

SOVIET UNION – RUSSIA

COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

Earl Packer	1917-1922	Clerk, Petrograd, Volgograd, and Riga
Edward R. Pierce	1938-1940	Clerk, Moscow
Willis C. Armstrong	1939-1941 1941-1943 1945-1946	Clerk, Moscow Lend Lease Officer, Washington, DC Director, Russian Ship Area, Washington, DC
Teresa Chin Jones	1941	Born in the USSR to Chinese Diplomatic Parents, Novosibirsk
Clinton L. Olson	1941-1943 1943	Deputy Chief of Joint U.S.-U.K. Supply Program for USSR, Moscow Military Attaché, WWII, Vladivostok
James McCargar	1942-1944	Vice Consul, Kuybyshev and Moscow
John F. Melby	1943-1945	Generalist, Office of War Information, Moscow
William A. Crawford	1944-1947	Administrative Officer, Moscow
Merritt N. Cootes	1945-1947	Administrative Officer, Moscow
Martha C. Mautner	1945-1948 1948-1950 1958-1963	Clerk, Moscow Intelligence Officer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC Intelligence Officer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Davis Eugene Boster	1947-1949 1949-1950 1959-1961 1965-1967	Political Officer, Moscow Intelligence Officer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC Political Counselor, Moscow
Eugene Kern & Edward Goldberger	1948	Voice of America: Russian Program

Mary Ann Stoessel	1948-1949	Foreign Service Spouse, Code Clerk, Moscow
George Allen Morgan	1948-1949 1949-1950	Cultural Affairs Officer, Moscow Political Officer, Moscow
Robert O. Blake	1950-1952 1954-1957	Consular/Political Officer, Moscow Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Richard Townsend Davies	1951-1953	Political Officer, Moscow
Sol Polansky	1952-1955	Translator, Moscow
Philip H. Valdes	1952-1953 1953-1954 1955-1958 1961-1964	Administrative/Political Officer, Moscow Political Officer, Moscow Intelligence Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
James F. Leonard	1953-1956	Publications Procurement Officer, Moscow
Joseph Walter Neubert	1953-1956	Political/General Services Officer, Moscow
Robert R. Bowie	1953-1957	Policy Planning Staff: U.S. View of Soviet Union: Solarium Exercise, Washington, DC
Emory C. Swank	1953-1955 1955-1957 1967-1969	Political Officer, Moscow Intelligence Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC Deputy Chief of Mission, Moscow
Terrence Catherman	1955-1956 1956-1960 1960-1964 1964-1967	Soviet Studies, Columbia University Special Projects Office, USIS, Vienna, Austria USIS Officer, Moscow Head of Russian and East European Language Broadcasting, VOA, Washington, DC
Vladimir I. Toumanoff	1956-1957	Soviet Studies, Harvard University
Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.	1956-1958	Administrative/Political Officer, Moscow

William N. Turpin	1956-1958	consular/Economic Officer, Moscow
Alexander Akalovsky	1956-1960	Interpreter, Washington, DC
Harry G. Barnes, Jr.	1956-1957 1957-1959 1959-1962	Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC Publications Procurement Officer/Cultural Exchange Officer, Moscow Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Edward L. Killham	1956-1959 1968-1970 1970-1971	Consular/Political Officer, Moscow Analyst, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC Soviet Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs Washington, DC
Wallace W. Littell	1956-1958 1979-1983	Distributor, <i>America Illustrated</i> , Moscow Counselor for Public Affairs, Moscow
Robert J. Martens	1956-1958	Political Officer, Moscow
William Watts	1956-1958 1960-1961 1961-1963	Soviet Internal Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC Russian Language Training, Oberammergau, Germany Cultural Affairs Officer, Moscow
John A. Baker, Jr.	1957-1958	Political Officer, Moscow
David E. Mark	1957-1959	Political & Economic Counselor, Moscow
Idar D. Rimestad	1957-1960	Administrative Officer, Moscow
Cole Blasier	1958	Temporary Duty, Moscow
Edward Hurwitz	1958-1960	Staff Aide to Ambassador, Moscow
John D. Scanlon	1958-1960	General Services Officer, Moscow
Vladimir I. Toumanoff	1958-1960	Political Officer, Moscow
Lewis W. Bowden	1958-1960 1974-1978	Political Officer, Moscow U.S.-USSR Economic Council, Washington, DC
Arthur A. Hartman	1958	Intelligence Officer, Bureau of Intelligence

		and Research, Washington, DC
Gifford D. Malone	1958-1961	Intelligence Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
	1963-1964	Russian Language Training, Oberammergau, Germany
	1964-1966	Administrative Officer, Moscow
	1966-1969	Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Walter B. Smith, II	1958-1960	U.S.-USSR Exchanges Officer, Moscow
	1965-1967	Publications Procurement/Political Officer, Moscow
	1969-1979	Intelligence Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Hans N. Tuch	1958-1961	Cultural and Press Attaché, USIS, Moscow
	1961-1965	Deputy Director for USSR and Eastern Europe, Washington, DC
Samuel G. Wise, Jr.	1959-1961	Bureau of Intelligence & Research, Washington, DC
Kempton B. Jenkins	1960-1962	Political Officer, Moscow
	1962-1965	Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
William D. Morgan	1960-1962	Russian Language and Area Studies, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC and Columbia University, New York, New York
	1962-1964	Publications/Political Officer, Moscow
	1964-1966	Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Jack R. Perry	1960-1962	Exchanges Officer, Soviet Exchanges Staff, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
	1962-1964	Personnel/Political Officer, Moscow
Vladimir Lehovich	1961-1962	USIS Exhibition Tour, Soviet Union
Richard Townsend Davies	1961-1963	Political Officer, Moscow

Samuel G. Wise, Jr.	1961-1964	Consular Officer, Moscow
Roger Kirk	1961-1962	Public Affairs Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
	1962-1963	Russian Language Training, Garmisch, Germany
	1963-1965	Consular/Political Officer, Moscow
Peter S. Bridges	1962-1964	Assistant General Services Officer/Political Officer, Moscow
Sol Polansky	1962-1966	Office of Soviet Affairs, Washington, DC
Thompson R. Buchanan	1962-1964	Intelligence Research Specialist, Moscow
	1968-1970	Soviet Affairs, Washington, DC
	1970-1973	Political Counselor, Moscow
James A. Klemstine	1963-1965	Consular Officer, Moscow
R. Keith Severin	1963-1966	Assistant Agricultural Attaché, Moscow
Ralph E. Lindstrom	1963-1965	Economic Officer, Moscow
	1967-1969	Economic Counselor, Moscow
Richard Funkhouser	1964-1965	Economic Counselor, Moscow
Marshall Brement	1964-1966	Political Officer, Moscow
Samuel E. Fry, Jr.	1964-1966	Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
	1966-1968	Consular Officer, Moscow
Frederick Z. Brown	1964	Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
	1965-1967	Assistant Administrative Officer, Moscow
David M. Schoonover	1964-1967	Agriculture Analyst, Moscow
Naomi F. Collins	1965-1966	Student, Moscow
Allen C. Davis	1965-1966	Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
	1966-1968	Political Officer, Moscow
Robert L. Barry	1965-1967	EUR, Soviet Union Affairs, Washington,

		DC
	1968-1971	Consular/Political Officer, Moscow
	1971-1973	Consular Officer, Leningrad
	1973-1974	USIA, Voice of America, USSR Division, Washington, DC
	1974-1977	Deputy Director, EUR, Soviet Affairs, Washington, DC
	1979-1981	Deputy Assistant Secretary for USSR and Europe, Washington, DC
Thomas M. T. Niles	1965-1967	Office of Soviet Union Affairs, Washington, DC
	1967-1968	Russian Institute, Garmisch, Germany
	1968-1971	Economic Officer, Moscow
	1973-1976	Commercial Officer, Moscow
William Andreas Brown	1966-1968	Political Officer, Moscow
William J. Dyess	1966-1968	Assistant Administrative Officer, Moscow
Jonathan B. Rickert	1966-1968	Staff Aide to the Ambassador, Moscow
William T. Pryce	1966-1968	Publications Procurement Officer, Moscow
Yale Richmond	1966-1967	Russian Language Studies, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
	1967-1969	Counselor for Public Affairs, Moscow
Robert William Farrand	1966-1968	Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
	1968-1970	Consular Officer, Moscow
William M. Woessner	1967-1968	Office of Soviet and East European Exchanges, Washington, DC
G. Norman Anderson	1967-1969	Administrative Officer, Moscow
David M. Evans	1967-1970	Analyst, Soviet Economic Division, INR, Washington, DC
Charles William Maynes	1968-1970	Economic-Commercial Officer, Moscow
Warren Zimmerman	1968-1970	INR, Soviet Policy, Washington, DC
	1973-1974	Political Officer, Moscow
	1975-1977	Policy Planning, Washington, DC

Michael G. Wygant	1968-1970	Political Officer, Moscow
Sol Polansky	1968-1971	Political Officer, Moscow
Anna Romanski	1969	Guide for "Education USA", USIA Exhibit, USSR
Robie M.H. "Mark" Palmer	1969-1971	Consular Officer, Moscow
John P. Harrod	1969 1969-1970 1975-1978	USIS, Moscow Exhibit, Washington, DC USIS, Moscow USIA, Assistant Cultural Attaché/ Press Attaché, Moscow
Harry Joseph Gilmore	1969-1971	Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Moscow
William N. Harben	1969-1971	Science Officer, Moscow
Gary L. Matthews	1969-1971	Soviet Affairs Officer, Washington, DC
McKinney Russell	1969-1971	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Moscow
Edward Hurwitz	1969-1972	Political Officer, Moscow
Raymond Ellis Benson	1970-1971	Language Training, Russian Language Institute, Garmisch, Germany
Peter B. Swiers	1970 1970-1972	Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC Consular Officer, Moscow
Pierre Shostal	1970-1972	Political Officer, Moscow
David M. Evans	1970-1971 1971-1973	Russian Language Study, Garmish Partenkirchen, Germany Economic Officer, Moscow
Jack R. Perry	1970-1974	Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Martin Wenick	1970-1974	Political Officer, Moscow
Jon David Glassman	1971-1973	Junior Officer, Moscow
Yale Richmond	1971-1978	Deputy Director, Soviet Union and Eastern

		Europe, Washington, DC
Arthur Mead	1972-1975	Foreign Agricultural Service, Washington, DC
David Nalle	1972-1975	Cultural Attaché, USIS, Moscow
John Todd Stewart	1973-1974	Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
	1974-1977	Commercial Officer, Moscow
Naomi F. Collins	1973-1975	Spouse of Foreign Service Officer, Moscow
Richard M. Miles	1973-1975	Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC
John Nix	1973-1975	General Services Officer, Moscow
Willis J. Sutter	1973-1975	Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Moscow
Sol Polansky	1973-1976	Exchange Program Officer, Soviet Affairs, Washington, DC
Gary L. Matthews	1973-1976	Deputy Principal Officer, Leningrad
	1977-1981	Deputy Director, Soviet Affairs, Washington, DC
Marshall Brement	1974-1976	Political Counselor, Moscow
Louise Taylor	1974-1976	Cultural and Information Officer, USIS, Moscow
James E. Taylor	1974-1976	Political Officer, Moscow
Robert. K. Geis	1974	Russian Language Study, Monterrey, California
	1974-1978	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Leningrad
Arthur A. Hartman	1974-1978	Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Thomas W. Simons Jr.	1975-1977	Political Officer, Moscow
William Veale	1975-1977	Soviet Union Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Marilyn P. Johnson	1975-1976	Russian Language Training, Garmisch,

		Germany
	1976-1978	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Moscow
Richard M. Miles	1975-1976	Russian Language Training, Garmisch, Germany
	1976-1979	Political Officer, External Affairs, Moscow
Raymond Ellis Benson	1975-1979	Press/Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Moscow
Donald B. Kursch	1975-1976	Economic and Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
	1976-1978	US Commercial Office, Moscow
	1984-1986	Office of Soviet Affairs, Washington, DC
Kenneth Skoug	1976-1979	Economic Counselor, Moscow
Malcolm Toon	1976-1979	Ambassador, USSR
Robert William Farrand	1976-1978	Chief, US Commercial Office, Moscow
	1978-1980	Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC
William Andreas Brown	1977-1978	Political Counselor, Moscow
Thompson R. Buchanan	1977-1980	Consul General, Leningrad
Jane Miller Floyd	1977	Exhibit Guide, USIA, Moscow
	1979-1980	Intern, Soviet Desk, Washington, DC
	1980-1982	Rotational Officer, Moscow
William P. Kiehl	1977-1978	Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
	1978-1979	Cultural Affairs Officer, Exhibits, Moscow
	1979-1980	Press Officer, Moscow
	1980-1982	Soviet Union Desk Office, Washington, DC
Marshall Bremert	1978-1980	Soviet Desk, National Security Council, White House, Washington, DC
Thomas R. Hutson	1978-1980	Consul General, Moscow
Michael A. Boorstein	1978-1980	Administrative Officer, Moscow
	1980-1981	Supervisory General Services Officer, Moscow
Philip C. Brown	1978-1981	Information Officer/Press Attaché, USIS,

		Moscow
Jon Gundersen	1979-1981	Press and Publications Officer, USIS, Moscow
Robert B. Houston	1979-1981	Science Counselor, Moscow
Nelson C. Ledsky	1980-1981	Special Assistant for Moscow Olympics, Washington, DC
E. Wayne Merry	1980-1983	Consular/Political Officer, Moscow
Wayne Leininger	1980	Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC
	1980-1984	Consular Officer, Moscow
Henry L. Clarke	1981-1982	Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
	1982-1985	Economic Counselor, Moscow
Michael A. Boorstein	1981-1983	Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Robert E. McCarthy	1981-1983	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Moscow
Warren Zimmerman	1981-1984	Deputy Chief of Mission, Moscow
Arthur A. Hartman	1981-1984	Ambassador, USSR
G. Philip Hughes	1981-1985	Deputy Foreign Policy Advisor to Vice President George Bush, The White House, Washington, DC
Geoffrey W. Chapman	1982-1985	Political Officer, Moscow
Thomas Macklin, Jr.	1982-1983	Russian Language Training, FSI, Washington, DC
	1983-1985	General Services Officer, Moscow
Richard T. McCormack	1982-1985	Assistant Secretary for Economics and Business Affairs/Under Secretary, Washington, DC
Robert E. McCarthy	1983-1984	Public Affairs Officer, Leningrad
Nadia Tongour	1983-1985	Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC

Raymond Ellis Benson	1983-1987	Press/Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Moscow
Parker W. Borg	1984-1986	Deputy, Office of Counter Terrorism, Washington, DC
Philippe du Chateau	1984-1987	Assistant Information Officer, USIS, Moscow
Jane Miller Floyd	1985-1987 1988-1989	General Services Officer, Leningrad On-site Inspection Agency Ulan Ude, Soviet Union
Edward Hurwitz	1986-1988	Consul General, Leningrad
Gary L. Matthews	1987	Coordinator for Soviet Union Affairs, Washington, DC
Philip C. Brown	1987-1990	Counselor for Press & Cultural Affairs, USIS, Moscow
Greg Thielmann	1987-1988 1988-1990	Russian Language Training, FSI, Washington, DC Political/Military Affairs Officer, Moscow
William Brooks	1988-1989	Office of the Legal Advisor: Moscow Embassy Arbitration Case, Washington, DC
Richard M. Miles	1988-1991	Consul General, Leningrad
Robert L. Barry	1988-1992	Soviet Refugee Program, Washington, DC
G. Philip Hughes	1989-1990	Executive Secretary, National Security Council, The White House, Washington, DC
Thomas Macklin, Jr.	1989-1991	General Services Officer, Moscow
Thompson R. Buchanan	1990	Consultant (Retired Foreign Service Officer), Moscow
Gordon Gray	1990-1992	Soviet Desk Officer, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
Greg Thielmann	1990-1993	Chief, Office of Strategic Forces Analysis, INR, Washington, DC

David M. Schoonover	1990-1994	Agriculture Minister-Counselor, Moscow
Joseph R. McGhee	1991-1992	Deputy Director, Office of Soviet Affairs, Washington, DC
Robert S. Strauss	1991-1992	Ambassador, USSR
Nadia Tongour	1991-1993	Soviet Desk Officer, Washington, DC
E. Wayne Merry	1991-1994	Political Officer, Moscow
Harold W. Geisel	1992-1993	Counselor for Administration, Moscow
Richard L. Stockman	1992-1993	Consultant (Retired Foreign Service Officer), Tashkent, Tbilisi, and Bishkek
Robert E. McCarthy	1992-1995	Public Affairs Officer, Moscow
Dale V. Slaght	1992-1995	Minister Counselor, Moscow
William Primosch	1993-1994	Assistant to Coordinator for Assistance Programs for the Former Soviet Union States (NIS), Washington, DC
Richard M. Miles	1993-1996	Deputy Chief of Mission, Moscow
Shirley E. Ruedy	1995-1996 1996-1997	Science and Technology Officer, Moscow Political Officer, Moscow
Ralph H. Ruedy	1995-1997	Deputy Public Affairs Officer, Moscow
Michael A. Boorstein	1996-1998	Deputy Director, Moscow Embassy Building Control Officer, Washington, DC
Jane Miller Floyd	1996-1998	Consul General, Vladivostok, Russia
Louise Taylor	1996-1998	Policy Officer for Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States, Washington, DC
Naomi F. Collins	1997-2001	Spouse of Ambassador, Russia
David Kramer	2001-2003	Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary for Global Affairs, Washington, DC
Melissa Sanderson	2001-2003	Deputy Minister Counselor for Science, Moscow

EARL PACKER
Clerk
Petrograd, Volgograd, and Riga (1917-1922)

Earl Packer was born in Utah in 1894. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in the Soviet Union, Hungary, the United Kingdom (Ireland), Turkey, Burma, and Tunisia. Mr. Packer was interviewed by Paul McCusker on October 27, 1988.S

Q: As of today, 94 years old, how did a young fellow born in Utah wind up in the Foreign Service?

PACKER: Well, it's a great story. I was born in a middle class family, and we didn't have too much money. I was the youngest of five sons, and after completing high school in Ogden I had a variety of jobs, which lasted until I got the results of a civil service examination for a clerical job in one of the government departments in Washington. And that resulted in my going to Washington in 1915, and taking a job there in the Bureau of Insular Affairs, in the War Department. It was in a clerical capacity.

Well, I'd been with them approximately a year, until there came, to the State Department, a telegram from Ambassador Francis, in Petrograd, asking for a couple of male stenographic clerks. The appointment clerk in the State Department came to the chief clerk of the Bureau of Insular Affairs and said, "Do you have anybody who would like to go to Petrograd?"

A friend and I talked the thing over, and we put our bid in, and shortly we were on our way to Petrograd. And we got there in time to be present at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, in 1917 -- November 7, Western style calendar.

Q: Excuse me, Earl. When you first went there, wasn't it still called St. Petersburg?

PACKER: No, I think not. I think they had already changed it to Petrograd.

Q: I see.

PACKER: Well, in a short time the embassy decided to leave Petrograd and go east, and settled in a little provincial capital called Vologda. In the meantime, there were changes in the staff of the embassy proper, and a military mission was created; the head of which was General Judson. He was a colonel, but he was quickly promoted to a Brigadier General.

Q: Why did we have a military mission?

PACKER: We had come into the war, and it was considered desirable -- from a military point of view -- to have this mission created. It was called The American Military Mission to Russia. The

job of being a clerk in the military mission came up, and it led -- in due course -- to my being commissioned as a first lieutenant of infantry, United States National Army (USNA).

From Vologda, as things progressed badly for Russia -- on the western front -- the decision of the allies was that intervention should occur, with a view to preventing the deterioration of Russia, as an ally of the Western powers, against Germany. A military expedition was sent into Archangel, and the embassy moved from Vologda to Archangel.

Then, of course, the development of the war on the western front eventually led to the peace, and the withdrawal of American forces from Russia. There was also some sort of intervention in South Russia, the details of which I don't remember. And at Vladivostok, as well as at Murmansk.

Q: Now, the U.S. was not fighting against Germany in Russia, was it? What was the purpose of the mission?

PACKER: The purpose of the mission -- looking at it from the point of view of Washington -- could only have been to somehow keep Russia active as long as possible in the war. But the military mission actually wasn't -- in my opinion -- a great success, because the Russian armed forces were not able to prevent the creation of a Soviet government, which put the Kerensky government out of commission. I would say it was a rather unexpected development, from the point of view of the American organization in Petrograd -- and later in Vologda; likewise in North Russia, in Archangel.

Q: Did you go to Archangel, or did you stay?

PACKER: In the military mission itself there was the general, two colonels, two captains -- one of whom was a National Army officer. He was of American-Russian extraction; his father was in business, and he was in business with his father until this opportunity came to get a commission in the National Army, and become a member of the military mission.

Q: Well, you were there -- in Russia -- at the time the Revolution was going on. Wasn't living difficult for you?

PACKER: Yes and no. We had no family there. Well, I think Prince . . . I don't remember when he got married. We somehow found quarters -- a house; and some of us lived in the house. Some of us were able to get living quarters with a Russian family. And we ran a mess at the military mission, for our own personnel. And we had Russian help there -- in the mission -- to look after the purchase of food, the preparation of food, the serving of food, and so forth.

Q: Okay, let's try another approach. What were your biggest problems, Earl, during that period? Was it being out of touch with the United States?

PACKER: Well, we could buy stuff on the local market, which the Russian people on the staff took care of. And the actual serving of food was arranged. We had Prince -- because he was absolutely perfect in his Russian. His mother was Russian, his father was American. He had a

good deal to say about how the mission's Russian staff worked.

Colonel Stewart was the officer in charge of the military expedition to Russia. And Stewart, and our Colonel Ruggels -- who was a regular Army officer -- was in close touch with the military expedition. And there was, of course, a possibility of telegraphic correspondence, and written correspondence, sent through couriers set up by the embassy, to enable messages to go for information purposes, to Washington via use of commercial telegraph services.

Q: So you did have constant communication possibilities?

PACKER: Yes, they were quite handy. And then, of course, the diplomatic side was handled by Ambassador Francis and his staff. He had two or three secretaries -- first secretary, second, and so forth.

Q: Earl, you were carried then as an assistant military attaché?

PACKER: I was made an assistant to the military attaché. As I recall, for some technical reason they had to put the 'to' in there because . . . probably it related to appropriations.

Q: But actually you were a lieutenant, at that time?

PACKER: First lieutenant of infantry, U.S.N.A.

Q: And that was attached to the embassy at Petrograd.

PACKER: Initially in Petrograd, and then went to Vologda, and then to Archangel. Then when the war was over, why, we were all withdrawn.

Q: And you went then to Washington?

PACKER: Then I went back to Washington. I was demobilized. Then I was offered a job in the State Department, with. . . I don't know what it was called; I don't remember. The biographic sketch may show what my title was.

Q: It just shows that you were appointed as a Foreign Service officer and a vice-consul in 1920.

PACKER: When I got settled on this job in the State Department, I resumed my studies at George Washington. In 1921 I got my A.B. In the meantime, I had taken the consular examination. I think there are some mistakes in that State Department Register record, but my recollections are not sufficiently firm to make any changes, really.

Q: Well, obviously because of your experience in Russia, you were assigned to the Division of Russian Affairs.

PACKER: Yes, it seems to me that initially we were an office in the Division of Near Eastern Affairs. And then the Russian division was created. I became, in due course, the assistant chief of

the Division of Russian Affairs. Many years later the Division of Eastern European Affairs was created in the Department; and it seems to me I had my initial assignment up to the Baltic States in that period -- before the Division of Eastern European Affairs was created.

Q: That's what the biographic register shows, in fact. But it was 1922 when you were posted to Riga.

PACKER: That is correct. But you see, at that time we hadn't recognized the Baltic States as independent, so they had the . . . some special title there.

Q: Office of American Commissioner, I think.

PACKER: Yes. A fellow named John A. Gade was the commissioner.

Q: But you arrived, in Riga, sent there by the State Department?

PACKER: Then I was sent up to Tallinn, to take charge of the consulate up there; the regular man was off on leave.

Q: How did you get along in Tallinn? Was it difficult for you there?

PACKER: No, I found there was a functioning office, with a Russian girl clerk. And there was an American clerk. I was the only person -- at that time -- with officer status, in Tallinn. And I found the Estonians very pleasant people to work with; until a new full consul was sent out to take charge of the office, and I was ordered back to Riga.

EDWARD R. PIERCE
Clerk
Moscow (1938-1940)

Edward R. Pierce was born in Lexington, Mississippi and raised in Washington, DC. After working in the US Patent Office and attending Strayer College and George Washington University, he took a clerical job in the Foreign Service in 1937. Pierce held positions in Germany, Italy, Washington, DC, and the Bahamas. Pierce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: You arrived in Moscow in November of 1938. Were you given any briefing when you got to Moscow about security precautions and all that? Was there concern about compromising American personnel or things that could get you into trouble, or things like that?

PIERCE: Actually, no. I knew a lot. See, between the time I was told I was going to Moscow, and I actually left, I knew several people back in the State Department who had served in Moscow. See, the embassy opened in '34, actually '33, but we didn't have anybody in there. They had to staff it. So they sent at least two or three code people from up in David Salomon's outfit.

A couple had come back, one of them had quit or been fired, or something. To be frank with you, there appeared to be an awful lot of homosexuality.

Q: It's interesting, and this is what is known today as politically incorrect, but it does seem that within the code business, and the communications business, many of the people who were involved in this were sort of loners.

PIERCE: They were the ones who were good at it.

Q: It wasn't necessarily just plain homosexuality. They were sort of loners. In a way, they were different than you might say the more gregarious other people, which made them more susceptible, I think.

PIERCE: It's a filthy story, I'm telling you. It's never been told. I know some things I'm not even going to tell you. But the reason is, I'm not sure to this day...the actual people are dead. The clock's taken care of most of them. But who's left behind? They're covering up. Now you can cut some of this out, if you want.

Q: No, we'll leave it here.

PIERCE: There's no question...I wasn't going to do this, but I'm going to show you a picture. You can draw your own conclusions. You see, when you talk about stuff like this, you begin to talk about people who are considered to be icons. When you attack an icon, any fool knows, you're liable to get hurt because most people would say, "Imagine that jerk talking about so-and-so." Truth of the matter is, the absolute facts, the truth has been covered up for 50 years. Fifty years. It's still being covered up. Because all this talk about documents coming out into the open, you know, is carefully managed. There's a lot of them that are not going to know.

Q: What are we talking about, we're talking about the '38 to '40 period. What is this we're talking about?

PIERCE: Well, we're talking about flatly, treason. I mean, you ask me if there were really instructions given to me on security, vulnerability from women, and stuff like that. All that's been going on, you know, for 2,000 years.

Q: But when you go to a place where you know the NKVD [Narodni Kommissariat Vnutrennykh Del - People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs - Soviet secret police] was trapping people...I would think somebody would say, "Watch out for this."

PIERCE: It's a very strange thing, and you ask a very good question. I guess it was assumed that everybody knew it. Certainly I knew it. But maybe I was more educated in the State Department world. But the same applies to any country. You hear it all the time. I mean, Jack Kennedy was supposed to have been involved with some German woman, stuff like that. Let me show you this...

Q: You're saying that William Bullitt supposedly selected his staff. He was the first ambassador

there, and he had...because I didn't have the tape on...they were...

PIERCE: ...a weird bunch. A couple of them straight off the Left Bank in Paris. I'm telling you! Well, it's a wonder I wasn't stepped on and squashed long ago.

Q: When you went out there what was your position?

PIERCE: I was a clerk.

Q: All right, there were other clerks who were probably putting you into the picture, weren't they? When you got there, they would say, "You know, watch out for so and so."

PIERCE: Yes, right. Maybe it was my fault. I think I sort of felt I knew more than most of them, anyway. I'd been around longer, and from an early age, and so on and so forth. I'll tell you, even if you were there, staring at it day after day, it really doesn't... Certain things happened later on.

Q: What was the atmosphere at the embassy?

PIERCE: Very strange. It was wintertime when I first got there. Gloomy. The sun comes up at ten in the morning, sets at four in the afternoon. Everybody drank a lot. Anybody who was inclined to drink that was the worst place to send them. There was no organized social life for anybody but the top echelon at the embassy. Everybody else was left on their own. I'm telling you it was really strange. Well, I'm not going to say too much, but there were people there who had been there since the embassy opened. You understand? This is more than four years. Moscow was a hardship post. You're not supposed to spend more than 18 months there. How did these people remain all this time? It wasn't because they were forced to. It's because they wanted to, and somebody wanted them to be there.

Q: You pointed out up above....yes.

PIERCE: Absolutely. There they were. Nobody over a period of time...it was like going into the Army and getting kicked around in boot camp...you don't have a chance. They've got ways of making you miserable, keeping you busy. I'm telling you. I'm probably, I'm not proud of it at all...I'm probably the only clerk that ever went there that had the background to be observant and the tenacity to hang on and be observant and the good friends... since I was 18 years old back in the States...to keep me on the payroll in spite of some efforts to do anything at all...disgrace me and what not. These people were vicious.

Q: Let's talk about this. We're talking basically right now...what type of things were happening, socially...?

PIERCE: The social life was left up to the individual. If you were interested, let's say, in ballet, or music, or something, you could keep really busy there in Moscow. If you were interested in athletics, you could go to ski and ice skate, and do this and do that. But there was no meeting place for, say, a young man like me, American, 27 years old to go and meet nice girls. So you didn't meet any nice girls. You met some bad ones. You had to presume that they were reporting

immediately to the secret police, because if they didn't they'd be out in Siberia.

Q: Did you have the feeling...I talked to somebody who was there somewhat later and said there was a hierarchy of I think they're called "sparrows." That if you were at the very top you sort of ended up with a ballet dancer and then you moved down by rank. But you were pretty much aware that these were young ladies who either were assigned to you or if you became acquainted with them they very soon had to make their deals with the NKVD.

PIERCE: Without any question. You had to presume that. But everybody knew that.

Q: Did it make any difference? I would think there would be the normal male/female liaisons.

PIERCE: Absolutely. In these homosexual cases, God knows what they were doing. I had a girlfriend. Not right after I got there. I met her at the Metropole Hotel in a bar or something. I believe she worked for one of the government agencies right around the Kremlin there somewhere. From all appearances, she'd be like some girl you'd meet over at Annandale or Falls Church. But you had to know...it just made sense that...She never asked any questions. But she didn't have to because I would go out with her, and there would be a couple of other guys and their girlfriends, there's bound to be some talk back and forth. You know, they had a number of cases involving these Marines.

Q: We're talking about in the '80s.

PIERCE: Yes.

Q: At that time they had 12 Marines?

PIERCE: Yes. The Marines seemed to think that ordinary rules didn't apply to them. Of course, they didn't. I'll tell you why. Right up to the top everybody was hiding something. A guy like Bohlen, I have a lot of respect for Bohlen, I think Bohlen was one of the very few clean-living men in that embassy, in the sense that he was married. But there's such a strange story about how he got married, how about that.

Q: I'm not familiar with that.

PIERCE: You wouldn't believe it.

But, anyway, it was a very strange setup, and designed to discourage anybody, rapidly. I came in for special attention from the administrative officer, a man named Angus Ward, who was later on glorified for his activities out in Manchuria.

Q: He was incarcerated for more than a year, as consul general in Manchuria, and later ambassador to Afghanistan. He was an odd duck.

PIERCE: He was never incarcerated. Blockaded for a bit. From what I understand now, and I'm not bragging. It was a set up. He was a Soviet agent and they used that stratagem to get him out

of nowhere into somewhere and it worked. He's one of the ones they shuffled out of Moscow. They sent him to Vladivostok and they had to invent an office for him because there was none there. They sent him out of Moscow to save his butt.

Q: What was he doing in Moscow?

PIERCE: He was an agent, I'm sure. His record was this: His name was Angus Ivan Ward. His mother was Russian, came from Canada. Came to the States, served a brief time in the U.S. Army, got hurt somehow on a motorcycle. He became an American citizen, went with the food relief people over there in 1919, got fluent in Russian, wound up marrying a Finnish woman. Then he eased his way into the Foreign Service because of his language, and there he was. He was one of the ones that Bullitt took in from Paris who was still there in 1938 working away. I'm going to find this picture. If I've talked this much, I might as well show it to you. You're kind of going to have to use your judgment. I don't care. Because I know I'm on sound ground.

Q: What makes you think that there were a group of Soviet agents, Americans, in the embassy?

PIERCE: It was discovered. You never heard of it, did you? It's a 50-year miracle. It's the darndest story. If it breaks loose, it might be the biggest story in a long, long, time. But I heard it so long ago that I'm probably the only one still around that really has a good enough memory.

Q: How did this come to your attention?

PIERCE: Would you turn that thing off?

Q: We'll quit at this point. We're talking about your time in Moscow and what I would like to do is cover the A-N-T-H-E-I-L, Antheil, Henry...to talk about that case in some detail. What you know about that. Then I would also like to talk about some of the other elements within the embassy. You say you felt there was a certain amount of hostility and there were cliques and all that, let's talk more about that. Then what your impression was of some of the people there, I guess Kennan, Bullitt, Bohlen. Was Llewellyn Thompson there, too?

PIERCE: He'd gone.

Q: Then more about life there and what you were getting from other people regarding the events in the Soviet Union at that particular time. Particularly as the war started.

Let me make my announcement here. Today is the sixth of April 1998. Let's start. You were talking about this case, the Antheil case.

PIERCE: This whole thing has so many ramifications. I have gotten immersed in it, more or less, over the years. There's one ramification represented by that board there, with all those pictures.

Q: We're having pictures showing...

PIERCE: That's wartime.

Q: So we're sticking to Moscow.

PIERCE: This is the best thing I have. I wish I had more. We had a fire in this house here about 25 years ago and lost a lot of stuff. This is, as you can see...

Q: You're showing me a picture of the U.S. embassy in Moscow.

PIERCE: The courtyard.

Q: October 1938.

PIERCE: Rather gloomy-looking picture. It was a gloomy place at that time. I'm not in this picture. I arrived there a month later.

Q: That would be November.

PIERCE: November 1938. At this time the embassy had been open, actually working, since 1934. The United States, Roosevelt, recognized Russia in 1933, and immediately appointed William Bullitt as our first ambassador to Russia. Gave him carte blanche in selecting his personnel which was, of course, tremendously important, etc. Bullitt charged right in, [from] all accounts. I met him a couple of times, but at his rank and at mine, it was just, of course, shaking hands at some cocktail party, or something. Very enthusiastic man, a brilliant man, but also very flawed. A fact which was successfully covered up. Like so many things get covered up. This picture, when I got there in November 1938, just beginning the winter of '38-'39...this man was ambassador.

Q: You're pointing in the picture to Joseph Davies.

PIERCE: This lady sitting here in the front row where all the ladies are...How many of them are there...one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight women, and I would say approximately 30 men. Unfortunately, about one third of them were homosexuals. No question about it. She was highly publicized at that time as the richest woman in the world.

Q: Mrs. Davies.

PIERCE: Marjorie Post Davies. Everybody's eating Post Toasties so they know about that. Here's Joe Davies, the ambassador, who really got famous for his book called *Mission to Moscow*. The word is, and I believe it, that he wrote about 10 words in the whole book. He didn't even trouble to learn a few words of Russian. He hated the place because she hated it. From all accounts she had all that wealth and they owned the biggest yacht in the world, which they kept moored up at St. Petersburg...

Q: "Leningrad" in those days...

PIERCE: ...and also down on the Black Sea at Odessa. They traveled down there. They spent little time in Moscow. This is the group that was there when I got there. I did not pick Moscow as a place to go to. Because I had been in the State Department, as I think I had told you before, for a long time and I know lots of people who had been in Moscow, clerks, that is, who served in that period between 1934 and when Bullitt arrived with his entourage, and the time when I got there, and everybody says, "Terrible place to go to," but I think I explained it to you...

Q: You did go into how you got assigned there.

PIERCE: So Davies was there but this man was actually running the embassy: Alexander Kirk. A career diplomat. Very smooth type of man, who'd you expect to be high up in the diplomatic service, and also very wealthy. His family, according to all the gossip among the clerks... God knows the gossip there was the time for that, because there wasn't much else to do... He was worth \$15-\$20 million. He was the sole heir to the Sweetheart Soap Company, a big soap company out in Colorado. Anyway, here's Kirk, Davies, Kirk... this is Lloyd Henderson. Now there's no reason for me to be reticent about these things. There's a room down in the State Department named for him. I feel that he was a traitor and a spy and a lot of other bad things, homosexual besides. There are a lot of fake marriages in here. Henderson's wife is in here somewhere. Here's Bohlen's wife. Here's Mrs. Davies. Ward's wife.

Q: Angus Ward.

PIERCE: Yes, there is. He's a bully. Everything else, despicable, but there he was. Now he and Henderson got into the Foreign Service by the side door. Which was the food relief program. Angus Ward was born in Canada. His mother was Russian. His name was Angus Ivan Ward. He crossed the frontier into the United States in World War I. Enlisted in the Army, did well, he'd probably make a good soldier, he had some vicious qualities that would make him good at that. He moved up in the Army, became a lieutenant, and became naturalized. He was a naturalized American citizen. No children, it was a fake marriage all over, as many of these marriages are.

I'm telling you the honest truth. These people had no children. Except for the Bohlens, there isn't a couple, and the ambassador and his wife, I think they had a couple of children...nobody had a child. It was a set-up. Regular technique. Ward was married to a Finnish woman. This man here, Chipman, Norris Chipman, was married to a Greek woman. Henderson was married to a Latvian woman but not at this time. That fake marriage occurred later. Kirk never made a pretense to be anything but a homosexual. This is Colonel Thamesville. Called the "Red Colonel" by some. A man named Grumman, etc. Now if I'm bouncing around, and you think I'm too harsh on these things, I'm just telling you what I think.

Q: But that's what we're doing in this oral history. How did this atmosphere affect the work of the embassy?

PIERCE: From my level, which was a clerk...and Ward immediately made me his private clerk, sat right outside his office...but the purpose of that was simply to have a good chance to criticize everything I did. Actually, I was the second best typist in that whole embassy. This man here,

named Presley, who was a communist I now know, had lived in Paris on the Left Bank for a long time and was married at one time to Catherine Ann Porter, the author, who wrote *Ship of Fools* and that sort of thing. Presley was an extremely able office worker. But I determined later, just to my own satisfaction, that [he] was second best. But Ward, I couldn't do anything right for Ward, because his intent was to break my spirit and send me home with my tail between my legs.

Q: Why do you think he did that?

PIERCE: Well, do you really want to hear it?

Q: Sure.

PIERCE: It's the most childish thing in a way that you could possibly think of. There I was working in the State Department from age 18, trying to move up from the position of messenger... See that building there, of course...

Q: You have a picture of the old Department of State.

PIERCE: Well, I knew every room in that building from the basement up. I began in the mail room. Where else do you start when you're 18 years old? I worked every floor in that building out of the mail room. We had it split into three floors to service. The fourth floor, we took turns on that, that was where all the files were, you know. We used to go across the street the west wing of the White House all the time. There was no formality in those days. There was hardly any security at all. Amazing when you think back, but don't forget, this was a different Washington. Anyway, I knew every room in that building, every body, practically, there were only 600 people. From Cordell Hull on down. Of course, Kellogg was Secretary when I first went in there. Well, in any case, here I was, a messenger. I worked up a bit. I got to be a clerk, Class One, so on and so forth. I think I explained this to you before. Somebody got the bright idea about 1931 or '32, '33, of forming a Department of State Recreation Association.

Q: I think you went into that.

PIERCE: I went into that...the tennis. You asked me why Ward was picking on me. They ran the tennis, and I won it three times in a row. I'm not bragging, but I was a very good tennis player and besides I was young. A man named Robert Kelly...I went through this before, was great friends with John Forrest Simmons, who really, I thought... the best high-ranking Foreign Service officer I ever met who was a decent guy. The rest of them were snobs, or this or that or the other thing, in my opinion. Kelly donated the cup exactly...somewhat like that...even bigger..it's up at my daughter's place. Kelly donated the cup assuming that Jack Simmons was going to win it because he'd been the captain of the Princeton tennis team. The champion of the Ivy League, singles. But I beat him, I won the cup. Apparently that made me a great many friends among the clerks, but it certainly made me enemies of a certain group of...particularly Kelly. I found out many years later, from Mildred Dykie, who was the keeper of all secrets in the Foreign Service Personnel Division...one of these nice little old ladies who knows everything, never talks... She felt compelled to tell me years later after I won that tennis tournament the chief clerk, Percy Allen, rewarded me by sending me out to Egypt on a conference...

Q: You mentioned all that.

PIERCE: Yes, I mentioned all that. I earned the hatred of Kelly, there's no question about it. It sounds very petty, and it is very petty, but under certain circumstances it could be a pain in the neck, too. Kelly wrote a personal letter. Here's what happened. I came back from Egypt. I thought the Foreign Service was just the greatest thing in the world, and it had been out in Egypt. I applied for a job right down the hall in the Foreign Personnel Division, and the first thing I know I had gotten a notice to come down there, they told me I was going to Moscow. I was hoping to go to Paris, Madrid, Rio, you know.

Q: Can I stop...[tape interrupted]

PIERCE: ...working right under Ward's nose and it's very difficult, and I'd do this perfect work, and he'd mark it up and I'd have to do it over. I figured out what he was up to and I made up my mind he wasn't going to run me out of there and I stuck around. Where do you want me to go from here? This is the half of the embassy...

Q: We talked about the case...

PIERCE: Antheil? You're talking about dynamite now because that case has never been exposed, and it may be gone too, because the facts are all there. Here's Antheil right here. As usual, shining the shoes of anybody in authority. There's the ambassador.

Q: He's right next to the ambassador, between Kirk and the ambassador.

PIERCE: There's Henderson. This small fellow is Henry Antheil. There's the ambassador. This also is a rotten egg, a mechanic named Hontowski, who was furnished by the Navy. You had to have somebody around there who could fix things. He was an electrician, do this and all that. There's a story about him, too. This is Colonel Thamesville, who became fairly famous. That's Antheil, okay. Now here is a man you may know the name, and you may not. Tyler Kent.

Q: I've heard the name, but Tyler Kent...

PIERCE: Well, Tyler Kent was a spy. Antheil was a spy. I'm pretty sure Morris Shipman, Ward, of course, a couple others in here. Now here is Charles Bohlen, and here is his wife.

Q: You were mentioning about Antheil and what he was up to.

PIERCE: Here's the thing on Antheil. This is all heavy stuff, but I've got all the papers that I need and I've written up enough of it. Enough people know about it now, it's no big secret. First I'll show you the result of a year and a half...I know some people at State still...trying to find out what the Department...see the Department's covered this up 50 years or more. That's what you get out of the State Department when you ask about Henry Antheil.

Q: You presented me with a form showing he was born 1912 in Trenton New Jersey, his address

is there, education, high school in New Jersey two years, languages, German, and started at \$780. He applied in 1934, for clerkship. He was sent there in 1934 and transferred to Helsinki in 1939. He died in an airplane explosion June 14, 1940.

PIERCE: That's a great record. That tells you a lot, doesn't it, unless you already knew a lot. They're not going to tell anything. Antheil, first place, he lied on his papers to the State Department. He never went to Rutgers. He was a high school graduate and that's all. He had no skills of any kind. He was twenty-one years old in 1933. Bullitt was given absolute carte blanche by Roosevelt to pick his own people to go to Moscow and that's understandable because it was very important. He picked a group....I don't know how many clerks around him, maybe 12 or 15, the language people like Ward, and Henderson, so on and so forth. Couple of military people like Thamesville and these guys over here. He reached out, Bullitt, from Philadelphia, reached out and grabbed this young man. With no office skills, nothing to recommend him. To go to this vital place just opening up. Furthermore, after they got over there within six months, he designated Henry Antheil, by that time 22 years old, as head code clerk of the United States embassy in Moscow. Now just on the surface it's ridiculous. But nobody noticed it enough or had the nerve to throw it to anybody's attention. Who would you throw it to when the ambassador himself picked this young guy out of Trenton, New Jersey, pushed him over there and made him head code clerk. Antheil's brother it turns out, was George Antheil, at that time a quite famous musician. Heard of him, maybe?

Q: I've heard of the name.

PIERCE: He was famous. He was a member of the Left Bank crowd in the early 1920s in Paris along with Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, so on and so forth. He was also a communist, which was very common in that group. Even Hemingway, you know, had leanings that way. Henry Antheil got the job because of his brother, George, who was a personal friend, perhaps even a homosexual friend, of Bullitt. Both of them were bisexual. Certainly Bullitt was. Anyway, Antheil gets the job. 1934. Here we are in '38 four years later, very, very difficult hardship post. Everybody agreed to that. Nobody wanted to stay in Moscow, particularly the clerks. They had no life. These people...

Q: You're looking at the women. You're pointing to the women. The wives.

PIERCE: Because I'm speaking about social matters now. These people and the career officers had access to the foreign diplomatic colony. They had, you couldn't call it a normal life, at that city at that time, under Stalin, the purge going on, and people getting shot every day around the corner at the Lyublyanka Prison. But at least they had a life, they even had a dacha, a country estate outside of Moscow with a tennis court, a swimming pool, riding horses, this that and the other thing. No clerks were invited out to that place with a couple of notable exceptions. This guy was invited out there to fix the plumbing or anything...

Q: We're pointing to the mechanic...

PIERCE: That's Hontowski. Antheil was a sort of a mascot of the women's group. He was quite young still, when I got there. He'd been there four years, can you imagine? It was a strange life.

Antheil had access to all crannies of it, and he made full use of it. Kent had a good background, well educated. Had gone to Princeton for a while, then he went to the Sorbonne, and he was a linguist, so on and so forth. But he was not in the dacha crowd. The reason I'm stressing this is that dacha features in all the history of this entourage up to this point. Chip Bohlen was an excellent tennis player, I played him several times, always managed to win. He and his wife and a man named Charlie Thayer were the backbone of the dacha crowd. They were all wealthy as far as I could tell, certainly from my standpoint. Thayer, there's a fifty-thousand word story right there. Married his sister off to Bohlen. Did you ever read a book called *Eyewitness to History* by Charles Bohlen?

Q: Yes.

PIERCE: I'm sure you have good memory. Excuse me if I go wandering off down these paths. Listen, Bohlen in his book *Eyewitness to History*...I'm telling you, this is one of the things that set me off on what I'm doing. That book is 50% lies. Certainly the Russian part of it is. Bohlen credits a lot of his success, and he had tremendous success, culminated, of course, by being chosen to sit beside Roosevelt at Yalta and all that, to the contacts they maintained out at the dacha, horseback riding, this that and the other thing. There was a man on the staff of the German embassy who I got to know slightly because I was permitted to set foot on the sacred dacha grounds because of my tennis. I was invited out there to play.

If you recall from *Eyewitness to History*, Bohlen credited a lot of his reporting success out of Moscow at that time to his friendship with Johnny von Herbauer, the German Secretary. He was out there a lot. He was certainly out there...I was only out there four or five times and all the whole time I was there...and it was always to play tennis with Bohlen or somebody else who needed to have a pretty decent player on the court, you know. For instance, Jack Kennedy...we'll talk about that later. Bohlen, cultivated this dangerous, that is, for von Herbauer, that's the way Bohlen portrays it in his book, that Herbauer was actually soft towards the United States and was feeding him all this red hot secret information straight from the Kremlin, straight from Molotov, straight from Stalin. Straight from von Schulenberg, the German ambassador. All of those, von Herbauer would accompany von Schulenberg to the Kremlin and around. Then he'd be out in the dacha, they'd take a ride in the woods. He'd spill all this tremendously important information. You can imagine at that time I'm talking about, which was '39 by this time. Bohlen would then go back to the embassy, get a hold of Steinhardt, the ambassador, and spend the rest of the night... They worked all night, many times. Of course, Stalin did that, too. So everybody in Moscow did it. I was one of the two secretaries who were good enough to do this kind of work. This guy was the other one. Anyway, we'd type the stuff up, super secret, eyes only, for Hull, Wells, and then very carefully take it, guess where?

Q: To the code room.

PIERCE: To the code room. To who? To this little traitor here. Henry Antheil. Who would then...he coded all the "eyes only" stuff himself, and decoded it. Which as we found out later, at least I've determined, gave him complete control of incoming and outgoing that he wanted. He could actually write cables and sign them "Steinhardt." He could see it on the incoming cable, like he did with the ones that ordered him to be transferred to London, not long after I got there.

That's what happened to Bohlen's vaunted cables. I would guess within 12 hours, certainly, actual copies...of course, the codes were gone, compromised up to the ears, and had been for years under Antheil. He would walk across...I've got a picture here somewhere...

Q: Well, it doesn't make any difference because we're doing this on tape.

PIERCE: But I wanted to illustrate to you what would happen. Antheil was a snobby little guy because he had this inside track apparently, with all the top brass. He didn't hesitate to throw his little weight around. He was reputed...he didn't seem to have any Russian women friends like many did, or this that and the other thing. I can't swear up and down. Certainly if he was homosexual, he wasn't an aggressive type, and there were a number who were. Antheil would put his little fur hat on and take an evening stroll across Red Square, you could see from my front windows of the embassy, past Lenin's tomb, then you'd lose sight of him. That's an actual fact. You know where he was going? The British embassy.

I never met the guy. In fact, nobody ever met him, but Antheil had planted the...which had become fact in everybody's mind...that he had a boyfriend over in the British embassy across the river. That's how you got there. How long that was going on? He might not have had such a friend. You see, I never got onto this stuff until after I was out of there. It never occurred to me, but he did brush up friendship with me. Although I know now, he knew perfectly well what was going on, that I was under the gun, and the idea was to get me the hell out of there. There was something about me that worried them. And well, it might have been, if I had learned this stuff earlier, you'd have heard about it earlier.

Anyway, Antheil, would take Bohlen's "eyes only"...of course Steinhardt was a very intelligent man, but he knew nothing about embassy work, and he knew less about Russia. Bohlen was the brains of all of this. Second, I would say, would be Grumman, who I think was a straight guy. Bohlen, Grumman...Chipman was a spy, I'm sure of that. Ward, didn't get into the political work. He was administrative officer. So on and so forth. There were a couple...Henderson of course would get into these cables. But the brains was Bohlen. Here's the point. These cables, jammed with this world-shaking information that we were working all night encoding, not encoding, but typing up and whatnot, and revising, then turned them over to Antheil. Those cables had been compromised for at least three or four years. The coding meant nothing.

I'm going to jump ahead. To June 14, 1940. Antheil finally had to leave Moscow, because it just became too apparent, apparently, him hanging on there, you know. Which had to be arranged topside, you know that. He was supposed to go to London, England as head code decoder. He altered the incoming cables and also the outgoing, he was indispensable. He had been doing that for years. This guy got sent to London. The linguist, who really didn't know anything about codes. Tyler Kent. Antheil, it must have been a terrific deal uprooting him out of Moscow to Helsinki, Finland which is as about as close as you can get and still be in the Soviet Union. Do you know the Antheil story at all?

Q: I think you told me, but I think it was off mike. Would you just finish this?

PIERCE: Antheil in September of 1939, right after the war broke out, that is, the Germans

attacked Poland, got sent over to Helsinki. He'd been there many, many times before on trips. Christ, he'd been in Moscow five years. He got sent to this little legation in Helsinki as code clerk. Here he'd been head code clerk in Moscow for five years. On June 14, 1940, he wangled somehow, a trip across the Baltic to Tallinn, Estonia. That was done all the time every two weeks, I think, they took turns carrying a bag. You know, it's done all over. They used to do it down in Miami over to Havana or whatnot. The plane that he was on, on a return trip to Tallinn, was shot down by two Red Army fighters. Antheil, there were seven or eight people on the plane, was killed in the attack. So was everybody else. Some Soviet sub... There were Estonian fisherman who witnessed this thing, it was in broad daylight. These fisherman rushed to the scene and started to rescue whoever was there. There was no one, of course, but there was debris. A Soviet sub with a great big red star on it surfaced and chased them away and proceeded to collect whatever was there. No bodies, I don't think. June 14, 1940. The news, of course, got to Helsinki right away. Plane didn't come in and was shot down in broad daylight, everybody was killed. Somebody, and that's something I haven't been able to find out, but I'm sure it exists... Somebody or several people searched, as you would if you had been in charge at Helsinki, or me, his quarters to pack up stuff to send home to his family. Maybe you know all this.

Q: No, I don't.

PIERCE: They discovered, and it's incredible, but true, incontrovertible evidence that Antheil had been a goddam Soviet spy for five years, or four-and-a-half, anyway. Okay, what happens? They covered it up. They, of course, knew in Helsinki what had happened. You couldn't have telephoned in those days, I believe, from Helsinki. But you could still cable. They would have been informed immediately in Washington, the State Department, White House, whatever. Embassy Moscow, certainly. Probably Berlin, Warsaw, etc. They would have notified the big European embassies. By this time Bullitt, who was in on the whole thing, I'm sure, was the ambassador in Paris and considered himself ambassador to Europe for FDR. We all know about that. As of that date, June 14, Bohlen, Steinhardt, the crowd in Moscow, and all these other embassies, top men, State Department and the White House, and FBI, of course, I'm sure, knew that the codes had been invalid for years. Nevertheless, they pulled together in a real tight little ball and successfully covered up the news of this happening. Now, my point is this: It was good reason to do so from their standpoint. There were about a dozen men who became U.S. ambassadors, high ranking. Bohlen, almost made it to Secretary of State. But Bohlen knew from June 14 on, 1940, that all those highly vaunted cables that he based on talks with von Herbauer were false. That they hadn't been secret at all. Nevertheless, he wrote his book. About a dozen guys got to be ambassador. This mystery is perpetuated. Do you know that as we sit here, the Estonians still don't know?

Q: All this is news to me.

PIERCE: Well, it's heavy stuff.

Q: Of course it is.

PIERCE: I don't know what's going to happen to it. It irks me tremendously. I spent three years in the Army, almost got killed a couple times, got a bronze star, shed some blood, I just don't like

this crap.

Q: You showed me that...

PIERCE: You think I've got a few documents? Look at this.

Q: You mentioned that Tyler Kent was arrested.

PIERCE: Well, that's part of the cover-up.

Q: He spent six years in a British prison.

PIERCE: Incommunicado. They let him go at the end of the war. He may even have been given money to keep quiet. 'Cause Tyler Kent know all about Antheil. Here's the real point. Kent was arrested in London on May 20, 1940, open and shut. Open and shut because he had hundreds of... They put him in the code room, see? He was a very intelligent guy. I knew Kent for the brief time he served in Moscow, after I had got there.

He was privy to the exchange of very secret messages between Churchill and Roosevelt. Hitler was poised over in Europe after Dunkirk, ready to invade England. Nobody knows quite why he did it. Unless we had come into the war. Strangely enough, many people are still very suspicious about Pearl Harbor, the timing of it. Hitler would have overrun England, there's no question about it. The liaison between Churchill and Roosevelt was priceless. I'm not saying anything in criticism of that. Hitler would have overrun England and the world would be different today.

But here's the point of the story. 1940 was an election year. Roosevelt was elected in '32, '36, and he was running for the third term in 1940. Never been done before. The isolationists, of whom there were millions, were raving away, and gaining ground, really, all the time, because people didn't like the idea of what they saw coming. Father Coughlin, you ever hear of him?

Q: Oh, yes, in Detroit.

PIERCE: He was banging away, and various other people. Roosevelt wasn't even certain of getting nominated for a third term. A lot of people didn't like the idea of a third term.

Q: Oh, yes.

PIERCE: Here's Kent, May 20, 1940, arrested, guilty as he could be. He had hundreds of cables in his apartment including the super-secret stuff between Churchill and Roosevelt. His aim was to get it into the hands of the isolationists in the States. With the idea, and he was correct, if he could get that info there, that Churchill and Roosevelt were under the table maneuvering, Roosevelt probably wouldn't even get nominated much less elected. So what do they do? They put him away for five years on the Isle of Wight digging potatoes or whatever he did. Then when the war is over, late '45, they let him loose. Kent. He married a rich widow. Family that established Hyattsville, I think. Named Martha Hyatt, millionaire woman, much older than he. He just lived out his life, he's dead now, but he remained quiet. Okay, that's Kent. Okay, that's

May 20, 1940. Covered up in a secret trial. Here's an American citizen. They put him away, secret. Three weeks later, on June 14, 1940, what happens?

Q: Antheil was killed.

PIERCE: Murdered. The Russian secret police killed him because he had become very dangerous. That's easy to figure out. May 20, June 14. Here we are, still in June, they haven't even held the conventions yet, political. That had to be kept secret. Those two things coming together would have done this: They would have knocked Roosevelt out of his third term. Wendell Willkie would have been elected. There would have been a turn in our policy, for good or for bad, who knows. That's what happened. Right there in that building, right there.

Q: You're pointing to the pictures of the Old Executive...it was the old War, Navy, and State building.

PIERCE: Yes, they were all in there. On the fourth floor of that building on the side toward the White House is the room that was used for many years by David Salomon, the head of files, codes. I knew him well. He patted me on the back about the tennis, too. There's a fireplace in that room. It's an old-fashioned building. One of the perks that Dave Salomon had was that gloomy days he could have a fire in his office. Anyway, sometime between June 14...you've seen the article that occurred in the New York Times, haven't you? Antheil's death?

Q: No, I'd like to look at it. On this, I'm not sure. This is very interesting and I have no idea...

PIERCE: It's probably outside your beat usually, right?

Q: No. Your oral history will become part of our collection and this will be there. I'd like to go to something else. You were there in September of '39 when the war started. How did that play? There was the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement. How did that play at the embassy?

PIERCE: September '39, summertime of course, and it was more pleasant than usual in Moscow. It was very tense, of course, because all this big stuff was going on. Steinhardt was the ambassador. Grumman had the rank of consular, I think, or maybe a man named Walter Thurston had showed up to be the consular. But the real political work was being done by Steinhardt and Bohlen. Strangely enough, there was a lot of social activity in the diplomatic corps, not that I got in on that, or any of the clerks. But there was a lot of back and forth feverish entertaining and what not. See, nobody had chosen sides yet. After I won that tournament there...I showed you that cup, didn't I?

Q: Yes, you did.

PIERCE: I'd go up to the German embassy and played a little tennis. The Italian embassy, particularly, because Madam Rosso, the Italian ambassador's wife, was a rich American woman and favored American friends, you know, and invite you over. So actually, it was more open, in a sense, than from the time I first got there. Or maybe it was just because I had become more familiar with life there. Anyway, the high-level stuff, of which I was a very close witness

because I was doing...by this time I was doing code work.

Antheil was transferred...and there's something there that I am troubled to think about too much...somebody topside among the bad guys...must have figured out that Antheil had become a liability. Because although it was certainly the Soviets that finally killed him over the Baltic, there, the Soviets couldn't reach in and transfer him to Helsinki. That was done by, I think, Lloyd Henderson, who was by that time back in Washington, DC pulling the strings. He might have been the brains of the whole thing. Antheil got transferred at the height of all this activity to Helsinki. I think about the middle of September. The war had started. You could still go up to Riga and then over to Helsinki.

Within the embassy itself it was around-the-clock code work because so many things were happening. In August, too, a big British delegation arrived in Moscow. We know now they were there to sign a defensive agreement which fell through. Because at one point there in September, I remember going up to the Metropole Hotel, which was only three or four blocks, with a couple of the guys. Which we often did, you know, lot of tension, we had a couple of drinks and relaxed. Von Ribbentrop and his entourage had arrived. While many of them, I'm sure, were staying over at the German embassy, there was also quite a squad of them wandering around the Metropole Hotel. In those Nazi outfits, you know? It was at that point that von Ribbentrop pulled off the coup of the century, diplomatically speaking, and they signed the treaty which started World War II. So, I don't know whether I answered your question or not.

Q: What happened at our embassy when this Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty was signed, or the announcement was made? Did that change things at the embassy?

PIERCE: Nothing that you could...it was already tense and very active. Odd working hours, this that and the other thing. What it did was cut off any travel between Moscow and Berlin and Moscow-Warsaw which had been a customary route. Most of us had come in that way, I had. Other than that, everybody just notched it up a bit. Nobody blew their top or anything.

Q: You said by this time you had moved over to the code room.

PIERCE: I moved up to the ambassador's office on the third floor. I was the second best office worker in that embassy. Eugene Presley, the guy I showed you...how did he get to be number one in Moscow with his background? I'm telling you...the place...the rottenness was back in the States.

Q: What was the problem with Presley?

PIERCE: Presley was two things. He was a homosexual and he was a communist. His background was Left Bank Paris. He was a very intelligent guy. He'd been married to Katherine Ann Porter. Divorced. It's in the records. He was a Left Bank pinko, communist, and he'd gotten his job through some unknown guy, probably Lloyd Henderson or Bullitt, or Ada Burley, maybe. Stuff like that.

Q: I was going to say...but your job, you had moved to the ambassador's office?

PIERCE: Everybody who could read and write and had the aptitude at all was pressed into service in the code room from time to time. Including Tyler Kent. Which is what accounted for the fact that Antheil was able to shove him into that London assignment. Where he wound up in a prison farm. I was working like everybody else, 14 hours a day, maybe. A lot of my work was at night and also Presley because the big brains, Bohlen and Steinhardt and occasionally Grumman would be out at Spaso House cooking up the cables. We'd get taken out there and brought back, etc.

Q: Spaso House being the ambassador's residence.

PIERCE: From the first day they went into Moscow, that's his residence. It was just a frantic situation every day instead of once in awhile. Strange working hours.

Q: You left there in June 1940?

PIERCE: I left there on May Day 1940. May the first. I came out through Kiev. Bucharest, Budapest, Trieste, Milano, and down to Genoa. I was supposed... See, I was leaving. I wasn't going on leave. If I had any factor for suspicion of people other than what I know for a fact...anybody that ever left Moscow on leave and came back...there was something wrong with them. Unless they were a career officer, whose promotion...

Q: This was a big job. You obviously gained the spotlight by being there, so I can see any officer wanting to be there.

PIERCE: Get ahead, yes. (Inaudible) became ambassadors. If Bohlen and the rest of them had faced the music and realized, or not realized, they knew that these vaunted cables over these years, particularly in the case of Bohlen were spurious, had been betrayed years before, history would be different. Certainly their personal careers would never have... At least ten of them, after they got into this thing, which I am going to call...you know, the Mafia had what they called "omerta," "silence." This career bunch of Foreign Service officers involved with the Russian situation rolled together in a tight ball. I'm sure their wives knew the secret. They knew that Chip Bohlen was their leader and they had no idea he was going to be able to jump right into the seat, next to Roosevelt and become as big as he did.

If he had let it be known what had happened with Herbauer and the cables and Antheil and Kent, those guys would have wound up as high-ranking language officers, or something. They would never have had those big careers. They all had something in common. What's even worse besides the career officers, there were a number of out and out traitors from the lower ranks who were let go free, never prosecuted, never tampered with until many years later. The most outstanding one of that kind was a man named Carmel Offie. You heard of him?

Q: Yes. Later, he was Bullitt's secretary in Paris.

PIERCE: Let's be frank. He was Bullitt's bedmate all over the world. He was as homosexual as you can get. I don't think he ever held a woman's hand if he could help it. Very intelligent, very

energetic, and a spy from the word "go." I think they fixed that guy up, trained him in America. He was a poor boy from up in Pennsylvania. Father was a coal miner. Nothing wrong with that if you're an honest coal miner. But this guy owned William Bullitt. He lasted way past the wartime. He lasted until about 1954 when the Senator had to go on the floor of the Senate and speak about him. Then they got rid of him. But even then he had such protection that they pretended to harass him. He became a millionaire and so on and so forth. Carmel Offie's the worst of the lot, but there were others. I'm going to tell you something else, which I'd appreciate you'd keep to yourself.

Q: Well, I'd better not, because it will be on tape. When I do this, it has to be on tape.

PIERCE: Okay, I'm not going to mention this other name, then. Shocking, but I'll just say this. You know a lot, I'm sure, about English history. These names don't mean anything to you. Burgess, McLean, and Philby.

Q: These were all part of the Cambridge group during the '30s who joined the Communist Party and became spies for the Soviet Union.

PIERCE: Then defected to Moscow. They all...Philby's still alive, I think.

Q: No, I think he died very recently.

PIERCE: They're all dead now. But consider this. Here's these three aristocratic, wealthy well-educated fellows. Big successes. They were trained, it's now known, by the Soviets. They recruited them while they were underclassmen at Cambridge. They were trained to go into, the British Foreign Office and Foreign Service. They were all more or less brilliant guys, very personable, this, that, and the other thing. Burgess was homosexual, McLean was bisexual, nobody really knows what Philby is. I keep repeating that because it's very important. It's goes all the way through all of this stuff. It's never been emphasized, although it's generally known...but these guys were told "when you get out of here and get into the Foreign Office we want you to be the most outspoken anti-Soviet people around. That's the perfect cover for doing what you're going to do for us."

Now, I don't know whether you believe that or not, but I do. Now, here's the other thing. In the scale of things the United States was ten times more powerful than Britain in those days. Do you think that they're going to take all the trouble to penetrate the Cambridge- Oxford crowd, they're going to leave the Ivy League alone here in the States? Can you tell me one single Ivy Leaguer who ever was identified as a spy, a traitor?

Q: Yes, Alger Hiss was from Princeton, I think Princeton.

PIERCE: Yes, Alger Hiss was a special case. Even he was not accused exactly of doing what these guys did. I'm just saying that there should have been ten times the effort to penetrate the Ivy League and it was penetrated by people whose names I'm not going to mention because I can't prove it yet. But it's all there, and some very strange upward movement was attained by people who never even took the exam. You understand? Where did that protection come from?

Q: Yes. Well, who knows.

PIERCE: When I started out on this story...the reason I started out was I got into this Ezra Pound thing. Then as I accumulated stuff on that it dawned on me where the little dotted lines led, here and there. It begins to dawn on you that they pulled off the damndest stuff by just swaggering around assuming privilege, and everybody was willing to give it to them. Everything goes to a certain point and then all of a sudden, there's nothing. Well, it's there, and strangely enough...people make mistakes, it's documented.

WILLIS C. ARMSTRONG

Clerk

Moscow (1939-1941)

Lend-Lease Officer

Washington, DC (1941-1943)

Director, Russian Ship Area

Washington, DC (1945-1946)

Willis C. Armstrong was born in 1912 in New York. He received a bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College and a master's degree from Columbia University. His career in the Foreign Service emphasized economic affairs and included posts in the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. The following are excerpts from Armstrong's interviews with Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 29, 1988 and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

ARMSTRONG: I was a graduate student of Columbia University, teaching in a girls' high school run by the University. It was a progressive school, and they wanted a program taught in Russian history. I didn't know any Russian history, but the principal said, "You can learn." So I started taking courses in Russian history in the graduate faculty, and finally became persuaded that this was a good major field, because there was an endless amount of research material that wasn't being worked on, on hand in the Columbia library. I had a very persuasive professor of Russian history, a great man called Geroid Robinson, who is, unfortunately, gone now. He was later the head of the Russian section of the OSS in the research side here in town.

I studied Russian at the University of California at Berkeley in the summers of 1936-37, and took seminar work in New York. Then about 1938-39, the professor thought it would be a good idea if I went to Moscow to start working on my dissertation. My dissertation was "The Petrograd Soviet, 1917." (That was the right term for that city then.)

So he arranged with the Russian desk of the State Department for me to get a clerk translator's job, which was a temporary short-term assignment, and I went over in July of 1939. The European war started in September 1939, and I never got any research done, and I never finished

my dissertation. I stayed in the government for 28 years without interruption. I guess I was one of the early Kremlinologists or Sovietologists in the United States, but I gave it up after the war.

I came back in 1941, and spent the next five years dealing with the USSR on Lend-Lease shipments and also UNNRA shipments. Then I peeled off from that in 1946, and I went into the economic side of the State Department, where on various occasions in the State Department, I had to do with Soviet relations, mostly in the context of keeping things away from them in the COCOM structure. So I've been on the supply side and the withholding side.

I got out of the Russian field at the end of the war, because I looked it over and considered that we were in for a long stretch of Cold War and diplomatic trench warfare, which didn't interest me. I got into things where I dealt more actively with potential friends and allies.

Q: You arrived at a very dramatic time, just before the war.

ARMSTRONG: Yes. You can check the dates, but the British-French military mission had gone there, I think a little before I was there, or maybe it happened while I was there. That was late spring, early summer. I was there when the German rapprochement with the Russians came, and I was there, of course, when the war began.

You wanted to know about American relations with the USSR. I'd say they were formal, not particularly friendly. The Stalin regime was never friendly with anybody. Being a foreigner in Moscow meant being ostracized by the local population, not because of anything that might happen to the foreigner, but because the local population was frightened. The Russians had just gone through their major purges in 1937-38, and a very substantial chunk of the elite had disappeared. If you ever did meet any Russians, you could tell that times were very strained. The Russians were kept pretty much in ignorance about what was going on in the world, if you could judge by what was available in the press.

My job in the embassy was to read the press. My first job was being night duty clerk. I did that from about August '39 until about the following March. I did some reading and research, but mostly I was on duty in the office from 6:30 at night until 9:00 in the morning. I had a bed in the office, in the code room. We had a rather primitive code room and rather primitive communication facilities. So throughout the first stage of hostilities in Europe and throughout the Russian-Finnish war, I didn't get a great deal of sleep.

Q: No, I imagine not.

ARMSTRONG: But if you're young, you can stand these things. It was fascinating. Of course, I read the telegram traffic, which didn't amount to much.

American relations with the Russians was formal, nothing very noteworthy. There was hardly any business transacted. We had a new ambassador who came in the summer of 1939.

Q: Who was that?

ARMSTRONG: Laurence Steinhardt. His daughter was high school age, and the ambassador knew from friends in New York about me. Several of his friends had daughters who had gone to the school where I taught. So I fetched up putting her through two years of high school while I was there, in my so-called spare time. She, incidentally, lives in Chevy Chase if you want to talk to her. Her name is Mrs. Sherwood. She lives on Connecticut Avenue just above Chevy Chase Circle. We see her once in a while.

Steinhardt was a lawyer from New York who had served as ambassador to Sweden and Peru, who later served as ambassador to Turkey, Czechoslovakia, and Canada.

Q: What was his approach?

ARMSTRONG: Steinhardt was always interested in all sort of specific human stories, and some people said he was the best consul we ever had. He'd go to any length to help individuals who were caught in the trap of Soviet bureaucracy. He was a good loyal supporter of President Roosevelt, a campaign contributor, a very bright and interesting man. Paradoxically, my wife served under him when he was ambassador in Czechoslovakia, because she was then in the embassy there. She wasn't my wife then; I didn't even know her.

Q: What was his reaction to the Soviet-German agreement?

ARMSTRONG: We weren't at all surprised. We knew it was going to happen.

Q: How did you receive the news?

ARMSTRONG: Germans told us.

Q: The German diplomats?

ARMSTRONG: We were very friendly with the German Embassy. The Germans told us, in effect, that a deal was being worked out, and therefore, our chief political officer, who kept close contact with the Germans, had the story. That was Chip Bohlen, who was later ambassador, a well-trained Russian expert. I worked for him for a while as his translator. That was before I got the night duty. (I got the night duty because I was the lowest ranking worm they could find.) But I had a lot of personal contact with Bohlen and other officers in the embassy. We had Norris Chipman, who was a very good Sovietologist, and we had a man called Ward, who was administrative officer, who was also a very competent, knowledgeable man about Eastern Europe. His wife was Finnish. Our counselor was Mr. Thurston, who had no experience on Russia, but who had a lot of experience on Latin America, and who was a good and sensible man, who handled things well.

The embassy was effectively functioning as eyes and ears of the U.S. Government during that time, but we were mostly spectators. We were spectators as far as what the Germans and the Russians did with each other. One reason we weren't surprised was that we were aware of how weak the Soviet Union was following the purges. Of course, it had a weak economy; it always has. But the whole command structure of the military had been pretty much obliterated, and it

didn't look to our military people as if the Russians could fight their way out of a paper bag. Therefore, it was not at all surprising that they would try to get some kind of a cease-fire or standoff with the Germans. Obviously, if their intelligence was working at all, they knew the Germans were going to move in on Poland.

I have a comment on Poland. I went through Poland on my way to Moscow by train in July, from Berlin, woke in the night when we stopped in Frankfurt an der Oder, now, I guess, part of Poland. You could look out over the railroad yard, and you could see, as far as the eye could carry, flatcars loaded with military equipment. This was the middle of July of 1939. It was perfectly obvious that you don't put weapons on flatcars unless you're going to move them somewhere. You don't use your flatcars for storage. I observed that.

Then a chap, an American newspaperman, got on the train in Warsaw to go on to Moscow.

Q: Who was that?

ARMSTRONG: I think his name was Wolf. I'm not sure. He'd been in Warsaw for a couple of weeks. Somebody said, "There's an American up there." So I went up and said hello. This was my first visit to Europe. He said he'd been in Warsaw for two weeks, and he said, "The Poles are unbelievable. They think they're going to beat the Germans."

Q: Oh, no.

ARMSTRONG: They think one good cavalry charge will carry them right into Berlin."

Q: Oh, dear.

ARMSTRONG: Well, you know, it's perfectly true that the Poles have an international reputation for having far more courage than brains. They have a marvelous spirit. They'll fight anybody. Anyway, he said that was the mood in Warsaw: "Let 'em come. We'll beat the hell out of them." Of course, it lasted about 20 minutes, which, of course, the Russians presumably expected.

Q: That must have been clear to you, coming from Berlin, that war was definitely in the offing.

ARMSTRONG: Oh, yes, sure. I didn't stay in Berlin. I just changed trains.

When the Russians moved their troops into eastern Poland, it was obviously by arrangement with the Germans. They had the demarcation line all worked out beforehand. It was an interesting experience to observe. I used to wander around markets and do a little eavesdropping, and I remember a couple of women talking to each other. The minute anything sounded like military activity, the Russians all got out and got into a line for whatever was being sold, because everybody knew that military activity meant shortages. A hundred years of that, and you get used to it. The lines were forming for kerosene. People were buying kerosene, taking it home and storing it in their bathtubs. They didn't wash much, but they kept kerosene in the bathtubs. They'd line up for potatoes, they'd line up for anything. I listened to a couple of women in the

line.

One said, “Well, what do you think about the situation?”

“Oh, I don’t know. We don’t have war, but we seem to have military activities.” “*Voyenniye dyeis Taiga*.” Then later in that same period, I was over in the barbershop at the International Hotel, and I heard a couple of Russians talking. One said, “What is this? Why are we being chummy with our enemies, the Nazis?” The Russian people had been strongly conditioned by anti-Nazi propaganda. He said, “I find this very peculiar, very strange.”

The other one said, “Oh, don’t worry. (On *znayet shto on delayet*),” which means, “He knows what he’s doing,” was the answer. The “he” had a capital H. He was pointing toward the Kremlin, across the street. The Russian people, in general, had confidence that in external matters, the government had done and was doing what was best for the country.

Q: How did the diplomatic community, the people who dealt with you as diplomats, present this?

ARMSTRONG: I didn’t have enough rank to be very active in the diplomatic community. I had a couple of friends, mostly clerical staff in the German, Swedish, British, Norwegian embassies. That was about it. The German girl seemed never to be able to understand why the Americans should have any objection to what the Germans were doing because, as she would try to explain to us, “This is a matter for the Europeans and should not be a matter of any concern for the United States.” We would say gently that we thought we believed in Europe for the Europeans, but to us that meant all Europeans, not just one country. She was also astonished because she found that the Norwegian girl wouldn’t come to the parties if she was coming. They were both called Hilda. This was after the German invasion of Norway.

Q: Well, I’m not surprised at that.

ARMSTRONG: But she didn’t seem to understand. She said, “We went in there for friendly purposes, to help out the Norwegians.” In other words, she believed all her own government’s stuff. She was a nice kid. I always wondered what happened to her with the cataclysm of the war. She came from East Prussia.

The Swedish girl was interesting. She was the most negative about the Russians of anybody in the community. This goes back to the Swedes having known the Russians longer and better than anybody else. She eventually married the clerk in our military attaché’s office, and presumably has lived in the United States in the American service.

Q: Shortly after that, the war broke out.

ARMSTRONG: This was after the war had broken out. This German-Norwegian and other reaction was in the early days of the war.

Q: I see. When the war did break out, how did you receive the news? You were in Moscow at this time.

ARMSTRONG: Nobody was surprised. This was the first stage of the war.

Q: September 1939.

ARMSTRONG: September 1939. Nobody was surprised. We got a little busier, and there were a few little new touches, but mostly life went on in the normal fashion. After all, Russia had declared itself neutral, and it was a neutral country. We were a neutral country. It was spectator sports.

Then during the period of September to spring was what a lot of people called the phoney war, because the Germans were not very active against the West. They were consolidating in Poland and regrouping. The West wasn't up to fighting anybody, anyway, and presumably was pouring a little more concrete on the Maginot Line, which did them no good.

The interesting thing about Russian policy during that period, throughout 1939 to 1941, was that they never lost touch with anybody who might potentially be their ally. In other words, they kept their options open diplomatically. They were perfectly correct with us and quite polite. We had no serious problems in the embassy or otherwise. They maintained correct relations with the British. Sir Stafford Cripps, who was a very important man in the Labor party, was the British ambassador there. He couldn't always get in to see anybody in the Kremlin, but he was there. The French Government in exile, the Petain government, did maintain its post, and everybody else was there.

The war was background, but what everybody focused on, beginning in the autumn of 1939, was the Russian protective measures on the borders. Having taken the eastern half of Poland, they then moved in on the Baltic Straits, as you well recall. They told Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that they'd like an alliance with them, mutual assistance or whatever. By the following summer of 1940, they had consolidated their control over those three countries.

That first winter, though, 1939-40, they did not intervene in local affairs in Latvia, Lithuania, and so on. I went out to Latvia in January on a courier trip. In those days, our courier would go to Stockholm, Helsinki, the three Baltic capitals, and to Berlin. We ran a shuttle courier from the embassy in Moscow who would go out to Latvia and deliver our pouches, and bring the new pouches in. We all took turns doing this, and we were always delighted to do it, because it gave me a chance to get out of the USSR for a couple of days.

So I was in Latvia in January for a few days, a perfectly normal train trip out, except for the weather and getting stuck on a siding, because of the deep snow. But going around doing business in Latvia, you were still in an independent country and doing business in Latvian currency, doing a lot of shopping for the colleagues and their girlfriends. I came back with 45 pairs of silk stockings. The Russians didn't have silk stockings. Almost everybody had a girlfriend. Not everybody. Some of the clerks were homosexuals.

On that trip I had luck. When I got on the train from Riga to Moscow, I found in the next door compartment Walter Durant, the famous correspondent of The New York Times. Of course, as a student of Russia, I had always been following him in the Times, so I went and got acquainted. I

spent the evening with him, sharing sandwiches and brandy and so forth, and found him fascinating. He maintained two families. He had a Russian family and a Western family. He was going in to see his Russian family. I saw him a couple of times after that in Moscow, and I also got to know other American or British correspondents. As a matter of fact, since one of my colleagues and I at the clerical level did all the newspaper reading and daily reporting on the press, the newspaper correspondents in town, the Westerners, frequently would talk to us about our interpretation of what was in the press, and we'd compare notes with them as to their interpretation. That was an external contact that I did have.

Q: Who were some of the American journalists?

ARMSTRONG: Henry Shapiro was one, a very bright and able guy. Jack Scott was another one. He's gone now. I guess Henry's probably gone now. Jack was for years with Time magazine, Time-Life Publications, a very good Russian expert. He had a Russian wife. He got thrown out by the Soviets in about 1940 for reporting that was probably too accurate. There was a great discussion over whether his Russian wife and children would be allowed to go with him. They were. We all went down to the train to see them off.

The Western group of people in Moscow was a very small group, and you tended to know most of them who spoke English, even if you were at a very low diplomatic level. All the foreigners huddled together, all the embassies huddled together, even if their countries may have had great differences of opinion with each other. There's nothing like a Russian environment to bring everybody else together. They were all suffering under the same yoke, as they say.

To go back, I started on the Baltic states. Everybody looked at that and said, "The Russians are protecting themselves and they will eventually gobble up the state." The U.S. took a firm view of this, and the U.S. still has the same view. We do not recognize the Russian acquisition of those three states, and we still have shadow governments in exile representing Estonia, and possibly Latvia, I think, floating around in the United States.

Q: How was this response manifested at the time?

ARMSTRONG: The early stage, technically the sovereignty of those countries was not violated, because the Russians made a mutual defense treaty, which they theoretically fully accepted. But later, of course, when they actually moved and took them over, the way they did it was to organize their own fifth column and have it take over the government. Then having taken over the government, it would petition for admission of the country to the Soviet Union. So as far as the Russians were concerned, this was all done quite legally. Their reaction was, "This is perfectly legitimate. This is what the people in these countries wanted." Believe that and you can believe anything, but that's what most Russian people believed.

Then, of course, after they got in there, they've had a program of decreasing the indigenous population and increasing the Russian component, so that by now, the Estonians are a minority in their own country. I think the Latvians are, too. The Lithuanians are more numerous with a higher birth rate. Lithuanians have shown more resistance because they have the Catholic church. I think it was perfectly transparent, but again, the Russians convinced themselves they

were doing it legally. They always liked to convince themselves they were right.

Q: Yes, that sounds rather like the invasion of Finland.

ARMSTRONG: I'm going to come to that next. What happened in about December, I think it was, was that they presented the same set of demands, in effect, on Finland, asking for a piece of territory near Leningrad, asking for bases and so forth, and a change in the Petsamo area so as to cut off the Finnish access to the Arctic Ocean, but really to get hold of the nickel mines. The Finns said no, they weren't interested.

We, of course, were very close to the Finns, diplomatically, and totally sympathetic. So we had an active cable traffic reporting on what the Finns told us about what the Russians had told them. The Finns had a remarkable ambassador there, Paasikivi. Was he there then or later? I think he was there later after they restored relations. He later became president of Finland.

We obviously took a very negative view. Therefore, our relations with the USSR deteriorated, beginning with the Finnish war, primarily, just because of American popular opinion about the Russian invasion of Finland.

Q: I've been watching newsreel reports, and they're not, to say the least, very favorable towards the Russians.

ARMSTRONG: Oh, Lord, no. I wasn't here. I was over there. But we had a lot of fun in the press reading section, because we'd take the Russian communiques every day, and I had some fun one time. They'd given an account of how many kilometers the Soviet troops had advanced, and I did a cumulative analysis of that, and it brought them out somewhere a little west of Norway, out in the North Sea after you'd added it all up.

Q: A little optimistic, perhaps.

ARMSTRONG: It was the coldest winter in the history of the Moscow Weather Bureau. There were bread riots in Moscow which had no political connotation whatsoever; they simply arose out of the fact that the weather was so bad that it froze the bread delivery trucks. I was out in it several times when it was 40 below and 45 below, and it's an experience. The town was frozen solid. They could hardly get the streetcars to run. Cars wouldn't start. Of course, cars in those days were pretty primitive, and Russian cars are more primitive than other cars. Their basic car was a Ford model that they got somewhere in the 1920s. Everything came to a grinding halt, including their offensive with Finland.

Of course, then they also made a terrible mistake. They must have ignored any intelligence that they might have had about whether the Finns would fight. Of course, the Finns fought like wildcats. The Russians had gone in with what we would call a National Guard out here. The reservists in the Leningrad military district were the ones who went. They weren't ready for what they got, and they didn't have the right equipment. They got stopped dead. Later, of course, the Russians realized what they were up against, and they regrouped and put in a new troop structure. Then eventually, their manpower was so much greater than the Finns, there could have

been no argument. You don't mind an anecdote?

Q: Oh, please, go right ahead.

ARMSTRONG: One night in about February or March of 1940, as the Finnish war was beginning to grind down, the Finns wanted to sue for peace, and the Russians didn't want to take over all of Finland, anyhow, they realized it would be an impossibility, they were negotiating privately. I went out to dinner at Henry Shapiro's. This is one of the unusual occasions when I actually met Soviet citizens socially, Soviet citizens of some status. I've forgotten the man and wife. They were somewhere in the artistic world, but they were representative of Russian intelligentsia, very nice people. Henry started to tell them, "Peace is being negotiated." They were astonished. Then he asked me for confirmation, and I didn't know where he got his information. I mean, I knew about it because I read the cables, but I wasn't supposed to talk about it. So I got caught on this.

The thing that was interesting was the reaction of this Russian couple, who could not understand why the Finns had fought them. They said, "We're nice people. We don't have any hard feelings. We're just trying to help protect the Finns. We offered them a defensive alliance. Why is that an occasion for them to fight us?" Sort of, "We can do no wrong. We're nice people." And this is essentially a major Russian self-justificatory view that you find, and it goes right on. It's still there. You read it in Mr. Gorbachev. "We're nice. Nobody's nicer than we are. Why don't you just recognize us? Nobody's more legitimate than we are." You know, all that. "We have civil liberties and we have a Constitution." You know. They tell themselves everything is all right.

There's another thing, too. They can be unspeakably crude, rude, and just plain filthy in their actions, but they always want to have the language be good. Euphemism is a Russian art in terms of describing things that happen in society. "All is for the best" -- Dr. Pangloss. "All is for the best. We're all right. Everybody is out of step but us."

Q: Not very many people outside of the Soviet Union are fooled by this.

ARMSTRONG: Oh, nobody outside is fooled, really, unless he wants to be. But they fool themselves. This is an insight into dealing with them. It makes it that much more difficult to deal with them, because they believe their own hypocrisy, and the public believes the government's hypocrisy.

Q: That does make things rather difficult.

ARMSTRONG: That's a side note about "why we're always right." Anyway, Soviet-American relations were not improved by the Russian attack on Finland.

Q: What was the American response? Did they make protests?

ARMSTRONG: There was a lot of money raised here for Finland, war relief, that sort of thing. Never overlook what the Swedes did for the Finns during that time; they turned out everything they could think of to help the Finns. Through Finnish and Swedish channels, we did a lot of

volunteer stuff.

Q: But the American Government didn't do very much other than that?

ARMSTRONG: There were a few debts the Finns owed, and I think the American Government probably offered to forget and forgive interest payments and things like that. The Finns said, "Never mind. We'll pay it." They always pay.

Q: Yes, they always pay their debts.

ARMSTRONG: I visited Finland in the summer of 1940 for a holiday. I traveled all around in the lake steamers and went near the new Soviet border. I went there by flying to Stockholm and then flying over to Helsinki, then came back the same way.

Then in the spring of 1941, I took the train from Moscow to Leningrad, did sightseeing in Leningrad, and then went on to Helsinki by train and back, and stopped in Viborg. By that time it had become a Russian town. The Finns were not giving up. There wasn't much of anything to eat in Finland by the spring of 1941.

I was in the border areas in the summer of '40, near Savonlinna. I said, "I don't see any war damage."

They said, "We don't have any."

I said, "How come? You're only a short distance from the war zone."

"Oh, every so often a Soviet bomber will come over, obviously under instructions to bomb us, and he would fly over the town, then he'd go out over the lake and drop all the bombs in the lake, then fly away." This is a reflection of an early naive Russian teaching of its own military, which was, "We do not bomb civilian populations. It is wrong to bomb a civilian population." There was a certain amount of pacifist idealism in the early Bolshevik view of things. Of course, they got into some real problems and it disappeared.

Q: When they were bombing German cities, they probably took rather a different view.

ARMSTRONG: They didn't bomb any German cities. They didn't have an offensive bomber force.

Q: Oh, that's right.

ARMSTRONG: Moscow didn't get more than one or two air raids. The Germans didn't bomb Moscow. I guess they figured it would be too expensive to use the air arm, and they were going to take it by the infantry. Of course, they never did take it by the infantry.

Anyway, the Finnish war was a major event, and it made the Americans officially quite cool toward the USSR. That carries you over to the spring of 1940. The summer of 1940 sees the

German offensive in France, rolling over Belgium, Holland, and everything, and demolishing the French forces and imposing the Vichy regime.

My observation then was that the Soviets were astonished and worried, because they had had, obviously, a better evaluation of the Anglo-French military strength than was warranted by the facts. You could see them. They had vivid accounts in the press every day of what was going on in France, much more vivid than was usual on any activity outside the country. You could tell it bothered them, because: “if they can do that to the British or French, look what they can do to us.” That’s when they first really began, I think, to get scared and more watchful of the Germans.

Q: That was a very dramatic example of what one had to fear from the Germans, non-aggression pact or no.

ARMSTRONG: The Germans are very efficient military people. There’s no arguing about it. I think that was our opinion then, that this kind of scared the daylights out of the Russians. ... From then on, really, until the following summer, they became more apprehensive. They didn’t convey this to the people, though; everything was bland. German-Russian relations were presumably cordial. Their press would be critical of the British and French, and critical of us, and they were obviously in various ways trying to see whether it was possible to please the Germans enough to keep them off their backs. I think it was probably the spring of 1941 by the time they realized this wasn’t going to work.

During the spring of 1941 was when you had the great German walk down through the Balkans, and again the Soviet press was full of lively reports on the German armies rolling into Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia. They made a brief and flickering effort to support the independence of the Yugoslavs, and the Yugoslav military mission came to Moscow to seek support somewhere about spring of 1941.

We got one interesting piece of intelligence. One of the Yugoslav generals who came had gone to the Russian military academy before the revolution, and he was entertained by a couple of his Russian classmates, who were then senior officers in the Red Army. We got a readout on that which is fascinating. The Soviet general who had a fine, formal house, and the servants were in livery.

Q: Oh, my heavens.

ARMSTRONG: To a bunch of peasants like the Yugoslavs, this was something. Who’s democratic, you know?

Q: Yes, indeed. In livery, nonetheless.

ARMSTRONG: In livery, yes. So the Russians kind of let the Germans know, “Look, we don’t like all these things you’re doing,” but they didn’t do anything more than just make motions. I am sure that from the time the Germans rolled into the Balkans, the Russians were then convinced that somebody in Berlin had their name on a card somewhere, and in due course, they would be presented with a bill.

Our general observation in the embassy was that the Russians really were surprised by the German attack in June of 1941. We had tried to warn them.

Q: Yes.

ARMSTRONG: We and the British tried to warn them with perfectly good intelligence, which we gave them.

Q: Where did this intelligence come from?

ARMSTRONG: Agents in Germany and just general open news in Germany, plus knowing what's going on, good hunches and good agents and so forth.

Q: The Russians didn't want to listen?

ARMSTRONG: British intelligence was damned good in those days and still is. Ours was kind of rudimentary, but it was functioning. So this was convincing. The Russians rejected it -- that is, Stalin rejected it. Our theory was that Stalin felt he was a big enough and important enough actor in the world stage so that even Hitler wouldn't dare treat him with contempt, that what he was going to get somewhere along the line was a set of demands -- economic, for supplies, because Germany was hurting, they needed grain, they needed oil, they needed other things, and assurance of non-belligerency, all that.

I think they thought they were going to be presented with a list. They never were. They just got hit on a Sunday morning with the full fire power of the German Army. They were so unsuspecting that they had, on their front airfields, all their fighter squadrons lined up for Sunday morning inspection. The Germans came down and washed them right out. They didn't have any significant defense in depth from the Polish border, and they simply were not prepared, in the military sense, for what hit them. I think probably their front line troops did a heroic job with what they had, but because there was not enough, they moved very rapidly and began to do the thing that they did in France.

Q: It's very similar to Pearl Harbor, don't you think, where the country that gets hit doesn't expect anything nice from their attacker, expects them to make some aggressive move, but not at that time and not in that way.

ARMSTRONG: Not that way. I mean, the German Embassy was still in Moscow and so forth. The Germans told us what they were going to do.

Q: They did? How did this come about?

ARMSTRONG: We were friendly with the German Embassy.

Q: You must have been very much.

ARMSTRONG: This is intelligence. This is an intelligence in an amateur way without having a Central Intelligence Agency or anything. The U.S. Foreign Service is not a bad source of intelligence, and they worked hard at it. Our contacts were good.

Q: How much notice did you get when they told you?

ARMSTRONG: Enough so that we got our women and children out before the war started.

Q: And you went to the Soviets, and they refused to listen?

ARMSTRONG: We didn't go. The embassy didn't go. We'd made the official approach earlier through intelligence channels, and they said, "Baloney."

There were several little things in the press that spring which I recall. Every so often there would be a funny little story in the press which would be hard to fathom. There was one report in some newspaper somewhere in Europe to the effect that the Germans were going to force on the Russians a deal whereby they would take over the Ukraine and have access to the oil and grain.

The Russians ran in Pravda a little humorous article which referred to this and said, "What nonsense." It quoted and said, "We're supposed to be renting Kiev to the Germans. This makes just as much sense as the nursery rhyme." I translated it at the time, but I can't remember it exactly. I quote in Russian a nursery rhyme which sounds good in Russian and translates very awkwardly, which is, "The lobsters are cutting hay in the meadow with hammers." That's the literal translation. They said it makes just as much sense as that. They put this out and kind of let the Germans know that they noticed something and expected to get some kind of reaction, and never got anything.

There were a few minor good relations efforts during the first year of the 1939 Agreement. I remember the Bolshoi Opera decided to do Die Walküre. It was one of the funniest experiences you can imagine. Some of us in the American Embassy went. In the first two rows, there was the German Embassy solid. The stage machinery was excellent, the tenors and the basses were fine, and the spirit of the thing was quite all right. It was good presentation, but the Russians simply did not have any Wagnerian sopranos. They didn't have any women in their cadre who could sing like a German soprano.

Q: Yes, you do rather need that.

ARMSTRONG: In connection with it, they put out a booklet in Russian, explaining the Ring. I think I've probably got it in my souvenirs somewhere. I didn't know much about it either. Wagnerian music had not been my bag, or at least I wasn't interested in the theology of it. We were kind of anti-Nazi around New York, anyway, so who bothered to listen to Wagner? I was fascinated by this pamphlet they put out. The Russians solemnly read it and tried hard to understand it. The Russians love songs and opera and all kinds of shows.

Another point. The Germans, when they did go in, made the grossest of political mistakes because they treated everybody like pigs. If they had gone in with the right kind of political

propaganda, if they'd understood what they were dealing with, or if they'd wanted to understand what they were dealing with, they would have gone into the Ukraine as liberators, with Ukrainian-speaking soldiers. "We're not fighting you. We are Ukrainians." You know. Friends and all that. They could have had the whole Ukraine in about 20 minutes.

Q: Just like they wanted.

ARMSTRONG: Which is what they really wanted economically. But instead of that, they shot everybody. Any sentiments of anti-Moscow disappeared in about three minutes and the Ukrainians went out and fought like tigers, too.

Q: This was rather a dramatic time for American policy, as well. One of our historical advisors claims that it's the German invasion of the USSR and the fact that the Soviets were able to hold on throughout that autumn and winter that convinced FDR to continue to pursue the possibility, then, of helping the Allies. What do you think about that?

ARMSTRONG: He was already committed to helping the British.

Q: Yes, indeed.

ARMSTRONG: That was a firm commitment. There was no argument about that. It was a while later that Churchill took over. The British were kind of hard to help at that point.

I'll tell you the reaction in the embassy when the war started. The night before the war was to begin, there were two parties, one of the clerical staff and one of the officers' staff.

Q: This is in September 1939?

ARMSTRONG: This is in June 1941. Of course, the officers were at the ambassador's house. We had ours at one of the apartments in the chancery. We had a clerical party, a clerks' party. Some of the officers came over to visit our party, quite a number of them, in fact. I think they wanted to get away from the ambassador. Our military attaché was at our party, an old friend of mine. He guess he was a major. I had known him as a captain, and we had both studied Russian together at Berkeley, California, a very, very nice guy and a good cavalryman, but not a great intelligence officer. He was satisfied the Russians would be rolled over by the Germans in very short order. I got into an argument with another clerk, in the presence of the military attaché. The clerk said, "The Germans will be in Moscow in three weeks."

I said, "I'll bet you on that."

He said, "How much?"

I said, "Fifty dollars," which was a lot of money for me at that point. I was the one who said, "The Russians will not lose." I don't know why I said that, except that I had a sense of the great strength of the Russian people, and I had a sense of their patriotism. I collected the \$50, incidentally. The other guy and I were both in Japan at that point, waiting for a way to get home.

But the military attaché turned to the other guy and said, “Your money’s perfectly safe.” But he was a dear friend and a good guy, and I always liked him. But his intellectual judgments were not great.

Q: You were right, though, in that the Russians did hold on.

ARMSTRONG: Oh, yes, no question about it. If you know Russian history, you know what happened to Napoleon.

Q: Indeed. Same thing happened.

ARMSTRONG: Same thing. Sure. The space and the numbers.

Q: And the winter.

ARMSTRONG: And the winter. So there was a division in the embassy, obviously, on what was going to happen. Ambassador Steinhardt was, I think, busy urging Washington that this was serious, that the Russians deserved some help, but that we ought not to give it to them without getting some political and other satisfaction on some of the things we thought were important.

Q: What did he have in mind?

ARMSTRONG: Some individual cases he was worried about. I know of one case where he told Molotov, “You know, I’ve got some passports here for exit visas.” They were American. “And I’ve got one more passport,” which was British, a local employee of the embassy who was really a Soviet citizen, also. He said, “I want a visa for her.”

Molotov said, “But she’s a Soviet citizen.”

“I know that, but you know, you gave me a list of military supplies you needed. I haven’t sent it home yet. I want the visa on that passport.” He got it. She got out.

Q: Quite effective bargaining.

ARMSTRONG: He was a tough cookie in terms of specific bargaining. Another thing, they were very polite to us all leading up to this period, although they didn’t give in on Finland or the Baltic states, but they were very polite. Somewhere in the spring of 1941, the ambassador called me and said, “I need you this evening. Would you meet me in the courtyard at 7:00 o’clock.”

I said, “Sure.” I got in the car and said, “What are we doing?”

He said, “The Soviet police have picked up an American citizen, and they were decent enough to tell us that they had him on a gun charge and to give us an opportunity to see him.”

So I said, “Where are we going?”

He said, "We're going to Lubianka," the headquarters of the NKVD, now the KGB. So I have actually been inside the headquarters of the KGB, the same building, still there, a big square building. We got in there, and in a room full of steely eyed KGB agents, all of their uniform hats on, sitting around, looked like a sea of blue, you know, they brought in a kid who was about 15. I had to translate, only he didn't know any Russian or any English; he spoke Polish. He had been born in Fall River, Massachusetts, when his family was visiting from Poland, had gone back and grown up in Poland on a farm. He knew enough Russian so he could answer "yes" or "no," so we had the most tortured conversation. The ambassador realized what the problem was, and he tried to be helpful to me. I was doing the best I could. It was an experience, but we got him out. The charge was kind of trumped up, which became evident when he told his story, and we got him out. The Russians let him go. This was a signal, I thought: "Look, we aren't going to cause you any minor troubles."

We had another event that spring, where somebody broke into the Roman Catholic church in Moscow, where the priest was an American, and there was always a great struggle over having him in there, because they didn't like churches. One day somebody came and stole all the objects off the altar, the host, everything. The priest came screaming into the embassy at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, and I was on my way over to the ambassador's to tutor his daughter. I said, "I'll give you a ride." I took him over, and he told me all about it.

We protested to the Soviet Government, and they sent a note back, which is a marvelous piece of casuistry, which I remember translating, which said that the appurtenances of a religious service are the property of the state and they're made available to the congregation for its use, provided they take good care of them. The fact that they've disappeared indicates that the congregation is not taking proper care, and therefore, it's your fault."

Q: Oh, my heavens!

ARMSTRONG: When I translated that, I thought, "When we get the ambassador on this, he'll go right up through the roof."

Q: Oh, I wouldn't blame him at all.

ARMSTRONG: He was Jewish, incidentally. He did go through the roof. He went over and saw Molotov, banged the table and so forth, and said, "I happen to have observed the church is across the street from a major police installation. I thought you had pretty good police in this country. Where is the stuff?" So eventually, they dragged in some bedraggled guy and two-thirds of the stuff or three-quarters of it. Probably melted down some of it. But it was an example. He was a combative man, but he always dealt in specific cases, the specific problems, rather than broad policies. A very effective representative of the United States, a tough guy and good.

... I came back from Russia by way of the Trans-Siberian, 14 days in a second-class car. This was the summer of '41, in June and July. I got to Vladivostok, was there two or three days, got

on a Japanese ship, and went to Japan. I spent seven or eight weeks in Japan, unable to get out, along with a group of other Americans from the Moscow embassy. Because the U.S. had frozen Japanese funds, and the Japanese had frozen our funds, and because we couldn't travel on a foreign ship under Foreign Service regulations, we had a long unit. There was no American ship stopping in Japan because of the freeze. So we sat and twiddled our thumbs at the Imperial Hotel or up at the embassy every day, to ask if anything had happened. The administrative officer, it so happened, was Chip Bohlen, the former First Secretary in Moscow for whom I'd worked. We had a nice time in Tokyo, more or less. It was a great change from Russia. It was clean. But we got tired of sukiyaki.

Then we got on a Japanese ship and went to Shanghai, were in Shanghai another couple of weeks or so, and then an American ship came into Shanghai which had come from the Philippines. It was, in fact, a requisitioned liner which was then a troop transport, so we came home on that. I got into San Francisco in October, after leaving Moscow in June.

I came to Washington and looked around for something to do. I found that because I spoke and read Russian, I was in considerable demand. I guess I must have had about four or five different offers from different agencies, each of which said it was the most important agency in town. I never heard of some of them again. It was a time of mushrooms sprouting in the bureaucracy.

I joined the Lend-Lease Administration because the Russian section was being run by John Hazard, now still a professor at Columbia, who was an old friend and who had Russian experience, having obtained a law degree from Harvard and then a law degree from Moscow Juridical Institute. He's famous in the field. He was organizing a group of people to help the Russians with war supplies. Russia was not eligible for lend-lease as yet, but we were working on their defense orders and using up their money until it ran out, which didn't take long. I started there in October 1941. I stayed with that program up until the war was over.

My function in the Lend-Lease Administration was to supervise the handling of shipping, transportation. Altogether we moved about 1,750,000 tons of stuff in four years. We had terrible times because of convoy difficulties on the North Cape route in 1941-42. I remember one day we lost 22 out of 33 ships. That was PQ-17.

In the springtime, the Arctic ice pushes out and the space between the North Cape and the ice is narrowed. The daylight begins to be greater, so you're running a great risk. The Germans had a base at Kirkenes in Norway, and they just blew us out of the water. I lost several friends on that route. I'd just sit here and organize convoys. We worked fantastic hours, six and a half days a week, and about ten hours a day. Well, we were not being shot at. Anyway, they did need somebody who spoke Russian and who could deal with the Soviet Purchasing Commission. So I was liaison with them and I became informally the coordinator of Russian lend-lease shipping.

The senior people I worked with included John Hazard, the civilian head of the office; our boss was General Wesson, a former Chief of Ordnance. We had a connection with General James H. Burns, General Sidney Spalding, General York, of the U.S. side of the combined Chiefs of Staff. They had a brief from Harry Hopkins to kind of keep an eye on the Russian program and make sure it worked all right. So I found myself working for three or four generals, and I was

conscious of my draft eligibility. They said, "Don't you worry about it. Either we get you commissioned and have you assigned back here, or we can get you deferred."

I said, "Which is easier?"

They said, "It's just easier for us to go on having you deferred if you don't mind not wearing a uniform. It doesn't make any difference to us whether you wear a uniform or not. You're doing your stuff." I had very fine relations with our generals, and in that process, developed a great respect for senior officers in the U.S. Army. All of these gentlemen were absolutely splendid people, people of good judgment, good skills, and fine human beings. This was a very worthwhile experience in that context of getting to know senior military types. I've always continued that to respect, and have a lot of friends who are military people.

In the work, you got to know the Russians quite well, because you were dealing on a bare-bones basis with guys who were working hard, who weren't professional diplomats, but were shipping experts or electronics experts or machine tool experts, armor guys in the military or aircraft guys or whatever. This has all been well described in a couple of books, very well done, which I have and which I can refer anybody to. They are accurate and good accounts. Some of us who worked on this helped the authors.

At the end of the war, all the time we were in Lend-Lease, our liaison with the Department of State was very close. I made sure of that myself because I knew the guys on the Russian desk -- Elbridge Durbrow and other people. Because I'd served in Moscow, they weren't worried about me. They recognized that I had the Moscow experience and was on the same wave length, and that we would do what we had to do for the Russians. As one of my Russian colleagues said, "We are allies through misfortune." And we were. So the State Department Russian people counted on me and John Hazard to keep them informed.

We also worked very closely with the research side of the OSS, where the chief of the Russian unit was Professor Robinson, who had been my professor at Columbia, and where several other guys who had been graduate students of his were working. So the Russians assumed that all of us in Lend-Lease were intelligence officers. Well, we were. Why not? That's the way they worked, so we worked that way.

The way it was handled was very bad. This was the fault of Averell Harriman, who was ambassador in Russia at the time. He came back here. I remember a great meeting in which a lot of people in the State Department and we from the Lend-Lease were talking about what we should do. In Lend-Lease, we had urged people in the State Department to please come to some kind of an agreement with the Russians as to how we would terminate Lend-Lease. They were absolutely stalled from doing anything about post-war planning with the Russians by the White House, because Mr. Roosevelt felt he was going to do it all himself, and he and old Joe would get along all right and they would settle everything after the war. Therefore, no significant preparations were made during the latter part of the war for any kind of a transition out of lend-lease, which I regarded as atrocious. Mr. Roosevelt played his own hand and paid no attention to intelligence about what the Russians were really like.

The interesting thing was the Russians had committed themselves to go to war against Japan within, I think it was, 90 days after cessation of hostilities in Europe. We had a special military program running for them to help supply or resupply their Far Eastern armies. We moved that entire program -- and I was personally responsible for this -- on Russian-flag ships, many of which we had lend-leased to them, right through Japanese waters in the five months before the Russians went to war with the Japanese. I remember the funniest requisition I ever cleared for military supply was 300 tons of hay for the cavalry in the Far Eastern Soviet armies. We declared hay a Lend-Lease article and sent it along. We also sent tanks, small arms, ammunition, and all kinds of stuff like that, right through Japanese waters on the Russian-flag ships.

Therefore, there was a problem. We needed to stop the Lend-Lease in Europe because the war was over. But the other program had to go on because the war wasn't over, and the Russians had a commitment to go in. But Mr. Harriman got awfully upset about this and wanted to cut off everything that went to Russia in Europe. He did it in such a categorical fashion, and everybody was so scared of him, since he was the ambassador, that it got too literal. Orders went out to turn around the ships *en route*. This was improper, because under Lend-Lease regulations, once you put the stuff on a ship, no matter whose ship it was, the other government accepted the goods. You couldn't just automatically reclaim them. Obviously, you could turn an American ship around, but you couldn't turn a Russian ship around. These were mostly American ships on the Atlantic, because Soviet-flag ships were in the Pacific run.

We turned the ships around and then everybody blew up. The Russians said, "You know, we expected you to cut this off sometime because it would be foolish to continue, but there was some other way of doing it besides stopping the hook at the dock in Philadelphia," (where we did most of the loading.) We sat there with ships half loaded, other ships dithering around the middle of the Atlantic. Do we go back? Do we go forward? What do we do? Finally, of course, what we did was let the ships continue if they were en route. Finally we finished loading the ships that were on berth. We didn't put any new ones on berth on the East Coast. Then we got into a discussion of what we should do about this stuff that was on order, that hadn't been delivered.

I found myself negotiating an agreement with the Russians at the end of the war, about September or October 1945, in which we agreed to give them the stuff that was on order, and they agreed to pay for it. It took a bit of arguing, and they tried an end-run, which was to go to Mr. Crowley, who was the head of the Lend-Lease Administration -- or then the Foreign Economic Administration as it had become by then. They bypassed me. Hazard had left to go off and help prepare the Nuremberg indictment. General Wesson had left to go back into retirement. I was in charge of the office, and I was doing the negotiating with the Russians.

TERESA CHIN JONES
Born in the USSR to Chinese Diplomatic Parents
Novosibirsk (1941)

Mrs. Jones was born in the Soviet Union of Chinese diplomatic parents. She was raised in the USSR and the United States. A specialist in Scientific Affairs, both

civilian and military, Mrs. Jones' Washington assignments were primarily in the fields of international nuclear and scientific matters and included non-proliferation, arms control, East-West Trade as well as general Political/Military subjects. Her foreign assignments were in the scientific and consular fields. She holds two degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. Mrs. Jones was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Today is July 2, 2007. This is an interview with Teresa Chin Jones. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Terry.

JONES: Yes.

Q: Well, Terry, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

JONES: I was born November 30, 1941, in Novosibirsk, USSR.

Q: All right. So we want to figure out how you came to be born in USSR in Novosibirsk.

JONES: Well in the summer of '41 Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. My father was a Chinese Nationalist diplomat assigned to the Chinese embassy in Moscow. They sent all the diplomatic dependents to Novosibirsk for safety. My mother still remembers going on the train to Novosibirsk, which was just packed with diplomats and their children, and looking at the troop trains going endlessly in the other direction. She doesn't think too many of those troops ever made it home again.

Q: These were the Siberian divisions that were brought in that sort of turned the tide in the battle for Moscow.

JONES: Well they were a never ending stream of men. Once my "expectant" Mom and Dad got to Novosibirsk, they settled in nicely, but on November 30, she fell down a flight of stairs. She was eight months pregnant when I was born. Even Chinese, coming from wartime China, were horrified at the sanitation standards at the hospital. Doctors didn't wash their hands and wore their outside boots into surgery.

It was no surprise when Mom developed peritonitis - considered 100% lethal before antibiotics or even sulfa drugs existed. But fortunately, at this point in time Stalin wanted the Nationalists as friends, so Malenkov (the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs) listened to my father's complaints that a total incompetents dealing with my mother and actually ordered one of the better surgeons in Moscow to go there and take care of her. With no antibiotics, they could only operate to drain the pus that developed internally - at a rate of two operations a week. She was down to about 80 pounds and after several months during which she weakened steadily, they were sure she would die.

A good friend of hers, a Eurasian, the Polish Chinese wife of a Chinese diplomat and a very devout Catholic, managed to somehow find a priest to give my mother last rites and to baptize

me -- Teresa, after her favorite saint. She also gave my mother the very last of her holy water from Lourdes which she had gotten years ago when on a pilgrimage.

My mother, then came out of the coma and, at age 85, is frail but still healthy. As my mother told us, she remembered that she died and was greeted by a little boy and a little girl carrying a lantern -- spirits whom traditional Chinese believed were there to escort dead souls to judgment. She prepared to go when she heard a loud voice tell her, "Not your time " - thus shocking her out of her coma.

She still had months of hospitalization during which her Russian became superb. She was 20 years old and a high school graduate, which was considered very well educated for a Chinese woman then. By the time she came out of the hospital she could read War and Peace easily in Russian; she could go to plays; and she could bargain for food in the bazaars.

After Novosibirsk, my father was sent to be the #2 at the Chinese Consulate General in Tashkent. I have only vague memories left of growing up in the Consulate General compound in Tashkent. The Consul General was also named Chin and also from Northern China. It was a busy enough post as there were large numbers of Chinese, probably illegal laborers, who got into trouble with the Soviet government. For example, at that time the easiest thing to get in the world was a Soviet Citizenship You went in to get a ration card, they put your thumb on a card and they told you, "You are now a Soviet Citizen." So there was a whole lot of pleading and begging at the consulate.

The area itself was strongly Muslim; and the locals often looked very Asian-probably as a result of centuries of Mongolian control. Even under Stalin there was very high crime, for example, the policeman in front of the Consulate gate was murdered.. For security the consulate bought a half wolf-half dog hybrid from the city zoo. So growing up I had the strongest impression that dogs kept their tails between their legs and howled.

CLINTON L. OLSON
Deputy Chief of Joint U.S.-U.K. Supply Program for USSR
Moscow (1941-1943)

Military Attaché during World War II
Vladivostok (1943)

Ambassador Clinton L. Olson was born in South Dakota in 1916. He received a bachelor's degree from Stanford University. He entered the U.S. Army in 1941 and subsequently received a master's degree in business administration. Ambassador Olson's Foreign Service career included positions in Iran, Austria, Martinique, the United Kingdom (England), Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. He was interviewed on April 17, 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

OLSON: ...I was a second Lieutenant, and became the Production Control Officer for the Small

Arms Division in the Ordnance Department in Washington, DC. As such, I did the Production Control work three machine gun, and machine gun ammunition factories. That was in the spring of 1941 and by the summer of 1941 I was doing that work for nine machine gun factories. It was during this period that I became associated with a lot of people with our military supply programs. We were supplying machine guns to the British, the Aussies, the Dutch, and to some of our own people. One thing led to another and the “powers that be” decided to send a special mission to the Soviet Union -- The Lend Lease Program.

Q: Is this prior to our entrance into the war or after?

OLSON: Prior to our entry in the war. This was September 1941. They sent a joint British and American special mission to set up a Military Supply Program for the Soviet Union. Then out of the clear blue sky, I was selected as one of the staff to go to the Soviet Union. We flew to London where we met with the other members of our mission under Averell Harriman.

We were in London for ten days of conferences with the other members of our mission. Our mission was headed by Averell Harriman. The British part of the mission was headed by Lord Beaverbrook. Our London meetings concluded with a luncheon at 10 Downing St. hosted by Winston Churchill. Our mission then joined our two B-24 bombers at Prestwick, Scotland. This was the 24th of September 1941. This you will realize was before Pearl Harbor but the war in Europe was raging on.

Our bombers were B-24s (Liberators). We had never seen one of these since they were our newest planes. They were numbers 73 and 75 built. The actual numbers were “3” and “5” built. The numbers were to mislead the Germans.

On the late afternoon of September 24th we climbed aboard our planes in Prestwick, Scotland and were off to Russia. Our plane carried the crew and eight passengers, four on each side of the catwalk. They included Colonel Philip Famonville who became Chief of our mission to Moscow, Konstantine Oumanski, the Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. and Quentin Reynolds, Foreign correspondent of Colliers magazine. From Prestwick we headed for Archangel via the North Cape. Off the Shetland Islands, we were suddenly attacked by three strange aircraft out of the setting sun, firing 20 M.M. guns. we thought we had had it, but the firing suddenly stopped and along side came three R.A.F. Spitfires. They wagged their wings to say “sorry chaps.” the word hadn’t reached the R.A.F. that we were flying in that area. Happily we had American flags painted on the wings so they finally recognized us.

It became quite an eventful flight off the North Cape. Some strange planes came after us but we were able to duck into some clouds and lost them.

We were supposed to land at Archangel but we saw that the airfield was too small to get out of if we landed there. After checking our fuel supply, we decided we could probably make Moscow with careful flying. So, to the consternation of the Russians, we flew on. They sent MiG fighters after us who dove on us but didn’t try to knock us down. After about six more hours of flying, we were over Moscow and, after some miscues by the Russians, we landed. As we taxied up to the air terminal, all four engines stopped. We were out of gas! All this after 15½ hours of flying,

which set the world over water record at the time. We flew most of the time at about 22,000 feet, which was the maximum altitude for B-24s. We were freezing to death in our heavy sheepskin flying suits but it was about 40 below zero at that altitude.

After landing, we were all taken to the Hotel National in Moscow, which was to be our home for a few days. That first evening, there was a reception for our mission at the ambassador's residence, Spaso House, to make arrangements for the conference.

The conference began the next morning at Spiridonifka, the Government's guest home. Aside from the principal delegates - Beaverbrook and Harriman - the participants were: Soviets - Colonel General Yacolev, Colonel General Colkov, and some other Lt. Generals; the British were General Sir Hastings Ismay, Lt. General Sir Gordon McCready, Lt. General Sir Mason McFarland, Lt. General Sir Allen Brook and Colonel Exham. Our delegation was Major General James Burns, Colonel Bundy and Lt. Olson. What a surprise this was to be named a delegate - participant of the Military Supply Committee.

We met for two days discussing the lists of military and other supplies and equipment each side wanted and what each side was able to supply.

At the end of the day, we were all escorted to the Catherine the Great Room of the Kremlin, where Stalin served as host of an incredible banquet for about 80 people. I was by far the lowest ranking person present. The banquet consisted of 26 courses and there were 36 toasts of vodka, wine, etc., drunk. The session lasted until 3 a.m. with movies, etc. Needless to say no one was in very good shape by the time it was over.

The next day, Harriman called the American side together and announced that agreement had been reached on a military supply program for the Soviet Union, and that some would have to stay behind to administer the program. This was good news for me since it meant, I thought, that I could return home. To my surprise, Harriman said, "General Faymonville, you will be chief of the Military Supply Mission to the Soviet Union. Lieutenant Olson, you will be his deputy, for the time being. And thus it was nearly two years before I got out of Russia.

Q: What was your impression of both your reception in Moscow and also Moscow at this time? This was just at the height of the German offensive.

OLSON: We had the feeling that the Russians were ready for anything. They were losing ground to the Germans everywhere.

Q: What was your impression of Stalin?

OLSON: Well, I met Stalin. He was a man about five feet five inches tall and he shook my hand with a very limp handshake. He noticed the red, white, and blue shoulder patch on my uniform and he asked Oumanski, who was the interpreter, about it. Oumanski said to me, "I guess he thinks you're a Marshall, a big star. That is the sign of a Marshall in the Soviet Union." Quentin Reynolds and Wallace Carroll, who were correspondents, were standing behind me, and unbeknownst to me, they recorded all of this. About three weeks later, an article came out on the front page of the New York Times, saying, "Stalin mistakes American Lieutenant for a

Marshall.” Stalin, when you looked at him, had white hair and sallow skin and you wondered if he was this “man-eating dictator” of all the Russians. He was a quiet-looking little man, until you looked at his eyes. Then you could feel that here was a powerful person.

Q: It was a pretty difficult time?

OLSON: Yes, the Germans were at the gate of Moscow. On the morning of October 15th, I was following the reports for the military attaché on the radio and listening in and I went to General Faymonville and said, “I don’t know what our policy is going to be, but it seems to me that we were sent here to help the Red Army even if the Germans come in and try to get around us.” The General said, “Yes, I think that’s right. I’ll go and see the Ambassador.” He went to see Ambassador Steinhardt and I didn’t hear from either of them for several hours. All of a sudden, I got a telephone call from Faymonville and he said, “Clint, don’t disturb anybody, but pass the word around that we’ve got to leave town in four hours.” So I had to race around and get a hold of everybody who was in Moscow and we arranged to get to the American Embassy. In the meantime, a blizzard had come up. We could hear the guns. They were fairly close to Moscow. We had heard the guns earlier. This big storm came up and we were told that we were going to go take the train to the Kazan station and we would move out to the East. At midnight, we finally got the orders to move out. So, carrying what little baggage we had with us, we went to the station and the populace were already starting to panic. So, we marched to the station with the Soviets’ Kremlin Guard holding back the populace. We climbed aboard the train and eventually under way. We headed toward the East or Southeast.

Q: Where did you set up your quarters?

OLSON: First, we were in Moscow. After that, we were in the American Embassy.

Q: When you left Moscow, where did you go?

OLSON: We left Moscow and were en route for almost six days to go 500 miles. We ended up in Kuybyshev. There was an old school building which we took over and that became our quarters and our headquarters. It probably had 25 to 30 small rooms. That became our home away from home. We were not very well supplied. On the train going out, we had few supplies. Not much in the way of food, but we had an excellent supply of liquor. It kept our morale up on the train. It took us about six days to make that trip. There were a couple of trains behind us. One of them had the Bolshoi Opera and the Ballet and just by coincidence, all of us being young Americans, by the time we got to Kuybyshev, the trains were all mixed up. So we had the good luck to get to know a fair number of Bolshoi Ballet. As I said, we didn’t have much to eat, but we had a lot to drink.

Q: To move on, what was your mission doing in Kuybyshev? When were supplies starting to come in?

OLSON: Some were coming in immediately. Our job really was to keep track of those supplies coming in, answering the requests of the Russians for the war supplies that they wanted. As it turned out, most of this was done through Washington, between Moscow and Washington. We

really did not, honestly, have a hell of a lot to do a lot of the time.

Q: Could you talk a bit about your Commanding General? He was an infamous figure. How did you see him at the time? I've had other views from books and so on. Jim MacArthur had very strong views about him. But what was your impression of him? Where was he coming from?

OLSON: As you probably know from history, he was rather friendly towards the Soviets - somewhat pro-Communist. He was really one of the guys who selected me for this mission. I didn't know that much about him except that he went to Stanford. He was a brilliant man. He was a bit of a protégé of Eleanor Roosevelt, as it turned out. I didn't know all of this when we first got involved. They were sort of "ultra liberal" in their approach to things. He was very secretive for the most part. He was a very gentle, nice, guy in social occasions. He was so regarded, not only by the attachés, but also by the Embassy in Moscow. Some of them were absolutely convinced after a year or so that he was working for the Soviets. There was nothing to indicate that he was disloyal, but I can understand why these fictions came about. I had many conversations with the General in which I disagreed with him on what the Russians were doing, and on Russian policy. I could say this for Faymonville, instead of knocking my ears down, which he could have done, he allowed me to project my opinions.

Q: From my understanding, part of the atmosphere was that they weren't giving due credit to the fact that these were our supplies coming and also our people were under tremendous restrictions. Here we were allies and were supplying them and we were being treated almost as an enemy. Was that true where you were?

OLSON: Absolutely true. We were under surveillance wherever we went. They were doing some surveillance, as primitive as they were in those days. Although some of them weren't so primitive.

Q: It seems that it happened at that time, it's almost hard to recreate it, but there were people who were like "I saw the future and it works." People were seeing the Soviet Union in a glorified way.

OLSON: Like Joe Davies.

Q: It's as if almost all judgment was suspended.

OLSON: That was the Roosevelt sort of approach to things. That is all very true. I happily had an interesting diplomatic job, not to cross swords with the General and not cross swords with my comrades in the Army. We worked that out okay. That attachés sneaked an FBI guy in at one point and he made a report and about ten years ago when one of the books that was written about that period came out, I was quoted as saying, "General Faymonville is not fit to wear the uniform for the United States." I was very upset with what had been written. I was very upset by that because, while I disagreed with Faymonville on many things, I would never make a statement like that.

Q: As a young man in this very tight little community, I assume that you were getting together with some of our younger officers, Tommy Thompson and those. Were they coming at you and

saying, “Can’t you do something about your General?”

OLSON: No, the ones who were coming at us like Mike Michela, the Army attaché, who was really almost paranoid about Faymonville. He had been trained into that by Ivan Yeaton, the previous military attaché. They hated Faymonville. They felt powerless inside the Embassy. They felt the attaché should be more powerful than the Special Mission Officers.

Q: It’s the usual thing. Power goes to who’s got something to hand out. If you’ve got something to hand out you’re not going to get it, so maybe part of Faymonville’s problem was the fact of the jealousy on the part of the attaché.

OLSON: Well, even before that, Faymonville having been the military attaché in Russia back in the 1920’s and 1930’s, was much more experienced than these other guys. They were jealous of the history involved. He was a very capable guy and had quite a following of sycophants. His reputation was further denigrated by Roosevelt sending people like Joe Davies over on Special Missions. Joe Davies was one of the biggest idiots I ever met in my life and everybody knew that.

Q: Yes, he was a very wealthy man who had been Ambassador there who portrayed Stalin as a benign ruler.

OLSON: Well, he started showing his would be “Mission to Moscow” in the American Embassy in Moscow and the British Ambassador and all of the other allied Ambassador’s were there to listen to him. After about half a dozen sentences, there were some giggles and pretty soon half of them got up and left. Joe Davies got mad at that point and walked out. He was mad that these people who had walked out on him. I could go on at length about Joe and my relationship with him.

Q: Why don’t we move on. What happened to you? What did you do?

OLSON: In the spring and summer of 1942, I was sent to Murmansk along with a wonderful Naval Officer, Admiral Frankel, then Captain, was holding the fort in Murmansk. In the meantime, they bombed up to 14 times a day from 20 minutes flying time away. They would drop their loads and would come back. I was blown out of bed and the floor above me blown away on one occasion. Happily, there were no injuries.

Q: What was the impression during this period about the American Military community and the survivability of the Soviet Union, by this tie?

OLSON: By that time, Laurence Steinhardt, who had been the Ambassador and the Military Attaché Ivan Yeaton were of the opinion that the German’s would wipe out the Russians. Then came the evacuation of Moscow and they were all counting on that sort of thing happening. Actually when the Russians started to regain control and set off a couple of offensives that were quite successful in changing the atmosphere. Then everybody was pro Soviet, pro Russian and pro victory, and not afraid of losing.

Q: How were you treated as Americans in Murmansk? The British and the Americans were taking tremendous losses in getting to convoys in Murmansk. How were you treated?

OLSON: On the whole, fairly well. Frankel did a great job in Murmansk in gaining support. He was pretty well liked by the Russians up there and those who were right at the front line in effect were generally pro American. We had no great trouble. We didn't have the type of surveillance up there that we had when we were around Moscow. We were treated much better in North Russian than we were in Moscow.

Q: Were you in Murmansk for long?

OLSON: About two months.

Q: And then where?

OLSON: I went back to Moscow. In the meantime, we moved our headquarters in the Military Mission from Kuybyshev, back to Moscow. That was in January 1942. Then I sent off to Tehran, where we had the Persian Gulf Command coming in and I was involved in establishing communications and liaison with our Mission in Moscow.

JAMES MCCARGAR
Vice Consul
Kuybyshev and Moscow (1942-1944)

James McCargar was born in 1920 and raised in San Francisco, California. He received a bachelor's degree from Stanford University in 1941. Mr. McCargar's Foreign Service career included positions in the Dominican Republic, Hungary, Italy, and France. He was interviewed by Charles Kennedy on April 18, 1995.

Q: How did you go to the USSR? Where did you go, and how did this work?

McCARGAR: The U.S. Government chartered a Pan Am Clipper: the four-engine flying boat that was then the transoceanic air transport. The only way that you could get to Russia was through the Middle East and Iran at that point, unless you went on the supply run around the northern tip of Europe into Murmansk, which was deemed too dangerous for everybody -- and shortly was definitively proved to be just that.

So we took off from New York in the chartered Clipper. It was a very interesting bunch of people on board. Louis Fischer, friend of Chicherin, the great Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs during the Twenties, and author of an outstanding history of the Bolshevik Revolution (which I had read at Stanford, and which had made Fischer *persona non grata* to Stalin) was on his way to India to interview Gandhi (Fischer became a great devotee). Maurice Hindus, whose books on collectivization in the Ukraine and southern Russia (*Red Bread, Humanity Uprooted*) was on board. There were a number of military headed to India and China, among them pilots on

their way to Kunming and the “Flying Tigers.” An Army captain who was in fact in OSS -- then called the COI, Coordinator of Information -- who became a lifelong friend. This was very exciting, and instructive, for a young man just starting out.

We refueled in Miami and then Trinidad. As we crossed the mouth of the Amazon (and the equator) the captain executed a sudden drop in altitude, to initiate us as new subjects of Neptune (a peacetime ceremony adapted from ship crossings of the equator that quickly disappeared). Following which one engine went out. We waited one week in Belem for a replacement engine. Parker Hart was Consul there, and I quickly unloaded into his safe the diplomatic pouch which was chained to my wrist, in order to enjoy the sparkling social life then animating this metropolis of the Amazon.

After Belem we refueled again at Natal, and crossed the South Atlantic from there to Fisherman’s Lake in Liberia -- a route that Pan Am had set up under Government contract. The co-pilot on our plane happened to be a Stanford man whom I’d known very well. He told me that when they first laid out the route they flew into Fisherman’s Lake and, as they were about to drop this huge flying boat down onto the lake, they saw all the fishermen in dugouts on the lake leap out of their dugouts and run to shore. They quickly pulled back up for another round at putting the ship down in what they hoped was deeper water.

After Liberia our final Pan Am stop was to be Lagos, in Nigeria. But this was April 1942, and no one knew what the position of the French military in the West African colonies might be. From Liberia we flew south, far out to sea, and then turned east, following at a distance the line of the coast. From off the British colony of the Gold Coast, we had a fighter escort from the British base at Takoradi, which accompanied us until we were past the three French colonies preceding Nigeria, which was, of course, British.

Q: There was still doubt. Vichy was in control there, and de Gaulle was beginning to make some moves, but that was all?

McCARGAR: De Gaulle was in London, and he hadn’t yet made a move into Africa. He had occupied St. Pierre and Miquelon off Newfoundland the previous December, but he had not yet made his unsuccessful attack on Dakar, in Senegal.

Lagos was jammed with refugees from the Far East. Quarters were scarce. Luckily I could bed down at the American Consulate, before taking off the next morning in an American DC3, C-47 in the military terminology. But it took 3 days to cross Africa. There were not yet any navigational aids between southern Nigeria and the Sudan, so the American military didn’t yet fly at night. Where we landed in late afternoon was where we spent the night. Kano, in the grasslands of northern Nigeria was the first stop, then a night at Maiduguri, near French territory. Next we overflew Chad, avoiding the French base at Fort Lamy, then a stop at El Fasher, already in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, but still the Sahara, and then a night in Khartoum.

Q: God, what a part of the world!

McCARGAR: Khartoum looked like the *sumum* of civilization, after the land we had crossed

to get there. I found the southern Sahara terrifying. It's alternately black, red, black-red, and so on. It looks like hell -- Dante's version. I guess it really is if you're on that ground and you don't know how to make your way out.

From Khartoum we made a refueling stop at Wadi Halfa, on the Egyptian border, and from there we finally got to Cairo. There I spent a week waiting for a plane to get me on to Baghdad.

I Finally took off from Cairo in a British Sunderland flying boat. We landed on the Dead Sea in Palestine, which is, as you know, well below sea level. Geologically, historically fascinating, but as a flight it's hair-raising, unless you're well forewarned, which I was not. The plane takes off from the Nile in Cairo and after flying a bit just above the water, it turns to the east. After some desert, still flying at a very low level, suddenly you see on either side of the plane cliffs rise up. You're in between them. The plane is actually descending a ravine into the Dead Sea. The wing tips looking to be but a few feet from each cliff. Absolutely terrifying.

Q: You're going when? What are we talking about - February or March?

McCARGAR: I left New York in April and we're now well into May.

Q: When you were in Cairo, were people talking about Rommel pounding at the gates? Some of his great offenses were mounted about then.

McCARGAR: When I was in Cairo, I went over to Shepherd's Hotel, which was the place to go. And they had just received Rommel's famous telegram reserving a suite. They said he'd be there shortly. Needless to say, this was the talk of the town. Also needless to say, if you've just supposedly recovered from amoebic dysentery, you don't go through Cairo without doing some penance -- "gypsy tummy" they called it there. I was sharing a room at the Carlton Hotel with two officers, South Africans who had just come in on rest and recreation from the Western Desert. They didn't want to talk about it very much, but what they did say was, "This can't go on, the slaughter is too great, its too horrible, and somebody's got to win this Goddamn thing out there one way or another." Of course, Montgomery finally managed it.

Egypt at the time was not exactly welcoming. I was carrying a courier bag, though not a courier letter, since no one thought that nicety necessary at the time. I was traveling with a diplomatic passport, though. The bag was locked to my wrist as I went through Egyptian Customs. The Customs officer, whose general air was that he was not certain he would allow me into Egypt, asked me, "How much money do you have?" I said "That's none of your business." We had a little argument back and forth. I've forgotten what it was that produced his final remark, but he concluded the discussion with the haughty statement, "This is Egypt. We're neutral in this war."

At the Embassy (though I think it was still a Legation) Wally Barbour (later to be our Ambassador to Israel for eleven years), whom I was to see a number of times over future years on East European problems, was the man with whom I dealt. He took the pouch, quite devoid of any of the sense of awe it had originally bestowed on me. It turned out to contain a coding device for the mission in Saudi Arabia. It was a big, heavy, canvas and leather bag; the device inside was no more than a foot long and ten inches wide. Both Wally and I accepted the assumption that it was very urgent.

But to return to the Dead Sea. I found it difficult to realize where I was. After the British military had completed their errands, they managed to lift the plane off the Dead Sea, and we flew on to Habbaniyah.

Q: Which is a major British base near Baghdad.

McCARGAR: Exactly. That is, it was then. Habbaniyah, of course, is a lake. I was deposited on the dock, and the plane went on to the Persian Gulf, India, and as much of the East as was still in friendly hands.

Two Indian Army soldiers offered me a ride into Baghdad from Habbaniyah. It was a long ride. I was, of course, familiar with the recent events in Iraq: the British occupation to block both pan-Arab and pro-German elements and insure Allied control of Mesopotamia. But completely naive in the more worldly sense, I took the frequent smiles and strange language of my armed escorts as standard procedure. My escorts knew better. They dropped me finally at the American Legation -- at which point with hue and cry they demanded to be paid (in dollars). I was baffled as to what to do. At my most indecisive Fraser Wilkins came out and shooed the Indian Army off. I spent just one night at the Legation. The next day I got on a British land plane which flew up to Tehran, where I had to spend quite a bit of time, about 3 weeks.

Q: What was the situation in Tehran as you saw it?

McCARGAR: In Tehran (also still a Legation) Louis Dreyfus was the Minister. He was a kind host, and I went several times to the Residence for meals. You probably know that Residence. I was stunned by it. One cause was the cool stream running through the dining room. Yet another cause for astonishment was my sudden understanding of the poem, "In a Persian Garden." The American Residence was the only one of the great compounds I entered. But it was enough to explain all "Persian gardens." On the way to Tehran you fly over what looks to be burnt land. In the city itself, the same burnt land is all around you. Stark mountains overlooking dry and dusty streets, buildings of the same dusty color. But then you go behind the walls of the great compounds, and enter into a different land, one of beautiful, towering, almost wild greenery. The American Residence thus lay in what looked to the newcomer like a vast park. As I say, the dining room in the American Residence had a little river through it, gurgle, gurgle, cooling you off, absolutely delightful. A great change from the Ferdowsi Hotel, where I stayed. All honor to the great Persian poet -- but not much of a hotel.

The city itself was full of Poles, practically everywhere you went all were Poles. Through an agreement between the Polish Government-in-Exile in London and the Soviets the Polish Army, General Anders commanding, was being formed in Tashkent from Poles scattered all over the Soviet Union after the Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland. Poles who could make their way to Tashkent (and they numbered in the thousands -- except, of course, the thousands murdered at Katyn) assembled there. The survivors and new recruits would then be sent over the mountains to Tehran. From there units were sent to the west, initially to the Western Desert, where they began the long road that would include Monte Cassino. I frequently ate in one or another of the Polish messes, and became duly fond of fruit soup.

When I left Washington, Loy Henderson had asked me to take care of a Polish diplomat on his way to Kuybyshev, who was on the plane the whole trip with us. He was the most morose -- I mean, morose as Poles can get, and I have a high Polish decoration, so I'm high on Poles -- but this was the most morose Pole I ever encountered. Incidentally, after the war he took the wrong turn and went to the Communists. But I took good care of him. The result was that General Anders, who was in town when I got to Tehran --

Q: He was the head of the Polish Army?

McCARGAR: He was the Commander-in-Chief of the Army he was forming. The Commander-in-Chief of all Free Polish forces was General Sikorsky, who was also Prime Minister of the Polish Government-in-Exile in London. The next year General Anders was given command of the Polish 2nd Corps in Italy. But in Tehran in 1942 he invited me to fly into Tashkent with him. I already had a passion for Central Asia, which I've never assuaged, and this was one of those things in life I really wanted to do. I told the General I was most grateful, and I would check with my authorities. I told the American Legation of what I believed to be an extraordinary opportunity. (No Westerner had been in Central Asia since the indomitable Fitzroy Maclean, of the British Embassy, sneaked in there a few years before.) The next thing I knew was a summons from Minister Dreyfus to the Residence. He read me a terrible riot act; "How do you dare?" and all that sort of thing. I only had one other Foreign Service Officer speak to me that way -- Elbridge Durbrow in one of his rages, also about an airplane flight. Dreyfus said Admiral Standley, our Ambassador in Kuybyshev had --

Q: That's where our Embassy had moved because of the German offensive, after they had evacuated Moscow?

McCARGAR: Yes, after a brief period in Kazan. Ambassador Standley's message via Minister Dreyfus was that he wanted me to come by a route that had been planned (though I had not been let in on the plan), and to bring several sacks of mail waiting in Tehran -- and fresh vegetables. So I didn't go to Tashkent. My thanks and regrets to General Anders were genuine.

So, instead of soaring over Khorasan and down into the valleys and plains of the Oxus and Jaxartes, I joined Maurice Hindus, and Alden Haupt, another FSO, with mail and sacks of vegetables, on a Russian airplane to chuff over the Elburz Mountains and down into Azerbaijan. I'd never before or since seen an airplane like that; it had what looked to be corrugated tin sides.

Q: Sort of like the Junkers, the Ford trimotor, or the German standard transport plane?

McCARGAR: Yes. Plus bicycle wheels and a wooden propeller. None of the side panels fit so you got a good bit of fresh air. From Tehran you go up and over the mountains to get down to the Caspian. The plane has to go to about 18 to 19,000 feet. I think the pass is about 16 and a half, 17,000 feet. The pilot and the co-pilot, a woman, (merely noted, nothing against her, but they were rare at that time) had oxygen. The three passengers in the back, the vegetables, and the mail did not have oxygen. So we just conked out. You fell asleep, that was all. When we awoke there we flying over all this green jungle in Azerbaijan, on our way into Baku. So I can't tell you what

lies between Tehran and Baku. I have no idea.

We then had to wait in Baku for about five days while the Russians tried to get us some kind of rail transportation. They finally put us on a train headed for Rostov on the Don. In the middle of the night, when we're half way to Rostov, the Germans captured Rostov. I can't remember if it was the first or second time. The train crew got the word and we screeched to a halt. We then backed up about 180 kilometers to a junction called Tikhoretskaya. A line went from there to Stalingrad. We got off there, in order, as we were instructed by railroad officials, to switch to river transport. This is now late May, early June, and the battle was still 5 months off. Soviet troops were still coming into the city from the south and west.

Q: This was the southern push of the German 1942 offensive?

McCARGAR: It was the early part of it. By late autumn of that year the Germans were on a line that ran from east of Orel (the Soviets had managed to hold onto their traditional artillery manufacturing center of Tula) through Voronezh to Stalingrad, and then south almost to Grozny (now so much in other news). They were on the northern slopes of the Caucasus, and this was when one German patrol climbed Mt. Elburz and planted the Nazi flag there. The whole area through which we had passed after our train left, say, the region of Grozny was in German hands. That push would of course culminate in the Battle of Stalingrad. And it was already on the horizon. On our way to Stalingrad we had to get off the train twice while German aircraft bombed. You just got off the train, lay in a ditch, and when the whistle was blown, got up, boarded the train, and went on.

I took advantage of our one-day stay in Stalingrad to follow the Russian fashion and get myself shaved (not even Russian soldiers shave themselves). It was undeniably one of the worst things that ever happened to me. The young girl engaged in this butchery had a straight razor -- in which even from a distance you could see the nicks in the blade. She'd go down one side, leaning in to follow the line of the cheek, leaving bloody streaks down my cheek with each nick. Anyway, I survived that. Then we got on a ship to go up the Volga to Kuybyshev. You'd be surprised at the name of the ship. It was the "J. V. Stalin." It's capacity was 600 passengers, and we were 3000, mostly Red Army soldiers from the front, on that ship.

We three, with our vegetables and mail, were the only foreigners, and we were given staterooms. But before we could reach our staterooms at night, the officers would order the Red Army soldiers into the passageways in the interior of the ship. They'd have them lie down. Then they'd order a second group to come in and lie down on the top of the first group. And then a third layer would come in and lie down on the top of the second one. Then we were told to walk on them to get to our staterooms. This went on for three nights.

Q: What was your impression looking back on it? A fantastic view of the Soviet Union at the time of its greatest challenge. You were the new boy there, wide-eyed I assume, looking at this thing.

McCARGAR: Well, I was, of course, fascinated by all this. I had a lot of conversations with the Russian soldiers. They were impressive: young, courageous, no trace of discouragement in the face of the continuing German advance. They weren't bothered particularly by the primitive

accommodations for them on the ship. I guess they'd rather be stepped and slept on than be at the front at that moment, anyway. I also remember coming through the Kuban, on the train that took us to Stalingrad. Maurice Hindus had not been in the Soviet Union for, I think, ten years -- not since the success of his earlier books on collectivization: *Humanity Uprooted*, *Red Bread*, and the famine in the Ukraine and the south of Russia that Stalin had instigated.

Q: The elimination of the kulaks?

McCARGAR: Yes. Hindus would look out the train window as we passed by these villages made up of little huts -- looking like adobe -- with grass and straw roofs and a big grass street between them. (In the Kuban they were mostly Cossack villages, the Cossacks not having been among the most preferred citizens during the events of the 1930's.) Hindus kept saying, "This is marvelous. This is the greatest thing I've ever seen. The improvements that they've done here! What a marvel!" Hindus would go on like this at each village. And there I was, looking at what seemed to me great poverty. A very simple kind of life. I didn't know what Hindus was talking about because I hadn't been there in the earlier times. When we got to Kuybyshev, which is a miserable town -

Q: Kuybyshev was south and east of Moscow?

McCARGAR: It's well south. It's below where the Volga, a little bit after Kazan, starts to turn south. It's sort of half way between Gorki (now again Nizhni Novgorod) and Stalingrad (Volgograd) on the Volga. But it's still a long way from Astrakhan and the Caspian. It was called Tsaritsyn before. I think they've given it a new name; either given it a new name or gone back to the old one. It was a miserable town. They'd moved the whole Diplomatic Corps there. The facilities were very primitive. There was a kind of opera house, or central theater, with some kind of entertainment. All the foreigners gathered there, but the trouble was you'd have to go in the dark and come home in the dark. And you could damn well break your leg and your head, because they had potholes in that city that were even greater than anything I've seen in Washington, D.C.

Q: Well, let me tell you. I was in Kyrgyzstan about a year-and-a-half ago and there were 10 foot holes in the sidewalks. I just didn't go out at night because those were on the sidewalk. You'd drop into the sewer. They couldn't afford to have the street lights on - so its scary.

McCARGAR: Well that's what Kuybyshev was like. I spent a couple of weeks there.

Q: Technically, this was our Embassy there, wasn't it?

McCARGAR: Yes, it was our Embassy.

Q: Who was the Ambassador? What were they doing in this out-of-the-way place?

McCARGAR: Our Ambassador was William Standley, a four-star Admiral. He'd been Chief of Naval Operations and was a great pal of FDR. In fact, Standley had brought along as his Naval Attaché, a man named Jack Duncan, who in due course made Admiral. I think Duncan was later made Ambassador to Peru. But he was in Moscow when I was in Kuybyshev. When I came to

know Duncan in Moscow he took pleasure in saying the only reason he was there was that when Admiral Standley was CNO he, Duncan, was in charge of seeing that when the President was on a Navy ship (something he enjoyed very much) the appropriate supplies of gin and vermouth, and whatever else was needed, were aboard ship -- contrary to Naval Regulations.

I was taken to see Admiral Standley. A canny old gentleman, pleasant of manner. When the moment presented itself, I made my respectful protest that he would not let me go to Central Asia. He said "Look, I'm a Navy man, and for us the most important thing in the world is the mail. We haven't been getting our mail here the way we should, and I wanted to try out this new route. That's why I wanted you to come this way through Baku." I said "Yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir." Actually, Standley was a very nice gentleman, even if he didn't care about getting some information on Central Asia. You may recall that, later the next year, he came out with this blast that the Russians were making no recognition of the help they were being given them by the United States. In other words, he was also the feisty type.

The chief person I can remember who was helping him at that moment was Eddie Page, the senior man on the staff there. Eddie was a Russian expert. In fact, earlier that same year he had given me my oral Russian-language exam in Washington. He later served Averell Harriman very effectively as a senior aide. I had occasion to come across him six years later when he was in the Rome Embassy, and then again in the mid-fifties, when he was Consul General in Munich. His final FS post was as Ambassador to Bulgaria.

In Kuybyshev I had one strange encounter. While walking in the street, somebody nudged me and pointed out two chaps walking on the other side of the street. My companion said, "That's the Bulgarian Embassy." You may recall that the Bulgarians remained at peace with the Russians throughout the entire Second World War, until, near the very end, the Russians invaded them. The two Bulgarian diplomats spoke to no one, and no one spoke to them, but they kept up the pretense of relations with Mother Russia. We were not allowed to see any Soviet citizens. Kuybyshev didn't have the facilities for such encounters that Moscow had.

But I did see one person there who always impressed me. He came around to the Embassy, usually in the evenings, when either food or drink, or both, were available. He was a rather famous figure in history. His name was George Andreichin. He was a Bulgarian who had been very prominent in the Comintern. How he had survived until 1942, I don't know. He came in and talked very freely with a lot of us in the Embassy. We assumed he went back and reported whatever he picked up. Eventually Stalin had him executed, in 1947. A very interesting man. He knew a lot of history, and he was not averse to telling it. I was fascinated with all of this.

We had just gotten news of the Soviet custody of the crew of the American aircraft that had landed in the Soviet Primorsk Krai (Maritime Province) after General Doolittle's famous raid on Tokyo in April 1942. All I knew, and was told, was that the crew was being held in a town called Penza, which is about half way between Kuybyshev and Moscow. So I was put on a train -- I confess I was poured onto a train in good Russian style -- and went to Moscow. It took 48 hours. I looked out at Penza, but that really didn't help anything.

I was very excited about getting to Moscow which, even in that grim wartime, had a certain

magnificence to it, a great weight of history. At the beginning I stayed at Spaso House, the Ambassador's Residence. The Embassy in Moscow at that moment consisted of Tommy Thompson, myself, and two clerks, Newt Waddell and another whose name I've forgotten. All four of us lived at Spaso House, as did Captain, later Admiral, Jack Duncan and two Assistant Naval Attachés. The U. S. Military Mission was located right across from the Kremlin in the Mokhovaya building, a part of Moscow University which the U. S. Government rented from the Soviets as our combined Chancellery and staff residence. A very old friend from Stanford, by then a Major in the Army, was on the staff of the Military Mission.

Brigadier-General Philip Faymonville headed the Military Mission. Faymonville was a very controversial character. He was a San Franciscan, and reputed to be held in high regard by the White House -- more narrowly attributed by rumor to mean either Harry Hopkins or Mrs. Roosevelt. As importantly, he was a very close friend of Lavrenti Beria. Not the kind of person you want to be close friends with.

Q: Beria was the head of the KGB, I mean the NKVD?

McCARGAR: NKVD. He was People's Commissar of Internal Affairs (in succession to the murderous Yagoda and Yezhov).

Q: He was the hatchet man.

McCARGAR: Yes, and how! Faymonville was extremely pro-Russian. He wouldn't listen to a word against the Soviet Union, or anything that went on there. This caused a lot of tension.

Q: You talk about the tensions within the American representation in the Soviet Union. I mean, we were having real problems with the Soviets at that time, weren't we? With our allies?

McCARGAR: Well, there was dissatisfaction on Stalin's part. And this constant pressure for the Second Front. The delays until 1944 in the invasion of Western Europe, the 1942 North African and 1943 Italian campaigns were regarded by many high-ranking Russians, both military and political, as diversions, if not actually evidence of an underlying ill-will towards the Soviet Union.

However, FDR and those who were running affairs were giving the Russians every possible aid they could summon. Sometimes even at the cost of other theaters of war. For example, they had built this whole transport and infrastructure system across Iran so that cargoes unloaded at Abadan could go to the southern Soviet border stations. Planes unloaded from ships at the Persian Gulf could be flown off direct to the Russian front by Soviet pilots. From now on the Russians could take the stuff and make use of it.

Actually, while I was in Moscow, it was the time of the great disaster on the Murmansk run. I've forgotten what the exact figures were, but out of a 32-ship convoy from the British Isles, at least 22 went down. It was terrible. From their bases in Arctic Norway the Germans attacked the convoys with airplanes and subs, also with surface vessels. That had a very great effect on us in Moscow. I must say, partly because we all had personal effects (and food and liquor) on those

ships. At that time we were in fact living out of the Kremlin Commissary, and so ate perfectly well. We still had the Chinese servants in Spaso House, and we all, including the Naval Attachés, ate there, except for the Military Mission, who rather remained off to one side. But, even if we did not talk too much about it, none of us underestimated the menace of the German closure of the Northern Route to the Soviet Union.

Q: What was Thompson doing and what were you doing there?

McCARGAR: Thompson was -- well, you had to have somebody in Moscow. Stalin was in Moscow -- after he reappeared following his famous three-day disappearance act when Germany attacked. Tommy was maintaining relations with the Kremlin and those of the leadership -- Molotov, for example -- who were there. We had visitors coming through all the time who had to be taken to the Kremlin. There were messages that bypassed Kuybyshev, or were repeated from there, for destinations in Moscow. There were allies in Moscow -- the British Naval Mission, headed by a very congenial Admiral, and some of their diplomatic staff -- John Russell, among others. And every once in a while Sir Stafford Cripps would drop in. There were others: the Swedes had refused to go to Kuybyshev. All these were part of Tommy's duties.

We made one of the bedrooms at Spaso into a code room, and I slept there. Once we got a message from Laurence Steinhardt in Ankara, where he had been transferred as Ambassador after leaving the Moscow Embassy. It took us half-a-day to decode this missive. It contained an entire list of Steinhardt's belongings which he wanted sent from Moscow to Ankara in wartime. It included, and this is not a joke because I saw it with my own eyes, "a box with string too short to use but too long to throw away." We found that box. To his eternal credit, Newt Waddell was later detached from the Moscow Embassy, and sent down the Volga to Astrakhan with all of Steinhardt's belongings. From there I think he went by ship to Baku, and from there the Russians got him over to Leninakan on the Turkish border. From there Newt and the Steinhardts' boxes and boxes of belongings were trucked to Ankara -- in wartime! This sort of thing made you a little bit nervous.

Q: Was Thompson going in to see Stalin, even though he was pretty low ranking?

McCARGAR: No, he wasn't. He was working through Stalin's Kremlin offices. I don't think he ever went to see him. When Stalin would give a dinner for some visiting American dignitaries, Tommy went. I was too junior to go but Tommy went. Tommy, by that time, was already extremely capable. And he was very astute in avoiding any impression on Ambassador Standley's part that he was usurping his position in any way.

There wasn't a lot of connection with the local citizenry. Of course, there were the correspondents. Practically all of them I got to know quite well, both British and American. There was the sad case of Negley Farson. When I was at Stanford I had read a book by Farson called *Way of A Transgressor*, which greatly impressed me. It was about his urban life, and then his escape for some years to the wilds of Vancouver Island. Obviously, I was eager to meet him, but his colleagues in the news corps advised against it. Apparently he was in great pain from an incurable leg injury, did not want to see anyone, and drank heavily.

When the Germans essayed an air raid on Moscow, I would usually go to Harold King of Reuters' room at the Metropole Hotel, where the correspondents were billeted. Harold, of whom I would later on see a great deal in Paris, had a room with a balcony. The view over the city was splendid, and we would watch the barrage balloons would go up, and listen to the guns. But I never saw any real damage in the heart of Moscow.

At some point, I moved out of Spaso House and into the Mokhovaya building. Years ago, the building went back to the University of Moscow to which it belonged in the first place. It gave a great view of the Kremlin. It was reasonably comfortable. We were all subject to the wiles of the NKVD's "swallows," as the Russians themselves called these young girls who would call you on the phone, the minute -- it didn't matter where you lived -- the minute you moved into one apartment or another. Some girl would be on the phone and she'd want to meet you at the well-known "National corner" -- the corner of Gorki and Mokhovaya Streets, where stood the National Hotel, just down from the main Post Office.

The Russians, being very hierarchical, arranged things in orderly fashion. Top ranks -- but top ranks only -- had access to a ballerina. I was honored with a circus acrobat. These young ladies were very forthright. They'd say "Look, tomorrow I have to go to the NKVD. I've got tell them what you've been doing. What do I tell them?" (I don't mean to be flip about this aspect of wartime life: some Americans were fortunate to make the acquaintance of some extraordinary Russian women, of great talent and character, and even more fortunate to be able to marry them and to get them out of the Soviet Union.) Ultimately, of course, all this changed.

Q: Were you under any particular constraints? Of course, it was completely different in the Cold War. We're talking about the hot war in which the Soviets are on our side.

McCARGAR: Moscow was much easier once the Germans had been driven back. It was much easier than other places. I was told then that the greatest place any of the people who had been in the Moscow Embassy had ever been was Kazan. At the evacuation of Moscow they were first sent to Kazan. The NKVD hadn't had time to get down there, and the citizens of Kazan, a great many of them, were absolutely friendly and delightful. It was like living in a normal city. Then the Embassy staff were sent on to Kuybyshev. By this time the NKVD was there, and the Embassies were squeezed back into their diplomatic ghetto. Moscow was easier until the Diplomatic Corps came back. I don't recall meeting any male Russians in the time I was in Moscow. And I was there for over two months.

Q: What were you doing?

McCARGAR: Coding and decoding, coding and decoding, coding and decoding.

Q: All this was on the one-time pad or was it a strip machine?

McCARGAR: We had a strip board, so-called machine. Nothing mechanical about it. I don't know why they didn't use the one-time pad, but we were on the strip machine. We also had the Gray Book, which I understand was available in any bookstore the world around. There was a lot of administrative work and the Gray Book was easy to do. There was an Air Corps General,

whose name I've forgotten, who came after I'd gone out to the Far East. I was told later he came in and wanted to make a big hit with the Russians. They took him down to Central Asia to show him something. The American General gave the Soviet Air Force in Moscow a strip board so that they could keep in touch while he was in Central Asia.

Q: Wasn't that nice!

McCARGAR: You often wonder.

Q: Did you have the feeling, either in Moscow or in Kuybyshev, (we're talking about the two periods) that the American Embassy was very much engaged or was it pretty much just military aid at that time?

McCARGAR: Oh, no. The Embassy was very much engaged. I don't remember if it was then or little bit later, but, for example, we got queries from the Department. "Do you think that when the Russians reach their former borders that they will get out of the war at that time?" There were a lot of political questions like this that were going back and forth. People in the Department were thinking ahead and the Embassy was getting a lot of queries of this kind. To that extent, they were very useful. Also, through the other diplomatic missions, and this leak and that, the Embassy could pick up quite a bit.

This is the period, incidentally, when Kremlinology got its start. When people learned to figure out what was going on in Russia from these abstruse signs that you got, bird droppings, so to speak, and one thing and another. I remember years later, Walter Stoessel, on his first assignment to Moscow, had to cover the cultural world. And he got onto it. At that point I was back in Washington reading some of these materials. I was struck by the extent to which Walter had caught onto this technique. He could tell you about a performance of "Swan Lake" at the Bolshoi and draw from it the correct political conclusions about what was going on inside the Kremlin. To people who don't know the technique, it seems extremely weird, but it's a perfectly valid thing that worked for a while. It went beyond just looking to see who was on Lenin's Tomb on the First of May or November 7.

Q: I'm told your great analysis of papers, local papers in particular -- who was mentioned, who wasn't mentioned, how often they were mentioned, on what page and things of this nature, were very useful.

McCARGAR: For example, later, the Vladivostok the paper we had -- it was not much of a paper -- but we read it faithfully. We had a Russian woman working at the Consulate General, Ida Borisovna Minovich, our only secretary. A bird-like woman, very bright. She came into my office one day with the paper, and said "Did you see this?" There was the announcement by the Kremlin of a great honor, a medal of some kind, given to a man named Ramzin. If you knew Bolshevik history, this was absolutely astounding. Ramzin, a brilliant engineer, was the head of what they called the *Promyshlennost' Part*, the Industrial Party, which supposedly opposed Stalin and the Bolsheviks in the Thirties. There had been a big show trial of those people. The British got involved in that, not to their benefit. Ramzin then disappeared. It was assumed that he had been executed. He was not. He was put in a laboratory with all the equipment he needed. He

worked throughout the whole war producing what the leadership wanted. He did so well that they publicly decorated him. You could pick up strange things like this all along, which were great insights.

In any event, after my Moscow experience, I got on the Trans-Siberian -- then a 12-day journey from Moscow to Vladivostok. You had to get on with a lot of supplies. I had diplomatic pouches, mail sacks, and boxes and cartons of food. But everyone in the Embassy was after me before I left. The Agricultural Attaché took me aside and said, "You've got to tell me how the corn crop is." I said "I'm a city boy". I'm afraid I wasn't of much use to him. The military, and just about everyone else whispered to me, "You've got to look for the BAM railroad." The BAM railroad branches off from the Trans-Siberian and goes north of Lake Baikal, ending up on the Pacific Ocean, or more properly, Tatar Strait, at, I think, Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, which is just opposite Sakhalin Island. In other words, it's a route much less vulnerable to the Chinese and Japanese. Everyone urged me, "You've got to look at Bodaibo and see if there's a switch leading out to the north from there." Another one that excited everyone was the possibility of a tunnel under the Amur at Khabarovsk. Nobody is going to tell this, but all of us who did this journey leaned out the train window in Bodaibo. Tracks went this way, tracks went that way. How did we know? At Khabarovsk everybody got out and peered into the darkness. What amuses me is, about three years ago, i.e., about 1992, the Russian Government announced the opening of the BAM railroad.

Q: Oh yes. That was a major, and very lengthy, accomplishment.

McCARGAR: Exactly. Here we were fussing about in 1942 and trying to find the damn thing when they had probably advanced only eight kilometers off into the taiga.

Q: I was wondering when you mentioned this. It seems like a time warp because I know this was the great thing of the seventies and eighties.

McCARGAR: But whichever line you cross Russia on, it gives you a very impressive idea of the size of the country. After a week in the same train, you really don't care whether you get there or not.

But there were many interesting things en route besides the BAM railroad. For example, as we got up towards the Urals, towards Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg, of ill-repute) you would see long lines of freight cars filled with people on sidings. These were the refugees from Leningrad (who were only able to be evacuated in mid-winter, across frozen Lake Ladoga). Our train stopped about every hour, I don't why, but that's just the way it was. The train stopped, not necessarily in a station. You'd get out, you'd walk up and down, everybody. On these occasions, if you stopped by one of these sidings where people were living in freight cars, they all wanted to know how the war is going, what is going on. News. They wanted news. Everybody exchanged as much information as they had. Nobody had a great deal, but whatever they had. A little later on, we began to get a different group of people in these freight car sidings. These were the evacuees from the Voronezh area -- the refugees from the 1942 German southern offensive you spoke of. The Russians evacuated, I think, 2 million people from the Voronezh area, which was heavily industrialized. The equipment of all the factories was sent out to Siberia. When I went through

Novosibirsk going east, it was a city, as I recall, of 400-500,000 in 1942. When I came back, a year later, in 1943, there was almost 2 million people living and working in an around Novosibirsk. What was going on was unbelievable.

And, as I mentioned, the sheer size of the country carried its own lesson. I was always very fond of Rachmaninov's music. You know, Rachmaninov, in all the years before the Second World War, would go out once every year to the Polish-Russian border -- the most unattractive part of Russia, near the Pripet Marshes. He'd spend a whole day out there lying on the ground, looking across at Russia, and crying. I began to understand this passion of the Russian people for their land. It began to mean something to me. I could see it. Some parts are very beautiful (though I'm not much for the steppes). But Russia has everything that you want in terms of topography and climate. And I began to understand some of the Russians' seemingly ineradicable feelings for their land.

I also came eventually to understand something else. When I left Russia it was with that very cynical conclusion that one arrives at, which is that people get the kind of government that they deserve. It is an arguable point. But in time, over years of work and changes in our century, I came to take another view. These people among whom I had lived for two years, in exceptional circumstances, were so cowed, so terrified by what Stalin and company were doing to them (at that point we didn't quite yet blame it all on Stalin) that they were paralyzed. The first view denies the existence of evil. The second admits its existence. It was the Bolshevik and Soviet knout -- and, of course, its earlier versions -- that explained the fact that the Russian people would not and could not stand up for themselves against authority.

You know what was the Russian announcement in those days used by the NKVD when they knocked on the door at night to take people away? It was "*Zdyes vlast*," meaning "Here is authority." It didn't say which authority. It didn't say "Here are the police," or "Here is the NKVD." No. "Here is authority." The people did as they were told. As I say, that produced my initial harsh judgment that I came away with after two years there. But in time, after years, that would change. A generation, or more, of dissidents, of intellectuals, of scientists, Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov, countless others, less famed, perhaps, but no less demonstrative of a vigorous individual Russian spirit would produce a more generous, more hopeful basic judgment.

Q: Did you get the feeling, as you looked in Moscow and from the whole trip, that, although tremendous things were being done, there wasn't a very operative system? How did you feel about it? Did things work well?

McCARGAR: Well, they must have worked well somewhere. But they worked with a terribly harsh discipline. For example, the children were working in the factories. Anyone over 12 years of age was working in a factory at that time. Three times late -- execution. For a kid, say a 13-14 year old kid, three times late -- executed. The discipline in the Red Army -- officers had the right to kill the men under their command. (This was traditional, and has been so in the Russian Army for a long time.) There were an enormous number of women serving in the Red Army: the penalty for pregnancy was execution. And so on. The ultimate in terror and discipline. But something was working somewhere. That's for sure.

But let's take Vladivostok. It was then a city of 220,000 people. It could be one of the most beautiful cities on the Pacific Rim. It's typical Pacific Rim: indented bays, forested inlets, mountains rolling down to the sea. And so on. Absolutely lovely. Steep hills, lovely views, all that. But substantially they had gained nothing since the Americans occupied it after the First World War. The Americans built a hospital, they built this, they built that. I had a woman servant, Shura, who was one of the few older inhabitants left in the city. And she would, very shyly, point out "The Americans built that, the Americans built that." But after the Americans left, in 1921-22, the Soviets, in the ensuing twenty years, had built four apartment buildings in town, eight stories high. None of them had running water. If you lived on the eighth floor and you wanted water, you came down to the ground, you pumped the pump and you hauled it up. That was it.

Everything in the city was pretty worn out. Vladivostok's great days were from 1900 to 1910. On the other hand, the port worked well. All investment had gone into the port. You'd go along Lenin Street, and you'd see these very sleek cruisers in the Naval port. The Soviets built only Italian style for their Navy, and their ships had lovely lines.

Q: They still do. They're much nicer than, say, the American or the British, which can be more functional. But I've seen shots of the now-rusting Soviet Fleet and they're beautiful ships.

McCARGAR: The influence of the Italian naval architects. You will recall Stalin's insistence at the end the Second World War on receiving a share of the Italian Fleet.

But to return to Vladivostok, we were really prisoners there. We were allowed to go to the restaurant of a single hotel -- the Chelyuskin, named after the great Soviet polar explorer, but formerly the Versailles (and now given back its original name by its Japanese owners). The clientele was limited to foreigners, high Party functionaries, senior military, etc. The food and vodka was accompanied by the saddest Polish orchestra I have ever heard.

Great parts of the city were closed to us. We couldn't go to the port, for example. We could go outside of town -- towards the north -- on one designated road, but only 19 kilometers. There was a barrier with an armed guard, and we could go no farther. We'd go out sometimes in good weather and have a picnic, just short of the barrier. Always we were followed.

My Stanford friend Major Olson from the Military Mission (later an FSO and Ambassador to Sierra Leone) came out from Moscow in early 1943 to inspect the port. The object was to see if it was capable of handling the amount of Lend-Lease material which it was being planned to send through it (with the Northern Route to Murmansk now abandoned). Olson judged it to be capable. But after listening to our complaints about our isolation in Vladivostok, he said, "Oh, you guys are all exaggerating. We don't get treated that badly in Moscow". So we said, "We'll show you".

We got together seven Americans from the Consulate General: two non-career Vice Consuls, three personnel from the Naval Observer's office (always in civilian clothes), Olson, and myself. (We didn't try to include Angus Ward, the Consul General, who was not one for jokes.) One of us left the building and turned left. From across the street a man emerged and followed him.

Then another American, promptly followed by another NKVD man from across the street. Then another, and so on, until we were a procession of fourteen people, discreetly separated one from the other, trailing through the city in single file. Olson was convinced.

We had a car, a station-wagon, but if we tried to get too clever and dodged the NKVD car that always followed us, we paid. If, after such a success, we would park outside the Chelyuskin and go in for a mild celebration, while we were upstairs the NKVD would puncture our tires with an ice pick. This was no joke because we couldn't possibly get another tire. We did a lot of repair work.

In that restaurant, by the way, we several times saw the brother-in-law of the great black American singer --

Q: Paul Robeson?

McCARGAR: Robeson. I believe the brother-in-law's name was Hunt. He had stayed on in the Soviet Union, and made his living as a wrestler -- what the Russians called "*Franzuski Boks.*" But he would never speak with us. I assume he was scared to. And as a matter of courtesy to him, not to complicate his life, we didn't speak to him.

That was a minor example of what we lived with. A more striking one was provided by a man named Bill Wallace, who came out from Moscow to replace our non-career Vice Consul, Don Nichols. (Wallace had been a Marine in Shanghai before the war. At some point I gather he left the Marine Corps and was taken on the staff of the Shanghai Consulate General.) Come December 1941 he was interned with the rest of our diplomatic and consular personnel, then sent by ship to Lourenço Marques, in Mozambique, for exchange against the Japanese coming from internment in the U. S. But Wallace didn't get on the "Gripsholm" for the rest of the voyage to America. He was sent straight on from Lourenço Marques to Moscow. (In those days when the Moscow Embassy said it wanted personnel, it got them.)

On Wallace's train from Moscow to Vladivostok, there was an absolutely stunning strawberry blond Russian girl on her way to the Soviet Naval Attaché's office in Washington, D.C.. She had to stay in the Chelyuskin Hotel for about a week until her ship sailed. Wallace was also staying in the hotel, until Nichols' quarters in the Consulate General became available. He and the girl were together all the time. Everything seemed happy and pleasant; Wallace was so taken with the girl, and spent so much time with her in that one week, that he had no time to absorb our complaints about life in Vladivostok.

One day we took this girl, along with Olson -- and Wallace, of course -- in the station wagon for a tour of the city -- or of those parts where we could go. One place I knew how to reach was a road on the crest of the range of hills at what was then the northern edge of the city. From there you could see the entire port, the bays, the islands protecting the approaches from the sea, the sea itself.

Sure enough, as we gazed at this splendid panorama, a man in a naval officer's uniform came up to the car, and said, "*Dokumenti,*" meaning, "Show me your papers." I said, "I don't believe we

have to,” and argued with him. He said, “According to Soviet law, an officer in the armed forces may ask anyone, including diplomatic personnel, for their documents at any time.” I don’t recall whether he alleged that this was especially so in wartime. But there were others passing by about. So, in the end, I showed mine, and the others in the car showed theirs. Then Wallace’s beautiful girl, who by now began to realize what was coming, had to show hers. The Navy officer wrote something down and handed her papers back. With a palpable chill in the car, we returned to the Chelyuskin Hotel.

The next morning she was called in by the NKVD, fired from her post in Washington, and sent back to Moscow by the next train. Wallace supported her financially from Vladivostok through friends in the Embassy. Eventually, a year or two later, after he had been transferred to Moscow, they were married. They had a child. But there wasn’t any hope of getting Wallace’s wife, or the child, out of the Soviet Union. The war was over; life, and relations with America, had become even harsher. Wallace’s wife was taken first by the MVD (successor to the NKVD), and the child stayed with the grandmother. Then the grandmother was arrested. With the arrest of the grandmother, Wallace who had meanwhile been transferred from Moscow, never knew what became of his child. I don’t know if Wallace still lives (he left the Service after his next assignment). But this was a typical story of that time.

I know of other situations that I will not mention on this occasion, with happier outcomes -- thanks to greater support from the Department. (Loy Henderson’s departure from Soviet Affairs did not improve matters -- though Chip Bohlen did marvelously well while he was directly in charge). Shortly before I arrived in the Soviet Union, there was one case, an FSO, an especially capable and attractive Officer, who became in due course a very prominent Ambassador. His particular friend in Moscow became pregnant. Accompanied by an Assistant Military Attaché, with an exit visa for the lady, the three headed for Tehran by train. This was before the Germans blocked that route. But on the train, she gave birth. Well, the exit visa was for three adults and here suddenly were three adults and an infant who had been born in the Soviet Union. A very rough problem. The only reason it was resolved in favor of the departure of all four persons was that the Officer got on the telephone to Loy Henderson, and Henderson, discreetly but effectively, exerted the necessary pressure on the Soviets. It worked. They were let out. But it was very exceptional.

Q: What were you doing in Vladivostok?

McCARGAR: Professionally, I issued two visas. One of them was to the father of a very well-known film producer of Russian origin in Hollywood. He later put out a successful film called “Tales of Manhattan.”

Q: That was with Charles Boyer.

McCARGAR: Somehow this producer had gotten to the White House, so the right help came. But as Angus Ward never tired of telling me, “You are personally responsible for these visas.” So I put this poor old gentleman through all the phases of the required interrogation. “Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?” I was not exactly ashamed; this was my sworn duty (said Angus Ward), but it was an occasion I was happy to forget. The victim of all this was

very sweet and very patient. Quietly, he said “I know you have to do this.” As the story came out later, the Soviets tried to blackmail the son with threats about the father, and the son went to the FBI and became an agent against the Soviets. Needless to say, when this all came out, years later, it was with maximum publicity for the producer.

The other one I was not at all happy about. This one came through with direct White House intervention. The visa applicant, who showed up at the Consulate General almost simultaneously with a cabled notification from the Department citing White House interest, was a Spaniard named Jesus Hernandez. He was applying for a transit visa to go to Mexico. Hernandez, as I well knew (from my own studies, not from State Department files) had been the chief Soviet liquidator in Spain during the Civil War there, slaughtering first the POUM, then the Spanish Communist Party itself. I learned more about Hernandez later, and although I knew enough about him at the time, it was pretty clear that if I didn't issue this visa I was going to get into trouble.

Q: Was the security lapse due to Roosevelt?

McCARGAR: That was our assumption. It was not necessarily true. I said the White House was interested in this case. The White House is a big place -- even if it is bigger today, it's connections were legion then. I subsequently came to believe that Mrs. Roosevelt was the sponsor for Hernandez. Not for any sinister reasons or connections on that great lady's part. But someone got to her, and she probably said, “Oh, yes, of course, we should help any victim of the Spanish Civil War.” Since Hernandez's request was for a transit visa, I gave it. He was a very somber type. To ask him, when I knew perfectly well, “Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?” made no sense at all. He knew that I knew what he had done in Spain. He went on to Mexico. There he became one of the chief operators for the NKVD, later MVD and then the KGB (or GRU, Soviet Military Intelligence).

Q: Was he involved in the Trotsky business, or had that happened already?

McCARGAR: No. That had happened already. It was something I had been very interested in. One of my professors at Stanford was a great friend of Trotsky -- or purported to be. Perhaps he was merely a sympathizer. But he returned one autumn from his annual visit to Trotsky in Mexico, at just the time the University was constructing the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace. He told Trotsky about this new institution, and Trotsky said, “That is exactly the way it will be. First war, then revolution, then peace.”

I don't know if you ever knew Bob McGregor? McGregor had been in our Mexico City Embassy charged with contact with Trotsky. He got to Trotsky's villa very shortly the assassin had struck. Trotsky was still alive. He lived for hours after the blow, with the axe in his skull. McGregor had told me all about it in the Department before I went to the Soviet Union. I used to amuse myself going out on the Trans-Siberian with this knowledge. You could talk to people on the train. I remember getting friendly with one chap and saying “By the way, whatever happened to Trotsky?”. The look was either of terror or total ignorance. The name had been absolutely purged from existence, a mere fifteen years after Stalin had bested him in their intra-Party rivalry.

I did come across one small incident that might be of interest. On that train, near Irkutsk, they took on fresh onions. (Mostly, our food in restaurant car was one meal a day, usually *lopsha* soup. *Lopsha* is a pasta, with little grey dots in it. It's revolting. The meal, day after day, was *lopsha* soup, followed by *lopsha*, and that was it.) But at Irkutsk they took on green onions, other delicacies -- and vodka, which was served at the noon meal. In short order, that train was a shambles. I had a cabin in one of those Wagons-Lits cars -- called "*Mezhdunarodniy* (International) class," being above "soft class" and "hard class" -- that had originally belonged to the Belgians (and I think were legally still their property). They were very comfortable, beautifully done. The corridors had been decorated with an occasional bust, or relief, of Lenin, and appropriate quotations or slogan. As I made my way back from the restaurant car my car attendant came along and said, "Come with me." He led me to my compartment, put me in, and locked the door. There was a huge, very handsome Russian who was also in that car, who was apparently out to get "the foreigner" (me) for some reason or other. I remember him having said to me, at one point, loudly and aggressively, "*Ya chistiy russki!*" (I am pure Russian!) He tore that car up including busting the bust of Lenin. They took him off the train at the next stop. I don't know what happened to him.

Q: You were there as a regular Vice Consul, is that right?. In the first place could you talk about the Consulate and also about Angus Ward. I've gotten little vignettes of Angus Ward in Harbin and also in Kabul, but I'd like to get something about him.

McCARGAR: Harbin before the war?

Q: Harbin after the war, when he was arrested by the Chinese.

McCARGAR: As a Vice Consul, besides the two visas that I issued, I also issued crew list visas, covering the crews of the Soviet Merchant Marine then beginning to go to our West Coast for Lend-Lease supplies. I also read the papers, monitored the radio (Vladivostok was a place where radio signals bounced, and one of our duties was frequent monitoring -- of broadcasts almost entirely incomprehensible to most of us), and tried to see as much of the city as I could.

I also performed one consular function that brought echoes from the past. One of the diplomatic pouches I brought out from Moscow contained a request to the Vladivostok Consulate General, forwarded by the Department, from Professor Kyril Brynner, one of my Stanford professors of Russian, asking for copies of the divorce papers of his parents, filed at Vladivostok in, I believe, 1921 or 22.

I was happy to provide this service, and in due course obtained the requested document from the local representative of the *Narkomindel* (Foreign Office). I promptly sent it on by pouch to Washington, for forwarding to Stanford, accompanied by a note to my former professor, stating that in view of the difficulties of wartime correspondence and financial exchange, and with gratitude for his teaching, I had paid the required Consular fee out of my own pocket. It was minimal. But I never heard another word from Brynner. Except that at a lunch with some young Russian Far East specialists (one Navy, one USIA) this year, 1995, I learned to my astonishment that my Professor Brynner was a close relative of the actor, Yul Brynner.

As for Angus Ward, Loy Henderson had spoken to me before I left for Russia. "I'm going to tell you about Angus Ward," he said. "Ward has a terrible temper. He once strangled a dog in Manchuria with his bare hands. Since then he tries to keep himself under control. So watch his temper". He said, "The other thing is that Angus, for one reason or another, is not sending us any political material. We get nothing out of the Vladivostok Consulate." He didn't say what I should do about that. He just mentioned it. Not long after I'd been in Vladivostok, 6 weeks or so, maybe 2 months, Ward went off to Moscow. He needed a little break. He had his wife with him.

Q: His wife was?

McCARGAR: He had a Finnish wife who was very much socially pre-revolutionary Russia. She never, or seldom, talked politics, but it was clear that for her Finland was, at least socially, still the Imperial Grand Duchy.

With Ward away I was left in charge. The first thing I did was to institute a weekly round-up of what was going on in our area. We had a Naval Attaché, in civilian clothes, there at that time with a yeoman and a secretary. We would put together whatever seemed noteworthy: such and such a cruiser is in harbor, this has happened, the paper says this, Comrade Pegov is running for First Secretary of the Krai Party, and so forth. This went on for the whole two months that Ward was gone. When he came back he didn't say a word. But he did not continue the weekly political cable. I got the point that he wasn't happy about my little innovation.

We got along all right. One thing amused me about Ward. He was a Canadian by birth, and a naturalized U. S. citizen. He was furious with Foreign Service Officers who retired abroad. He just couldn't think of anything worse than that. There was at that time a Foreign Service Officer named Washington -- I don't recall his first name, because when I try to I always confuse him with the first elected Mayor of Washington, D.C. But his name was Washington. Ward used to carry on about this man. He said, "Can you imagine, when he retired, he went to --[I can't remember where, but it was not in the United States]!" And Ward would fulminate about this, damning his "disloyal" colleague. Twenty years later, my wife and I spent a year in Spain. We were just leaving to go back to France, and I thought, what the hell. I knew Ward was then living in retirement in Coin, inland from the Costa Brava. So I telephoned Angus and he invited me to lunch. After finding the residence of "El Embajador," as he was known in town, I found Ward and Mrs. Ward in a very expansive layout. I asked him how things were going. He was still working on his Mongolian-English dictionary (that he had been working on twenty years before, that went on forever, and never was published). Anyway, I couldn't resist it, I said "Mr. Ambassador," (he enjoyed the courtesy, as we all would), "Tell me, here you are in Spain and I knew that you'd retired to Virginia. Is there something preferable here?" Both he and his wife came out with the same immediate answer. Very forcefully, they said, "You can't get decent servants in Virginia." So they moved to Spain.

Q: Can you talk a little about Mrs. Ward, because I've heard stories of her as being very difficult.

McCARGAR: She was extremely difficult. I was very careful, but one time I fell afoul of her. There was nothing to do. She asked for the station-wagon to be provided with a driver for some

personal errand that she wanted. It conflicted with something we needed in the Consulate General at that time. In effect, as politely as I could, I refused it. Having explained the circumstances, I said, "Can we do this some other time?" She came down on me. First of all she came in and gave me hell. Then, of course, she got Angus to give me a little bit of hell too. He was less obnoxious than she was. She was really impossible. Otherwise, she could be charming. She made a perfectly marvelous salmon caviar dish. Angus had a couple of little dinghies, and he'd go out on Amur Bay and come back with a salmon, which he'd split it open. She'd do the red caviar -- of which I can never get enough -- with sour cream and onions. Admired, she was in her element at that time. Otherwise, I found her to be a very embittered woman. It was obvious she loathed the Russians, that is, the Bolshevik Russians.

Our other problem was the Japanese Consulate General. The Japanese Consul General's residence was next to Ward's, and their relations couldn't have been worse. Quite apart from the war going on, there was another going on over the fence between them, because Ward's cat would go over to the Japanese side. The Japanese, outraged, would throw the cat back over the fence. And so on, back and forth.

Our only other colleagues were the Chinese. The Chinese Consul General, Chang Da-Tien, was married to a Russian woman. They had a son, Dima, in his early 20's, who later had a very successful career in the Diplomatic Service of Taiwan. He was fluent in Chinese, English, and Russian. He was more fun than the rest. He had a vivacious sense of humor. Of his father's Consulate, Dima said, with much laughter, "We have a staff over there, but they all sit around playing mah jong, and that, of course, is forbidden by the Chinese Government. But they still play mah jong." He also told a story about going up to inspect the Chinese Consulate at Blagoveshchensk, a small, miserable, swampy town way north on the Amur River. Apparently they found their local Consul cowering on a table with water swirling all around the Consulate in one of the frequent floods that inundated the place. They rescued him. Dima was pleasant company and very helpful to us. He relieved some of the tedium.

As for my other duties, I was, of course, coding and decoding.

Q: What about American seamen? Did they get in trouble, go to jail?

McCARGAR: There were no Americans, seamen or any other kind. As I came to know as a naval officer several years later, the only traffic across the North Pacific was Soviet.

Q: That's because of the war with the Japanese. You really couldn't get anything through the Pacific. You were there '42 to '43? What were the signs of the threat of the Japanese? The Guangdong Army at that time (later it switched to the other side) must have been a concern.

McCARGAR: It was indeed. We were very conscious of the Guangdong Army, not many miles away to the west, in neighboring Manchuria. At one point we sat around -- we were instructed to do so, but we already thought we'd better do it for our own sakes -- to elaborate an evacuation plan in case the Japanese struck. That, as the years passed, I realized was one of the more pathetic exercises we ever engaged in. We were totally ignorant: we hadn't the vaguest idea what the terrain was like. Because, if you got out you wanted to get north, through the mountains, or

along the Pacific coast, the Sea of Japan, actually. We had no idea of the terrain, of the facilities, the communications, the road network -- nothing. We were always uneasy about that but there was nothing we could do about it. We had no advice of any sort from the Department nor from Moscow on that subject, or on any other subject for that matter. And, as I said earlier, Vladivostok was a place where radio waves bounced. We were also thus provided with quite a receiver. So we'd sit around, twirl the dial, and write reports of what we thought we heard. This was done for the FBIS which already existed at that time. It kept us occupied. Vladivostok was also a great place for reading. I finally got a shipment through the port that included a box of books (the Soviet Customs were fascinated by Emil Ludwig's biography of Stalin, a staple of the time). I was almost as grateful for the books as for the food that came with them. One of the books, incidentally, was Koestler's *Darkness At Noon*. I lent our secretary, Ida Borisovna Minovich (who was permanently frantic over the possibility that her young son would reach draft age before the war ended). In any event, at her request, I lent her Koestler's novel. Her comment on returning it was, I thought, a masterpiece of diplomacy, considering her circumstances. "You know," she said, "I think if Stalin were to read this [the implication was clear that he would not] he would say, 'This is the truth.'"

I also had a few illnesses while I was there. Scurvy was one, which would years later cost me my teeth much earlier than normal. Then I came down with erysipelas, a streptococcal infection. At first I got it on my left hand. Our medical recourse was something called the *Physiotherapyucheskii Institut*, with a very nice chief physician named Rutkovski. He was great friends with Ward. Erysipelas, sometimes confused today with cellulitis, is not a joke. Woodrow Wilson's (or Coolidge's) son died of it, after a game of tennis at the White House. Rutkovski's reaction was prompt. He came around and he did something I'd never heard of. I was later told by the Navy doctor at the Moscow Embassy, "Jesus, we stopped doing that 50 years ago." The procedure is to take blood out of the infected limb and then jab it in your rear end. It produces a splendid fever, and apparently sets up enough antibodies to dispel the infection. Then I got it in my middle ear, which almost drove me right out of my mind. Sulfa drugs were all there was at that time, and they were very scarce. But they worked.

In the course of this second illness I conceived a great longing for fruit. It was overwhelming. One of my colleagues, a non-career Vice Consul, Don Nichols, the one later relieved by Bill Wallace, had a very well-stocked larder. He came to see me in my apartment, and I said "Don, you pick any can of fruit that you have and I'll give you five dollars for it". And he gave me a can of black cherries, which is still the best fruit I've tasted in my life. Also, he took the five dollars.

When I got my own shipment across the Pacific it included a little phonograph my brother-in-law sent me. I had two records. One of them was Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto -- not all of it, just part. The other was a thing I picked up in Moscow. It was a Jewish folk song called *Dyecyat' Docheri* (Ten Daughters). It was delightful. I played both records night after night and never tired of them.

Q: You went back to Moscow for a while?

McCARGAR: Yes. I was there for about a month the second time.

Q: Had things changed much?

McCARGAR: Enormously.

Q: How about your trip across, was it still the 12 days?

McCARGAR: It was still 12 days. You still had to have your own food and you still had to provide for yourself the best you could. But they didn't get the vodka aboard on this trip so we got through it uneventfully. I must have had 14 mail sacks with me. By the time we got to Moscow I had learned enough about the Soviet Union so, after I unloaded them onto the quai, I summoned a railroad man there and said "I want the *Nachal'nik NKVD*," (the chief of the NKVD), enough to terrorize any citizen in those days. He went off in a great rush and sure enough there came the chief of the NKVD at that railroad station. A nice young officer, cold but very efficient. I identified myself, showed him my passport, and said "I need assistance here. I can't possibly get these out by myself to a taxi". So the orders were given. They all danced around him. In a flash my sacks and I were out of the station alongside a taxi. You learned that that was the way to get things done in the Soviet Union of that day.

One night in Moscow during that second stay -- I had always had a great, and idiotic, desire to see the inside of the Lyublyanka, the prison attached to NKVD headquarters where so many terrible things had taken place -- and so I acted on it.

Q: This is the prison of the NKVD?

McCARGAR: Yes. It was not far from Red Square. The curfew was 11 o'clock and I managed to be out after 11 in Red Square. As I walked past the GOUM department store, towards the National Hotel where I was staying, a Red Army soldier came up and stopped me. I identified myself, and he said "I'm sorry, you're out after the curfew. You've got to come with me". He collected a fair number of people including a two-star general -- a Red Army general, not an NKVD general. There were about a dozen or fifteen of us, and we were marched over to what was apparently a sort of police station in the Lyublyanka, presided over by a young NKVD Captain. He went through each case and when he got to the general, you should have heard what he said to that general. For starters, he said, "General, you're a disgrace to the uniform. You're a disgrace to the Soviet Union. You're a blockhead." And he went on talking this way -- "You know better than to be out after the curfew." The General kept saying, "Yes, but..." trying to explain himself, and getting nowhere. The Captain really gave him hell and sent him off to a cell. In due course we were all relegated to cells, where we spent the night -- but, interestingly enough, not more than three or four to a cell. My cellmates simply accepted the situation and attempted to sleep on the benches or floor. There was a strong atmosphere of misery, nonetheless. The Captain finally called me in from my cell. Stony-faced, he said "I've called your Embassy and they've never heard of you." A typical trick to produce merriment among the colleagues. The next morning somebody admitted that, yes, they did know me, and I was released. The important point was that the speech and attitude of this junior NKVD officer to the General showed precisely the relationship between the NKVD and the Red Army.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

McCARGAR: Standley was still the Ambassador in Moscow.

Q: He'd returned?

McCARGAR: Yes. The whole Embassy -- indeed, the entire Diplomatic Corps -- had moved back up from Kuybyshev. As I told you, coming across the Trans-Siberian, I did notice the changes in cities like Novosibirsk. It was absolutely astounding. Omsk as well. The industry that the Soviets had moved from European Russia -- you could see from the train. The growth of these cities and the work that was being done there was visible. In Moscow the Embassy's facilities were by now full up, and that's why I had to stay in a hotel. The National was all right - - much sought after, in fact. I spent about a month at the National Hotel.

Q: Did you find the work at the Embassy -- were they well connected to the Soviet Government?

McCARGAR: There was still this tension between the Military Mission and the Embassy itself. By then Ambassador Standley had made his famous denunciation of the Russians' non-appreciation and non-mention of American aid and General Faymonville was publicly regretting that. I had a talk with Faymonville, and he asked me about Vladivostok. I told him it was a prison for us, and described how we were treated. I told him who the head of the NKVD in the Primorsk Krai was -- which I never even told Angus Ward, because Angus wasn't interested. But I added that the NKVD head in the Primorsk Krai (Gvishiani -- whose son married Prime Minister Kosygin's daughter years later, and made something of a splash on the international scene) was one of Stalin's Georgian thug friends. I did all this, needless to say, in the hopes that he might confide in Beria in one of their friendly sessions -- though I did not ask it.

But Faymonville said, "Well, you know how it is. Out at the end of the line they get the order. Then they make it much tougher than it really is at the beginning because they want to make sure they're doing the right thing". He was excusing the whole thing. Actually at that time, the great change was taking place. General Dean was being sent out to replace Faymonville -- who, incidentally, was to be reduced in rank. When he went back to the United States, his Brigadier-General's star was taken from him, and he reverted to Colonel. Admiral Standley left a month or two later, and was replaced by Averell Harriman. This was all in the works while I was in Moscow, although I was not told, since it was all still confidential.

Actually, it was Tommy Thompson and I who went out together through Tehran. Tommy was on his way to London for vacation. This was September of 1943. I asked Tommy, "What are you going to London on vacation for?" and he gave a very good answer. He said, "London is the most exciting city in the world to be in at this moment." We dined with friends of his in Tehran, whose names I don't remember. All I remember is that I was humiliated because a Russian in Vladivostok, one of the few I'd encountered at some point there, gave me a bottle of wine, saying proudly, "This is the greatest wine ever made in Russia." So I carried this wine across the whole Soviet Union, down all the way to Tehran. And insisted on providing it for the dinner given by Tommy's Embassy friends in Tehran. We opened it and it was vile stuff. Tommy wouldn't let me forget that. We had to go through Abadan, filled with American equipment

going up the line to the Soviet Union.

Then we flew on from there to Cairo where we had dinner with Alexander Kirk, who was then the Minister. Kirk was a most extraordinary man. I'm surprised there's been so little attention paid to him and his career in the Foreign Service. (When he died, in Colorado, in the eighties, Beatrice Strauss, the daughter of William Phillips, who knew Kirk when her father was Ambassador to Italy, agreed with me that he had been a first-rate diplomat, and insufficiently recognized as such.) First of all, at dinner, Kirk said that he was very proud to have been "a poke in the eye" to all the major governments of the time. He had served in Moscow, Berlin, and Rome at the moment that the Ambassador at each of those posts was withdrawn as a sign of American displeasure, and he was left as Chargé d'Affaires. He was very proud of this.

In some ways Kirk was rather strange. He always wore only grey. I watched him once at a cocktail party. He was a wizard at it. He never gave more than four minutes -- to any such function. He greeted his host, made a few quick turns and was out, because he deplored these social functions. He also made a remark at our dinner with him at the Residence which rested in my mind. The Allies had already gone into Sicily, and I think had begun their assault on the peninsula itself. Apropos of the political problems surrounding these military operations, Kirk, who knew a lot about Italy, said, "I can't imagine who is advising the President on Italian policy but, judging from the results, it must be an Italian".

From Cairo I made my way back, across Africa, then across the South Atlantic. It was a totally different performance from the previous trip across.

Q: How did you get across the Atlantic?

McCARGAR: First of all, it was one straight flight from Cairo to Accra, in the Gold Coast (now Ghana, of course). From Accra we flew, in land planes, to Ascension Island, where the Army engineers had carved the landing strip right through the mountain which makes up most of the island. We fueled there and then flew onto Natal, Brazil. You got a moment's rest and then were put on another plane to Belem, which had a large contingent of American troops there, and had lost a good deal of the colorful life it had manifested two years earlier. From there we were loaded onto a C-46 (a Curtiss-Wright plane which was reputed, no doubt wrongly -- we hoped -- to lose its wings in turbulent weather), and that plane just kept going forever and ever until we got to Miami.

There I got a quick lesson in the difference between being a diplomat abroad and one at home. The Customs inspector said to me -- mind you, we were all pretty exhausted -- "Open your bag." I said, "Do I have to do that?" and he said, "Well, who are you?" I answered, I thought in a normal way, "I'm Third Secretary of the American Embassy in Moscow." He said, "What?" So a little more loudly I repeated myself. He then said, "I didn't get you -- you're what?" This time I gave it full force. "Third Secretary of the American Embassy in Moscow!" He looked at me and said, "That's slicing it sort of thin, isn't it?"

Q: I wonder if we could stop at this point and pick it up next time?

McCARGAR: A week after I came back from the Soviet Union I was examined in Bethesda Naval Hospital. Then I was summoned to an interview with Howland Shaw. I went into the Assistant Secretary's office (it overlooked the West Wing of the White House, that alone being enough to impress anyone). There was Shaw, handsome as ever, and affable. "Well, Mr. McCargar," he said, in a markedly sympathetic fashion, "tell me about Vladivostok." One can be so stupid sometimes. (Some years later, remembering this exchange with Howland Shaw, I delighted in one of Dean Acheson's comments in an essay, in which he explained the attraction of cabinet-making to him: "It is a steady reminder of how stupid one can really be," he wrote).

I told Assistant Secretary Shaw that Vladivostok was a prison. I tried to explain the frustration of living in a city of 220,000 people, and not be able to touch anyone of them, to touch the life of the city, to be a part of it. I went on in this vein and got it all off my chest. Shaw, now looking more magisterial than sympathetic, said, "Oh, come, come, Mr. McCargar, you can't go through life being that sensitive." To which he added, after a brief pause, "After all, you *were* saving money."

This was a sore rebuff for me. I might as well add now that I got my own back while at my next post -- Santo Domingo. My first Ambassador there was Avra Warren, who taught me a lot about politics. At one point I told him, "Look, I've got all of this material that I learned about the Soviet Far East. What I want to do is send it to the Department. That's where it'll be useful. It's no good just sitting in my brain". Warren said, "You'd better be very careful about this. What you do is, you write to Chip Bohlen. You say that you have this material. Would he like it? If you get a letter from him asking you for it, then you're covered". I was learning. So that's exactly what I did, sending Bohlen the Table of Contents.

Q: Chip Bohlen was doing what at that time?

McCARGAR: Chip was the Russian Desk Officer. He'd taken Loy Henderson's place, Loy having been exiled, as I recall, as Minister to Iraq, being one of those regarded by the White House at the time as too anti-Soviet.

In any event, Bohlen wrote back saying he would like to see my report. I had written the report, and had showed it to Ambassador Warren. His comment was, "You really do want to get into trouble, don't you?" I sent the report to Bohlen. It was titled *General Political Conditions in the Primorsk Krai, August 1942 to August 1943*, and ran 23 pages single-spaced (the old State Department long pages). I told everything I knew, which was a lot more than Angus Ward had ever conveyed to anyone. I sent it to Washington on March 7, 1944. In May I received a letter dated the 11th, signed by Dean Acheson, which said, "The Department is pleased to advise you that, because of its interest in the subject and of the value of the information contained in your memorandum, it has been given a rating of "Excellent". Your industry and initiative in preparing it are commended." It was a nice ending to that circle.

Q: Wasn't that nice. Wasn't that wonderful. You were going to describe the Consulate General at Vladivostok and the city itself.

McCARGAR: Yes. The Consulate General, during the love affair between Hitler and Stalin, had

been the German Consulate General. When that fell apart, the Americans latched on to the building right away and Angus Ward was sent out from Moscow in 1941 to open the office. Prior to that, in late 1939, Angus had been sent, during the confused period of the Russo-German partition of Poland, to the Lvov region to help Americans caught in the turmoil. There were a lot of American citizens in southeastern Poland -- Volhynia, Podolia, lands that would end up being, not in Poland, but in the Soviet Union (and ultimately in Ukraine!). Among those Ward found was a young man named Tony Lapka, an American citizen by birth (although I think his residence in the United States had been minimal). Ward took Lapka on as a U. S. Government employee, used him as a kind of handy man in Lvov and Moscow, and then took him on out to Vladivostok. It was Lapka who tried to keep the place more or less going physically.

The Consulate General was on Tigrovaya Ulitsa, which is Tiger street. It was so named because sometime in 1910, or between 1900 and 1910, somebody saw a tiger, a Siberian tiger, on that street. I understand there are very few of those Siberian tigers left. I never saw one. Tiger Street, like much of the city, was a steep hill. To the south of the Consulate General, going uphill, the street went along the west side of a ridge running north and south which formed, on its opposite, eastern side one edge of the *Zolotoi Rog*, the Golden Horn, the inner harbor of Vladivostok. The shape and formation of Vladivostok's Golden Horn is remarkably similar to that of its Istanbul namesake. It must have excited the imagination of the first Russian officer to look on it. The part of the Golden Horn before and at the bend was the commercial port. Beyond that was the naval port. Both were forbidden to us.

If we went downhill from the entrance to the Consulate General, the first cross street we came to was Leninskaya Ulitsa, at the corner of which was the Chelyuskin Hotel, locus of our social life. If you continued straight ahead on Tiger Street, it went down to a small inlet of Amur Bay (where Ward kept his boats), on the edge of which was what was still known as the Kitaiskiy Rinok -- the Chinese Market. It was a free market bazaar, permitted by the authorities. The real currency of the day was vodka -- one bottle of vodka, a pair of shoes.

If you turned to the right from Tiger Street, and went along Lenin Street past the Chelyuskin, you passed, in sequence, the Zolotoi Rog Hotel, with a nearby theater, in a side street, the local department store on the left, then a movie house, then the commercial port, and, past the naval port, the House of Culture and Rest of the Pacific Ocean Fleet. We sometimes went to public dances in a garden there in summer. We were not allowed in any of these local landmarks, the Fleet's Culture and Rest garden excepted. For the department store, or the movie house, we were obliged to write a letter to the Diplomatic Agent of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, who would then issue us tickets or passes, as might be the case. The citizens of the town, of course, had free access to all these oases -- except the ports.

I should also mention that, as far as the citizens of Vladivostok were concerned, there had been a tremendous upheaval in the years 1936, 1937, and 1938. The Koreans were moved out first. Then -- a major blow to the life of the city -- the Chinese had been moved out. It was the Chinese who provided the fresh vegetables and were, above all, the carriers of water from the pumps at street level, up the hills to the houses and apartments without running water. Then most of the population was moved out, the Russian population, that is, and replaced with Ukrainian deportees. There were a lot of Ukrainians in the city. There were a few old residents, but not

many. This was part of Stalin's moving populations around and leaving them in odd places where they were not familiar with the terrain or anything else. So that was the city -- which did boast, on another main street at right angles to Lenin Street, a main Post Office, and, further up the hill, the city's Park of Culture and Rest, which included a parachute jump -- a sport then much in vogue.

We made no use of the department store (except once, when Ward and I went there with official permission, to counter a report spreading in the city that a shipment of shoes, which fell apart after one wearing, were American; we established that they were Argentine, and then made our point loudly.) We were allowed, once as I recall, to attend entertainment at the theater near the Zolotoi Rog Hotel. While the occasion was not without the usual *agitprop* trimmings, they were reasonable enough for wartime, and the performance was first-rate. The star was an Uzbek singer and dancer, Tamara Khanum, who was also a Captain in the Red Army, a member of the Uzbek Supreme Soviet, and of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet. She was accompanied by a stringed instrument, and by a Central Asian instrument called a *bubnya*, almost identical to a tambourine. Tamara Khanum appeared in Red Army uniform, and when she bowed to the audience, her long black hair falling in plaits on either side of her side, next to the brilliant gold shoulder boards of her military rank (the Tsarist epaulettes and ranks had only recently been restored to the Soviet Armed Forces by Stalin) the effect was impressive. But the most impressive was the *bubnya* player. At intervals, he would toss his instrument to the top of the proscenium arch, and as it fell back down he would catch it in his right hand, between his thumb and forefinger, simultaneously slapping the stretched skin of the instrument with his four fingers, producing a cataclysmic bang that almost shook the theater. The audience loved it, and so did I.

Until the next day, when we were received by the three artists in their rooms at the Chelyuskin. Tamara Khanum radiated presence and charm, and quickly introduced her colleagues. The *bubnya* player gave me a big smile, and, knowing what was coming, proffered his right hand. I shook it -- and, crying out with pain, wondered if I could ever use my right hand again. The man had a muscle between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand that was more like a biceps. Hence the cataclysmic bang.

In the Consulate General, the furnace was in the basement. On the first floor, on the right, were four rooms: one was Ward's office, one was my office, just outside Ward's, another was the non-career Vice Consul's, and then a small office near the entrance for Ida Borisovna, the Russian secretary. Across the hallway was the Naval Observer's office, who, as I said before, was in civilian clothes. He had a yeoman and a secretary. (I think that the secretary, Irene Matusis, came to a bad end. As I recall, she had been born in New York in 1914 of Russian parents, who subsequently returned. As a dual national the Soviets refused all representations in her behalf by the Moscow Embassy. After her arrest by the Soviets in 1947, she was sentenced to three to five years in a labor camp.) The building's second floor had two apartments, one for each of the Vice Consuls, with a steep garden behind, used mostly for drying laundry in good weather.

To give you a bit of the flavor, so far as I know, there are few survivors of the staff of the Consulate General of the 1941-1947 period. Ward's successor, O. Edmund Clubb (whose real interest was China) died several years ago. He was the last Consul General. After Clubb departed in 1946, Vladivostok was staffed by personnel from Moscow, assigned for six-months periods.

The Consulate General was finally closed in August 1948 -- as the Soviets closed their Consulates General in New York and San Francisco. There has been a story circulated all these years which, even if apocryphal, gives the flavor of American life in Vladivostok in those days. It is that as the Russians invaded Manchuria (and the northernmost Kurile Island, Paramushiro) in August 1945, the Diplomatic Agent of the (by then) Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned an officer from the American Consulate General to protest that the Americans were signaling to the Japanese across the bay, and that they must cease immediately. According to the story, the American officer who was told this, after the Americans had fought for four years across the Pacific to Japan itself, was so infuriated that it affected him physically. But, of course, this was the sort of thing that we went through all the time out there.

Q: You had mentioned the reason why you were moved out of Vladivostok, and why Tommy Thompson] accompanied you out of the Soviet Union. Why don't we talk a little about that to catch the flavor of the old Foreign Service?

McCARGAR: This had to do with our social life, not our professional life. Ward had Mrs. Ward, but the rest of us were quite alone. As one person put it some years later, he said, with fairly good humor, "Oh, Vladivostok was a series of one night stands four months apart".

There were two instances of the cost of mixing with Soviet citizens of which I had personal knowledge. We always flirted with the waitresses in the Chelyuskin restaurant, who were responsive and always joked with us. One of the waitresses, a very pretty girl who had a small son, one night asked me to go to the movies with her. Her name was Valya. I said, "Valya, I can't do that. I have to ask permission to go the *kino*." She was very offended, not at me, but that any such thing should be possible. She said, "I am a Soviet citizen, and if I want to invite you to go the movies with me, I can do so." So I went. The film was "One Hundred Men and A Girl," starring Deanna Durbin. You had to see the Russian subtitles on the screen to see what the *agitprop* people could do with a relatively silly movie, designed mainly to give Miss Durbin a chance to sing. The bloodstained capitalists were grinding this lovely young girl and an entire symphony orchestra into misery.

It was mid-winter, the theater smelled something awful (no one removed his or her coat in a Russian theater in cold weather, since there was no heat). So, when at last the show was over, I walked Valya home, which meant going straight up a mountain. We parted at her doorway and I slid back down to Lenin Street and home. At 5 or 6 the next morning, she was arrested. She and her child were taken away. They were sent, I later found out, to a concentration camp near Khabarovsk. Then they were relocated to Novosibirsk. It was put in their dossier that they, she and her child, could never go again to the Primorsk Krai. Not even to visit.

Lapka, whom I spoke of earlier, our handy man, had made a courier trip to Moscow. He was coming back on the Trans-Siberian, in July 1943, and the train stopped in Novosibirsk. He got out to walk around (you'd go crazy if you didn't). And there was Valya, whom he also knew. He told her that I'd be leaving Vladivostok shortly for Moscow. In other words, I would be coming through Novosibirsk. So when I did leave, in August of 1943, the train stopped at 4 in the morning in Novosibirsk. I got out into this cavernous railroad station and there, close to a pillar, was Valya. She had been waiting all night, using as an excuse that she was waiting for the train

to her village, some distance outside the city. She'd been watching the Moscow-bound train for a couple of weeks. A deeply touching moment, not to be forgotten. It belies what I said earlier about people getting the government they deserve. But cases like hers were very rare, no question. That kind of courage. I'd met her in the middle of winter and there was that brief and -- as the saying goes -- one innocent evening.

Later on, as summer broke out, and we all emerged from that dreadful icy cold (there was little snow in Vladivostok, almost all was blown away by the wild, icy wind that came straight out of Manchuria to the west), Bill Wallace and I went one night to the House of Culture and Rest of the Pacific Ocean Fleet, where they had a little orchestra playing in the garden. There was dancing and we saw two pretty girls. We invited them to dance and we all got along famously. My memory is not exactly clear whether it was that night, but I think it was that night -- we all went back to the Consulate General, the four of us. The ladies spent the night, and either they were concerned about leaving, because of the NKVD watching across the street, or we explained to them that they should be. We therefore lifted them over the fence in the back of the building, and the NKVD never saw them. I am not certain, but I think we had two more weekends, one including even a picnic out near the 19th kilometer barricade. Afterwards they came again to the Consulate General. This produced an absolute uproar.

On Monday morning, perhaps even Monday afternoon, these girls were still upstairs in the bedrooms. Ward returned to his office from a visit to the Diplomatic Agent -- a career Soviet diplomat named Dyukarev (his young wife had died some months earlier; I last noted, years later, that he was Soviet Consul General in Milan). Ward had constant arguments with him. For example, one of their favorite arguments was about corn. Corn, in the Russian view, is not fit for human consumption. It is for pigs, at best cattle. Ward would say "You don't know what you're talking about. American corn..." etc, etc. This is the kind of relationship the two had. On that particular day Ward had apparently just made some marvelous point that humiliated the Russian. At that point Dyukarev punctured his bubble. He said "Oh, by the way, Mr. Ward, I must protest against your permitting Soviet citizens to establish residence in the American Consulate General. That is not within your rights." Ward was stunned. "What are you talking about?" he said. Dyukarev answered, "There are two Soviet citizens living on the top floor there." (During that particular weekend, the NKVD, which could accomplish miracles in wartime, had, without stepping on our property, installed very strong searchlights all around our building. No more surreptitious exits over the back fence. And they shone right into our windows. Typical NKVD hospitality, but since Ward didn't sleep in the Consulate General he hadn't noticed them.)

Ward returned to the office in a fury. He called me in and said something about "Is there a girl?" I said "Yes, there's a girl," and he said "Get her out!" Then he called in Wallace, who said "Yes, there's a girl," but in a tone that implied "So what?" Ward said, "She's established residence and that's illegal". Wallace said, "Residence? She doesn't even have a change of skivvies! What are you talking about?" Ward said, "Get her out!" So the ladies were let out and were arrested. Actually, I'm not sure if the girl that was with Wallace was arrested. The girl who was with me was named Tamara (her family were Party members, and she worked in the port; blonde and blue-eyed, she once told me that her correct name was Tamisa Shakhilai -- an unusual name that I find ethnically clueless). She was arrested. She was let out, we saw some more of each other, and then she told me that she was pregnant. Then she disappeared, and her friend got word to

Wallace that Tamara had been sent to a collective farm outside of Vladivostok. Gvishiani, the NKVD chief of the Krai (she told me she had been taken to see him), was obviously playing a potentially clever game.

So I asked Ward's permission to call on the Diplomatic Agent. I didn't tell him what it was about. I said it was a personal matter that I wanted to discuss with Dyukarev. Ward gave me permission, with no inquiries. Once received, I said to the Diplomatic Agent that I wanted Tamara released. He said, "Why are you interfering in our affairs?" and added some very derogatory remarks about our two female guests. I said, "I don't want the mother of my child working on the collective farm out there." "Oh", he said, "that's different." He woke up and took great interest at that point. "Well, then," he said, "I think we ought to make some arrangement here whereby you're responsible for the support of the child," and so forth. I answered, "I'll take care of that myself," and we parted. The girl was brought back to town and was allowed to see me, but they gave her an abortion. She didn't actually tell me that but I found out. They put her in a clinic in Vladivostok, where I visited her, gave her an abortion, and then let her out again. (Actually, four months after my departure I had a letter from Wallace saying he had seen her as a dancer on the stage of the theater near the Zolotoi Rog Hotel.)

I was very careful to tell Ward exactly what had transpired. After a day or so he started figuring out all kinds of complicated plots to fool the Russians. I said "Look, it's not necessary. I'm just not going to do anything about this, that's all. They're not going to get anything out of me. I'm not going to sign anything, and I'm not going to talk to them again about it." At which time (Ward having done his own coding), word came in of my transfer to the Department, via Moscow. A week or so later I left. Tamara spent my last night in my apartment, and the next morning Dima Chang, the Chinese, sneaked her out so that Ward wouldn't see (the NKVD across the street obviously did), took her to the station, and put her on the Moscow train in my compartment. She rode out 19 kilometers with me, and we parted, she to get the local back to town. It was all very dramatic.

This goes back to what I told you earlier about Loy Henderson. Loy had said to me in Washington before I left, "You tell us if you get into any kind of a jam with women there. We will get you out and nothing will appear in your record." That word was kept. Nobody in the Foreign Service, or elsewhere in the Government has ever mentioned this to me. Nothing ever appeared in my record that I know of -- assuming that Foreign Service Personnel were later obeying the Foreign Service Act of 1947, and showing me everything. I later received at least ten or a dozen Top Secret clearances, going into the middle 1980s. The question never arose. Henderson, and people like him, were men of their word.

Q: You mentioned that Tommy Thompson accompanied you partly to make sure that you got out?

McCARGAR: Yes. That was the whole point. In fact, I had to wait around for quite some time in Moscow. I fell ill so there was no great problem in waiting for Tommy's leave to come up so he could accompany me. While ill, incidentally, a young Russian lady whom I had known in Moscow in 1942, officially a Russian-language teacher for the Embassy staff, but also in 1943 the *maitresse-en-titre* of one of the Assistant Naval Attachés, came to see me in my room at the

National Hotel. She asked me about Vladivostok. Certain that the room was bugged, I gave her the whole story, at length. Among other things I complained about the *very* comfortable residence in Tiger Street, with full domestic staff, provided to Comrade Pegov, First Secretary of the Krai Party -- a luxury I contrasted with that of the city's workers, who were on very short rations indeed. She listened, and finally, with a smile, she said, "You are more Communist than Stalin."

I think much of all this helps to point out why the State Department personnel, at least those who had served in Moscow, or Kuybyshev, or Vladivostok, had a very definite anti-Soviet bias (but not an anti-Russian bias). The officers that served there came away from this experience of Soviet treatment in the midst of a major war in which we were supplying them with all sorts of things and they were our allies with unavoidable resentment. For those in the State Department who knew, the experience on the ground was that we were basically being treated like enemies. As the revisionist historians get into all this, they should get a feel for the atmosphere at the time, and for how the Soviets operated.

Much of this led to other aspects of my later career which we'll be going into. That is to say, if you worked for the American Embassy or the American Consulate General in the time of Stalin in the Soviet Union (of course it was true even under his successors but particularly so under Stalin), you learned very quickly that the only methods which would help you to get your work done were clandestine. Open diplomacy? -- forget it.

JOHN F. MELBY
Generalist and Acting Director, Office of War Information
Moscow (1943-1945)

John F. Melby was born in Oregon in 1913. He received a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan and a master's degree and doctorate degree from the University of Chicago. He entered the Foreign Service in 1937. His career included positions in Mexico, Venezuela, the Soviet Union, and China. He was interviewed in June of 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well, how does one go to Moscow? This was 1943. We're at war with Japan and Germany. And our ally Moscow, while not under siege, the war is still very iffy.

MELBY: Yes, it is. My route of march was long when planes didn't fly as far and as fast in those days. So I went to Miami, to British Guyana, mouth of the Amazon to Belem. Recife in Brazil, across the Atlantic to Liberia, to what was then the Gold Coast, now called Ghana. At the time I was leaving, suddenly Litvinov, the Soviet ambassador, was recalled to Moscow, without warning, without even saying goodbye. The White House gave me a pass to try and catch him. Well, he was moving so fast, I never did catch him. I got as far as Ghana and I was exhausted. So I gave up trying to catch him. And I sat on the beaches of Africa for ten days and recuperated.

Then we went over to Khartoum, Cairo, Tel Aviv, Basra, the Persian Gulf, and Tehran. And then

up across the Caucasus, across Caspian Sea, to Kuybyshev, which still had some of the American embassy.

Q: That's where the capital and pretty much the whole government had been moved after the major assault in November or December of 1941.

MELBY: But by the time I got there, most embassies had moved back. We just had the remnants of an office in Kuybyshev, in the Urals. Warwick Perkins was in charge of the office, he and a couple of clerks. That was about it. Then I went from Kuybyshev into Moscow.

Q: What was your job in Moscow?

MELBY: I never really had much of a job because the embassy was badly over-staffed. And it was done deliberately because nobody knew whether the Germans were going to break through at Stalingrad. And the embassy would be cut off.

Q: The siege of Stalingrad was going on at this time, wasn't it?

MELBY: Yes. When we flew in, we came over the Elburz mountains and stopped in Baku for breakfast. And then we had to fly at almost ground level up to Kuybyshev to avoid detection from German planes. We were that close to Stalingrad. For the first few months -- Admiral Standley left shortly after I got there -- I overlapped him by only a few weeks. He never returned.

I'd moved into Spaso house, which was the ambassador's residence. I stayed there the whole time I was in Moscow. Harriman came as ambassador after the Moscow conference of foreign ministers. He came with Hull and the others. And he stayed, of course, and became the ambassador.

Q: Were you working in the political or economic sections, or AID?

MELBY: I didn't really do much of anything. I worked part of the time in the code room. We were all taking our turn doing that. Max Hamilton was chargé d'affaires when the admiral left. And he didn't know how long he was going to be there or who was going to replace Standley.

There was a huge military mission there. And all the Russians were interested in was the military affairs. We had no part of that, really. So I didn't have much of anything to do, and neither did anybody else.

Then, when Harriman came in November of 1943, he brought with him Sam Speiwak who had to open up an OWI office.

Q: OWI means Office of War Information. It later was turned into USIA.

MELBY: USIA is abroad; OWI when it's at home.

Sam Speiwak came to be the head of the office. Well, it was quite clear when Sam got there that

he wasn't going to stay. And, in fact, he took one look -- he came originally from the Ukraine. I think one reason he had taken the job was his mother still lived in the Ukraine. And I guess that was the reason Averell brought him. Thought he spoke Russian, would be interested. Sam got sick as soon as he got there and the few weeks he was there, before he went back to Washington on consultation, mostly I sat around talking to him. He sat and he just stayed in bed. We had a leak in the ceiling, and he had an umbrella over his head to keep the water and rain off. It was a very entertaining period. We all knew that Sam wasn't coming back. So Averell asked me to take over the office. And for a year, I was the acting director of OWI in Moscow.

Q: So, here you were, chief information person. What could you do? Obviously, you must have been under tremendous constraints. Soviet society was --

MELBY: Surprisingly, no, not at this time. We did the usual function of press releases and so on. There wasn't any censorship involved. The primary job that we had to do was -- Averell's daughter and I, she went to work for me. She had been working for Newsweek in London, and she came with him to be his hostess. Because his wife never came out to Moscow. We had permission to publish a magazine in Moscow called America. Which was the glossy job of all time. It made Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, all the rest of them, look like cheap publications.

Q: Where did you get the equipment to do all this?

MELBY: It was all done in the States. It was the most complicated business. The text was all written in the States. It was cabled out to Moscow. We translated it into Russian. It was then cabled back in Russian to Washington -- because Washington Russian was still Czarist Russian, not Soviet Russian. So we had a lot of changes. It was printed in the states, and shipped out. And it was a very expensive, glossy job.

Q: Well, when you say shipped out, we're talking still about a time when we were having a hell-of-a-time getting convoys through to Murmansk and taking tremendous losses. And part of this was getting this magazine?

MELBY: It was the most popular item ever put out in the Soviet Union. Distribution was about 50,000 copies, and they were all gone before they arrived.

Q: Well, then we're not talking about something that wasn't without value.

MELBY: It was enormously valuable. That and the Sears Roebuck catalog were the most valuable pieces of literature ever distributed in the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you have much reason to call for what the line should be? Or what we were trying to do?

MELBY: No, we had lots of ideas about what should be in it. Washington listened, too.

Q: What were we particularly trying to emphasize about the United States in this popular magazine?

MELBY: Trying to show American life as it was. It was no snow-job at all. Russians didn't believe a lot of the stuff we published. I remember we had one particular item, photographs of River Rouge plant, a Ford plant.

Q: This was at that time a bomber plant, wasn't it?

MELBY: But the shot was of the workers' parking lot. These thousands of automobiles parked there. And the Russians didn't believe those were owned by the workers. They said, "No, this is a fake shot! It can't be true in the land of capitalism."

Q: Did you have any contacts with Soviet officialdom or with Russians?

MELBY: I had a great deal. Of course, we worked for the press office and the foreign office.

Q: Did they have any problems with what we were putting out?

MELBY: Not particularly. We had no trouble with that. In fact, when I finally ended up in China after the San Francisco conference, who should be the new Soviet ambassador in Chungking but the man who'd been head of the press office in the foreign office in Moscow, who was a good friend of mine, A. A. Petrov. And his staff, most of them I'd known in Moscow, too. So it was a sort of old home week for me.

Q: So there was real allied loyalty, at least at your level. What was Harriman like, as a boss?

MELBY: Well, I thought he was pretty good. He had a few misconceptions to get over. When he arrived, he thought he was going to deal with Stalin as he had with Churchill. He was just going to spend weekends at Stalin's dacha, wherever that would be. And it was going to be "Joe" and "Ave" and so on. And, as it turned out, Harriman didn't even see Stalin for weeks. It took him a long time before he could present his credentials. Stalin was a busy man, and he wasn't about to sit around and gossip with one of these upstart ambassadors. Averell never did have anything but correct, pleasant relations -- but he got along with Stalin all right.

He used to have to see Stalin when it suited his purposes, which was usually after midnight. Of course, Stalin went to work at midnight. And then he worked all night, the rest of the night. Slept all day. It was a kind of an irregular life. But if the Russians wanted to live that way, that was their business. After all, it was their country.

So, Harriman never got to know anybody. I mean, he knew Molotov, the foreign minister, but it was strictly on a very formal basis.

Q: How was he as a boss? Did he give you a difficult time? Was he a difficult person to work for?

MELBY: Not at all. He was very easy to work for. He liked the Foreign Service, appreciated it. He had great respect for language officers we had there. I was not one. He enjoyed Kennan and got along well. Thompson, the others.

He was a man with a lot of peculiarities and strange mannerisms sometimes. He very seldom went to the chancery. He set up his office in his own bedroom. He had a huge bedroom in Spaso, and he worked there. He went down to the chancery only once a month or every other week. So he never had his office in the chancery, which was right on Red Square in those days.

Q: George Kennan was the deputy chief of mission at that time?

MELBY: That's right. He was Minister-Counselor

Q: How did you find him?

MELBY: George and I never hit it off particularly well. I think he thought I was not a language officer. He didn't think I was making much progress on learning Russian. He thought I made a better newspaperman than I did a Foreign Service officer. I finally got around to seeing an efficiency report he once submitted on me, that I should never have seen, and I did, under the Freedom of Information Act. In it he said that he thought I would probably be more at home as a newspaperman, but that I undoubtedly had qualities which were enough to warrant keeping me on. It wasn't worth the trouble to get rid of me. And I never did become a language officer.

Q: Well, we're talking about someone assigned in a hurry, rather than taking a couple of years off. The Kennans and the Thompsons had about three years in which they were -- in war time, you go to a post and you don't have that time.

MELBY: I didn't have any difficulties with George.

Q: No, but you found him sort of aloof?

MELBY: Yes, we just didn't have much to say to each other.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviets and the Soviet system at that time? You were coming from a different climate, both Washington and Latin America. And all of a sudden, you're in this thing which you've always wanted to see. I think almost everybody wants to get a look at the system. You had pretty good access. How did you feel about what you saw?

MELBY: I suppose one of the answers to that one is: I've never been back to Moscow, nor have I had any slightest desire to go. Yet despite the fact that it was a lot easier than it had been and certainly a great deal easier than it was before the war was over, leave was like getting out of jail.

I didn't like the climate particularly. I wouldn't like the winter weather much, anyway. My interest was -- I'd seen it, and that was enough. It seemed to me that they had taken a kind of an orthodox Marxism, and even Leninism, and Stalin had perverted it. Worst thing that ever happened to Marxist theory was the Soviet Union.

Q: Were you seeing the dark side of this? Were you and others pretty well isolated at this juncture?

MELBY: Of course we were isolated. We did have Russian friends, particularly among the artistic community. I knew a great many of them. But it was on the kind of easy, easy basis. After all, Moscow had been at war.

And the artists we saw, and the musicians -- for instance, Prokofiev was a good friend of mine. And Shostakovich I knew him too. And I knew his mother even better. But they couldn't do anything in the way of entertaining. They didn't want any foreigners seeing the way they had to live.

Contacts with them were usually set up in someone's apartment that had been provided for that purpose. Otherwise, though we could travel, we had no difficulty once you got away from Moscow. You would just get on a train and go someplace. So I saw quite a bit of Russia when I was there.

Q: You didn't feel you were being shadowed?

MELBY: Sure we did! We knew we were. We knew everything we said was probably being taped or at least being bugged. Except that maybe there wasn't quite as much bugging going on at that time because they were short on manpower. They didn't have the people to do it.

But the people you did know, did meet -- and this was the tragic side of it -- he'd be the only surviving member of his family. After all, the Russians lost 35 million people -- killed! -- in that war. This was the tragic part of it.

Q: Were the people you talked to talking about the great purges of the '30s? Or was this just not a topic of conversation?

MELBY: No. During the war, the whole ideology was thrown out. The whole feel of the propaganda going on at the time, "Fighting for the Russian soil". And even ranks were reinstated in the Red Army. And they had to put out regulations saying "Officers will not hang on the outside of buses."

Of course, that all changed again when the war was over.

WILLIAM A. CRAWFORD
Administrative Officer
Moscow (1944-1947)

Ambassador William A. Crawford was born in New York in 1915. He received a bachelor's degree from Haverford College, after which he studied for two years at the School of Political Science in France. Ambassador Crawford's Foreign Service career included positions in Czechoslovakia and France, and an ambassadorship to Romania. He was interviewed by H.G. Torbert on March 23,

1989.

Q: Having gotten through in Havana you went back to the Department for a while or did you get to Moscow?

CRAWFORD: No. I decided toward the end of my tour in Havana that I wanted to go to Moscow. While I was in Havana the Department of State asked for volunteers to go to Moscow. This was in the spring/summer of 1944. They were looking for six officers to learn Russian first, and then go to Moscow. It looked to me like an interesting thing in itself, we were coming to grips with the Russians at that time.

Secondly, it offered an opportunity to get out of the Latin American field. I had begun to feel that I might be typed as a Latin American specialist. Although it was interesting, I preferred the idea of going to Europe. This seemed to offer the possibility of possibly getting into Europe by the back door, that is, Eastern Europe. I put in for it and was accepted. I was trained at Harvard then sent over to Moscow.

Q: Was that primarily the language or training or what?

CRAWFORD: That was all language training. Yes. Although I did study a bit of Russian literature and so on while there. But it was to give you a quick intensive grounding -- in Russian grammar there's certain vocabulary.

Three of us were sent to Moscow, three were sent to Cornell. At that time the Department was trying out the field. I wound up in Moscow, arriving amidst of the victory celebration. I stayed in Moscow until the summer of '47.

Q: Was Averell Harriman still there when you got there or had he left already?

CRAWFORD: Yes. Averell was ambassador and George Kennan was his number two. I served through Averell's tenure from that point on until the spring of '46. I was there during the period when George Kennan sent his long telegram to the Department in February of '46. I stayed on for while with Bedell Smith.

Q: What did a new man in Moscow start out doing in that time?

CRAWFORD: They started you out in the administrative section where you really had to deal with the local staff and the chauffeurs.

Q: And speak Russian.

CRAWFORD: And with Bureau for Foreigners of the Foreign Ministry, which was the bureau for services for foreigners. And speak Russian, yes. So it gave you very good training of that kind. Also you were always your head against the wall dealing with Russians. At that time if you wanted a box of matches you almost had to send a note to the foreign office.

I spent my first two months in administration. Then I was moved up to be the press secretary. There my job was to read the press, and send to the Department any telegrams of items of very special interest. Also to read the Russian political journals and reviews and so on. The rest of my time was spent there. It was a very small operation. It was very stimulating because the group who were there were an exciting group of older and younger officers, all of whom were specialized in the field.

Q: This would have been the period when the happy alliance turned into the Cold War.

CRAWFORD: That's right.

Q: Was that clearly noticeable in Moscow to you as a working stiff, so to speak?

CRAWFORD: Yes. Your associations were, first of all, made with a few so called "trained seals" from the Russian government. Then in June of 1947 the Russians passed a state secrets act which made it a crime subject to considerable penalties to talk to any foreigner about almost anything that didn't have to do with daily business. At that point even information from the trained seals almost dried up. So I was there when the Cold War took hold.

Moscow was very exciting. I had one quite interesting experience. I had a wife and two small children by that time, and I had to get them over. The policy at the Embassy in Moscow was then that you could only have living accommodations with one bed - this meant there was no room for my two small children and Barbara couldn't do that. I had to scrounge around and I was lucky enough to find a little dacha outside of town. I got Hannermans's permission to bring over my own furniture and to leave my own bed in Moravia and to set myself up at the dacha and to bring my wife and children. For almost two years we lived that way in the little winterized dacha I finally got fixed up. We were the only ones in Moscow who were living outside of the Embassy compound and it was really quite fascinating.

Q: By the time you got through with that tour did you feel your Russian was pretty good?

CRAWFORD: It was pretty good for practical purposes. I could read the press without any problem. I had some problems on oral Russian. I was sent back then to Washington to the Russian desk. I stayed at the Russian desk for several years. Then I was sent on for advanced Russian training at Columbia in 1949.

Q: Again that was basically language training at Columbia?

CRAWFORD: It included language training and I had a whole year of it. I was there with Walter Stoessel and Dick Davis. We also studied economics and law and other subjects, like Russian history.

MERRITT N. COOTES
Administrative Officer

Moscow (1945-1947)

Merritt N. Cootes was born and raised in Virginia. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Haiti, China (Hong Kong), Italy, Portugal, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, and Algeria. Mr. Cootes was interviewed by Lillian Peters Mullin on September 27, 1991.

Q: The war ended in Europe in May, 1945. This was in October, 1945.

COOTES: Yes. I stayed in the Embassy in Moscow for two years. At first our Ambassador was Averell Harriman, whom you knew about later on. After he left, there was a short period when George Kennan was chargé d'affaires. Then came Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith, who had been chief of staff to General Eisenhower, initially in England, when they were talking about the arrangements for the post-war period and what was to be done. You will remember there were a lot of people who maintained that we should insist that the Germans surrender unconditionally. The British were 100% in favor of that. As it worked out, as you know, the surrender was fairly unconditional because the Nazi Government was completely liquidated, and with it came the American, British, and Russian occupation. The three countries occupied different zones in Germany. Later, the French were given an occupation zone, and there was a Four-Power occupation of Berlin.

Q: And the entire country. And there was no German Government at all.

COOTES: The occupation covered the entire country. The German Government was formed later on.

Q: In 1952.

COOTES: In 1952, yes. While the "De-Nazification" process was under way the, Nuremberg Trials were taking place. Goering was one of the German leaders charged, but he committed suicide by taking a lethal pill which, they say, his American guards had helped him obtain. So he bumped himself off.

Q: You were in Moscow in 1945. What was Moscow like? It must have been badly damaged. What were the conditions?

COOTES: Moscow was not particularly badly damaged because, you know, the Germans never really got there. It wasn't like under Napoleon when the French actually got into Moscow. The Germans were defeated at Stalingrad, but Moscow was not much damaged.

Q: Except from the air.

COOTES: Except from the air. There was a certain amount of damage from air raids. The Bolshoi Theater was damaged but not destroyed.

In Germany the British, the Russians, and ourselves had our occupation zones. Our military

controlled the situation in our zone, but we had a State Department political adviser to General Eisenhower. Initially, Eisenhower was the American commander in Berlin. However, very shortly thereafter he went elsewhere and left General Clay as his deputy and commander of the American forces. General Clay had Robert Murphy, later Ambassador Murphy, as his Political Adviser. He had inherited him from General Eisenhower. Murphy stayed on in Berlin. Later, the German Government was established, and we set up our Embassy in Bad Godesberg.

There's an amusing story about the time we had the Berlin Airlift. The Russians had cut off access to Berlin by land. General Clay arranged to have an airlift of supplies to Berlin. Our planes took off and landed, I think, every six minutes. According to the story, there was a British correspondent up in the control tower in Berlin, listening to the communications between the tower and the pilot of a plane that was about to take off. The British correspondent heard the American pilot say to the control tower: "Give me the woid and I'll make like a boid." Naturally, the pilot was from Brooklyn. The British correspondent said, "Oh, you Americans. I find it very difficult to understand you."

Q: When you got to Moscow, then, how were the living conditions?

COOTES: Well, as to living conditions, I lived at first, as I say, at the Finnish Legation with Mr. Kennan. Later on, I was moved down to the Mokavaya, an apartment building right on Red Square, which the Russians had turned over to us to use as our Embassy, after the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1933. We had our offices on the first two floors. Above that, were apartments. On the top floor were six studio apartments with a Northern exposure. Evidently, this building had been intended for artists. On Soviet national day, November 7, the anniversary of the "glorious October Revolution" (The calendar had been changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar.), when they had military parades in Red Square, all the friendly military attachés came over to our apartments there overlooking Red Square so that they could see things.

Our contacts with the Russians were zero.

Q: This was in 1945?

COOTES: In 1945. Oh, absolutely. We were then, as the saying went, taking over from the British as Number 1 Enemy. We were not allowed to see Russians. The man who was handling American affairs in the Soviet Foreign Ministry had previously served in the Soviet Embassy in Washington. He used to come down to the State Department when I was in EE [Eastern European affairs]. So I saw him regularly in Washington. We exchanged lunches. They always invited us to lunch at the Carlton Hotel because they had some of the waiters on their payroll.

When I got to Moscow, I invited him to lunch frequently, but only once did he come, and that was when Dick Davis and I gave a party to celebrate our moving into this new flat. Our Ambassador came. When I told this man, the head of the American Section at the Foreign Ministry, that our Ambassador would be there, and I hoped that he and the chief of Protocol would be there, they both came. However, a man named John Davies was First Secretary of our Embassy. He devised a wonderful system for handling invitations to a cocktail party. When you invited people to an event of this kind, you kept a list of how many were invited, how many

replied, and how many turned up. In our case we issued 117 invitations, 19 replied, and five showed up. So, we were not allowed to see Russians, except when we would go skiing. We could chat with Russians when we went skiing. One time when I was about to leave a ski slope, there was a Russian who had been very nice to me. I said, "Look, I've got a car. Could I give you a ride into town?" He looked at my car and said, "Oh, no. If I went into Moscow and got out of your car, one of the militiamen would pick me up right away and interrogate me." So our contacts with the Russians were absolutely zero.

Q: What kind of parties did you give then?

COOTES: We invited other colleagues -- the British, the French, the Dutch, the Swedes.

Q: What kind of reporting were you doing, then?

COOTES: Well, our other colleagues didn't have any contact with the Russians, either. There was one time each year when the Soviet Foreign Ministry would have one of their men give a party in what had been one of the old houses, like Spaso House, where our Ambassador lived. I lived at the Mokavaya on Red Square, but the Ambassador lived in Spaso House. The Soviet party was given in a very nice apartment, and this man was obviously in public relations. He gave a party and invited people from the various embassies. It was well attended by ballerinas from the Bolshoi, half a dozen skaters, and so forth, who were allowed to be in contact with us that one time. But don't worry. They were pretty closely watched.

Now, it's true that George Kennan and I rented part of a dacha, a country house. This had been turned over to the Allies by the Russians when the Red Cross was operating in the Soviet Union in 1945-1946, and even earlier, during the war. This building had been kept, and George Kennan and I were two of the six people who had access to it. We used to go out there for weekends. There was a custodian, a man who took care of the place when we weren't there. He was really the only Russian we ever got a chance to talk to, person to person. He, obviously, was an ex-farmer, so we weren't getting the highest level opinion of Russian affairs from this man. But at least we did get some feel of what the people were thinking.

I stayed in Russia for two years. During 1947, the last year when I was there, we had the meeting in Moscow of the Conference of Foreign Ministers. This conference had taken place once in the United States and then in England and France, so the Russians said that they would host a meeting, too. They cleared out six floors of the Moskva Hotel, which was the hotel right near Mokavaya Square and our Embassy. They kicked out commissars, under secretaries of state, and people like that to clear the six floors there. There were two floors for the Americans, two for the British, and two for the French.

The Secretary of State was then retired General George Marshall. He came up to this meeting of Foreign Ministers in Moscow, which lasted about a month in March, 1947.

We had a rule then that you did not serve for more than two years in Moscow.

Q: What Section did you serve in when you were in Moscow?

COOTES: Well, I was on the administrative side. I was responsible for physical arrangements at the Embassy, in other words. I was First Secretary of the Embassy. I was responsible for the accounts, the administration, the personnel, and all the rest of it.

Q: How about supplies? How were you getting things like that?

COOTES: They came in by ship through Murmansk.

Q: How did they come down from Murmansk?

COOTES: By train.

Q: That's a long way.

COOTES: It was, indeed. You see, I was there just after the war. They hadn't been able to get anything in during the war. That was the route they used during the war. They couldn't receive supplies through the Baltic republics, -- Latvia, Estonia, and so forth. So they had to go around to the top of the country, to Murmansk.

Q: Why couldn't they come in through the Baltics?

COOTES: Through the Baltics? Lord, no. The Germans had all of that mined.

Q: And the mines weren't cleared out yet?

COOTES: They hadn't been cleared out yet. The other route would have been through Tehran [Iran], but that was very long, devious, and very expensive. Then, after the war was over, we were able to get things in from Berlin, by train. Actually, on one occasion the British, the French, and the Americans got together and placed a big order for alcohol -- wines and things like that. Since the rest of the stuff was coming in through Murmansk, there was a risk that the wines would be frozen. But Mr. [Ernest] Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, couldn't fly. So he came in by train from Berlin. We got all of the wines loaded on the train that came in from Berlin to Moscow.

Q: You mean that there were cases and cases of booze?

COOTES: Yes. Later on I went to Berry Brothers in London to order some things. I was going down to Algiers later on. I said I wanted three cases of their whisky and two cases of their 12-year-old whisky. They said, "Are you a regular client?" I said, "Do you keep records?" They replied, "Oh, yes, we keep records." I said, "You look it up. Last year I ordered 350 cases of whisky. I guess that makes me a client." You see, I had ordered for the British, French, and ourselves to have the whisky put on Mr. Bevin's train.

So after I'd served for two years in Moscow, I was transferred to Pakistan.

Q: Perhaps you could tell us a little bit more about Moscow before you go on, because we're really interested in what you experienced there.

COOTES: Well, as I say, we had no contact with the Russian people.

Q: Was the Ambassador seeing anyone in the Government?

COOTES: Oh, yes, he'd see high officials in the Soviet Government, but there was no social contact -- no cocktail parties with conversation and so forth. It was all just strictly official. Naturally, we all felt very much cut off from everything. But fortunately, all of our colleagues in the other embassies were pretty well chosen for this post there, so there were really some very stimulating contacts with them. However, not with the people of the country.

Q: Were your families with you?

COOTES: I wasn't married then.

Q: Did the other diplomats have their families with them?

COOTES: Very few of the families were there, because of the housing shortage. You see, we had just this one building. Actually, Mr. Kennan had his wife there. One other American diplomat, Third Secretary Bill Crawford, somehow or other had been able to rent a house from an American lady who had done a great deal of study about the origins of mankind and our descent from an ancestor common to us and the monkeys. She became known as "the monkey woman." Bill Crawford had a house there and was able to bring his wife and two children there. But he had provided housing outside of what was officially available.

Q: The Russians had no objection to that?

COOTES: No.

Q: What about food?

COOTES: Well, we had a commissary there.

Q: Already?

COOTES: Yes. It had basic staples and things like that. Then there was a shop where the foreign diplomats could purchase things. Only the foreign diplomats. The Russians couldn't buy things there because you had to pay in foreign currency. There was very strict rationing in Russia at that time. We used to buy things in that way, and then there was a certain amount of open market activity for fresh vegetables and things like that in the summertime.

Q: Not during the winter.

COOTES: Very seldom. I was horrified the first time I bought anything from the free market.

There was this man standing outside one of the shops there. He had three lemons in his hand. He was trying to sell those for \$85, or the equivalent thereof! You see, everything was strictly rationed, and your money wasn't any good unless you had tickets to buy fruit and things like that. They'd rather have three lemons than \$85 worth of rubles that they couldn't use for anything else.

Q: Were there ration tickets for everything for the Russian people at that time?

COOTES: Oh, yes. The Russian people were strictly rationed, and, as I say, we could buy from this one store, a limited, diplomatic store. It was called "Torgsin." We paid in foreign currency.

Q: What could you get there?

COOTES: Well, sheets, suits, trousers, and things like that. But most of us brought our own stuff in. But then, as far as food was concerned, we could get meats and things like that which were rationed to the Russian people, but they were available in the diplomatic store there. That really didn't present much of a problem. I was darned lucky. I had a German girl, another one of these Volga Germans, who spoke, naturally, perfect Russian but also spoke German. I'd been to school in Vienna and also spoke Russian. I spoke German to her. She took very good care of us. Of course, she reported everything that happened in our flat to the NKVD [secret police], as it was known then.

MARTHA C. MAUTNER

Clerk

Moscow (1945-1948)

**Intelligence Officer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1948-1950)**

**Intelligence Officer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1958-1963)**

Martha Mautner was born in Pennsylvania in 1923. She received a bachelor's degree from Seton Hill College and a master's from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Mrs. Mautner's Foreign Service career included positions in Germany and the Soviet Union. She was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on November 7, 1995

Q: Did you have any choice of your assignment or were you just told you were going to Moscow?

MAUTNER: We were asked where we would like to go and both of us thought Germany would be good because we had some knowledge of German from school, but the only spot that had an opening for two at the same time, and the two of us were pretty young and naive and scared

about going off on our own, was Moscow. We had no background whatsoever.

Q: Now this was shortly after the war in Europe, in 1945. Tell me something about the atmosphere in Moscow in those days? What were the conditions like on your arrival there?

MAUTNER: It is hard to describe them from today's context because you also have to realize I was looking at it as a 21 year old somebody who had never been out of the United States and who took everything for granted.

We were the first State Department people going to Moscow who traveled through Europe. Prior to that everyone had gone via Casablanca, Cairo, Tehran and up that way. So we were sort of a novelty. All of these countries were militarily occupied and we were in the hands of the military.

Q: By traveling through Europe you mean that you went through France and then Germany?

MAUTNER: Yes, and then flew on from Berlin to Moscow. So, I was in Berlin in September, 1945 and I gather we were the first female civilians who had gotten there to fall in the hands of the visitor bureau. They stalled our departure as long as possible but finally arranged for us to get on one of the Russian military aircraft going into Moscow in the latter part of September.

We arrived at Centralny Airport, the military airport right in the center of Moscow, (that was long before they had the big ones outside the city) and were just dumped there. Somebody called the embassy and eventually somebody picked us up and brought us to a billet. We went on from there just taking it as it was.

The atmosphere was very peculiar. In the first place, there were few families there at the embassy. The only wives who were allowed to come were those who were working at the embassy -- because of the housing shortage. That made quite a different atmosphere. Everybody was in the same situation. There were only about 40-45 people on the staff and altogether a foreign colony of maybe 4-500 in all of Moscow, a city of 8 million or so. We were as isolated from the Russian population as the Soviet government could keep us isolated.

Q: Despite the alliance we had had during the war?

MAUTNER: You could still have contact, you could get out and talk to people, but you didn't talk to them twice. The atmosphere was relaxed in one sense: there were no overt restrictions. But at the same time you still had the sense that Soviet people were staying away from foreigners. So, the foreign colony was pretty much incestuous in that we were kept on top of each other all of the time.

But the atmosphere, the morale in the embassy, was very good because of the fact we were all in the same boat. There was no class distinction. The old style Foreign Service wives who made the distinction between themselves and the clerical staff didn't exist because everybody was working. There were only one or two families there and then chiefly because the officer was able to find housing outside on his own. So, for young unattached females, it was a delightful time. Those were the days in the Foreign Service when Foreign Service officers usually didn't get

married until they were first secretaries. Bachelor status was preferred because you always needed extra men for dinner. So that meant we had great pickings.

Q: What did you do there?

MAUTNER: I started out as a code clerk, and the other girl I went with was in charge of the file room. Later I moved up into a research position. They had three or four people who did research. Bob Tucker, who became quite famous later on as a historian at Princeton, was there, and Tom Whitney and Spencer Barnes, were all doing background work. I, because of my graduate school background, got moved into that too and was able to carve out a place for myself.

Q: Your ambassador at the time was Averell Harriman?

MAUTNER: Averell Harriman was ambassador when I arrived and then was succeeded by Bedell Smith in the later part of 1946.

Q: Did you have any contact with them?

MAUTNER: Well, much more with Smith than with Harriman. Harriman was never really around the embassy. In fact, I don't ever recall him coming into the embassy building. He did all his work out at Spaso House.

Q: Who was your supervisor there?

MAUTNER: In the code room it was Tommy Senter, but basically supervision came out of the DCM's office. At that time it was George Kennan who had oversight of everything. But there was very little hierarchy in the embassy. Everybody seemed to be on an equal plane.

Q: Rather democratic I would gather.

MAUTNER: Yes. Freddy Reinhardt, Merritt Cootes, Roger Tyler, Dick Davis, Jack McSweeney, John Davies...there were five or six of the first secretaries all working sort of on the same level and everyone pitching in together.

Q: Now this is a period where George Kennan became famous with his long telegram. Were you involved in this at all?

MAUTNER: Ah, yes, this was my great encounter with history. I happened to have late duty in the code room the night Kennan brought in his cable. I happened to have a heavy date that night because there was a big dance at one of the other embassies and I wanted to get out early. He came in at about 7:00 with this five-part opus. My encounter with history involved trying to talk him out of sending it. He didn't pay any attention to me.

Q: Well, history might have changed.

MAUTNER: He said they had asked for that and he was going to give it to them.

Q: Did you have a chance to learn any of the Russian language while over there?

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, we started Russian language lessons as soon as we arrived. I eventually ended up with an ability to read, but not to a serious professional level. I never had any formal training in it.

Q: Now you were there during that famous Foreign Minister's conference in March, 1947, with Secretary Marshall and Molotov, etc. Do you have any remembrances of that?

MAUTNER: Oh yes, very, very vivid remembrances. In the first place, it was quite an occasion because of the big invasion of all kinds of Americans, particularly from Berlin. I shared an apartment with two other girls, one of whom had come from Berlin and was very well acquainted with General William Draper. So, as soon as Draper arrived, he turned up at the apartment. This was one very funny episode because when the plane crews came in with the delegations, the Air Force officers immediately descended on our apartment because they had messages for us from people back in Berlin, that they should look us up, girls, you know. They were all sitting around the apartment trying to impress us with their flyboy stuff when the door bell rang, and there was General Draper walking in. You never saw a batch of Air Force lieutenants disappearing in such a hurry!

The conference, itself, was impressive. John Davies had a very smart idea. He got me detached from my regular duties to set up a reference center in the embassy library with all sorts of background material about the Soviet Union -- Russian social studies, histories, pieces of information designed to give the many journalists a sense, an idea of what was really going on there. None of them had much background in the field. So I rode herd over the backgrounding for journalists on the Soviet scene -- not, of course, on the activities of the conference. That was quite an interesting operation.

Then a good friend of mine who was a first secretary at the British embassy and had no reverence or respect for authority most of the time, swiped the pass of a British delegation economist and gave it to me, so I went to one of the sessions of the conference as a member of the British delegation. So I was able to watch Molotov in action. One episode there that I enjoyed: John Foster Dulles was present and spent the whole time doodling the flags that were in the center of the table, coloring them up in great detail. When the session was over and we were standing around chatting, my English friend picked up the doodle Dulles had done and showed it to him saying, "That is a very professional doodle, Mr. Dulles." Dulles responded, "Do you want me to autograph it?" So, I had Dulles' autograph on this doodle.

Q: That was the first Mautner-Dulles confrontation I take it?

MAUTNER: Yes, it was.

Q: Our delegation must have been very disappointed with the results of that conference.

MAUTNER: They were disappointed in the sense that on the formal agenda, nothing positive

had come out of it. On the other hand, everybody was jubilant that we had finally laid down the line to the Soviets; that was the time the Truman Doctrine was announced. There was this sense of finally having enough courage to stand up and not take anymore. So you had this mixed result, the idea that no solution to the world's problems was imminent but at least the air had been cleared.

Q: Did you get a chance to travel at all while in Moscow?

MAUTNER: Not very extensively. I got up to Leningrad, of course, on my way in and out on vacation trips. And I was down through the Ukraine to Odessa on a trip. In the Moscow area, technically speaking we were not allowed more than 25 kilometers outside of the city without special permission. But you couldn't get very far anyway because there weren't many driveable roads. Everything had been damaged and you couldn't have stayed overnight. There were no facilities. But we did drive out as far as we could and saw the rubble, particularly the areas that had been in the path of the German invasion.

Q: While you were in Moscow during that time did you feel that you were under surveillance when you walked around?

MAUTNER: Not when you walked around, but we always had the feeling that big brother was watching you. Any time you met a Russian, or dealt with some of the more obvious Soviets who worked at the embassy, you knew it was being reported back. Our Russian teacher, who we figured was at least a Lt. Colonel in the NKVD at that time, arranged for my roommate and me to meet some Russian fellows "accidentally". She got a young navy lieutenant and I got a chap from the ministry of foreign trade. They took us out for a while, but since nothing came of it they gave up. But you knew what was happening, and you assumed that anything you said in your apartment was being recorded.

Q: That was the time when we lost that young lady, Annabelle Bucar, I think.

MAUTNER: Yes, in fact, when I came back on home leave at the end of 1947, she gave me a whole list of things that she wanted her family to send. A month or two later, after the items had been sent, the great announcement of her defection was made.

Q: Is she still in Russia?

MAUTNER: Yes. She worked for Radio Moscow for years. FBIS picked up a lot of these broadcasts. She and Joey Adamov (I think that was his name) had a talk show in the English language until roughly eight years ago. She came back to the United States several times to visit her family after the thaw.

Q: Any other comments on your tour in Moscow before we go on to other things?

MAUTNER: Well, it was a most fascinating and informative first assignment experience. Totally different from anything to which I had been exposed. But it was the beginning in a lifelong involvement with Soviet and Russian affairs. The mentorship that you got there from people like

John Davies or George Kennan was invaluable. They encouraged you.

Q: You could hardly have done better than that.

MAUTNER: Elbridge Durbrow was another one who pushed you along.

Q: In 1948 you were transferred back to the Department and I gather you went into research?

MAUTNER: Yes, INR.

Q: Was it called INR at the time?

MAUTNER: OIR, I think. That name changed so many times. I was assigned there because Personnel had a hard time figuring out where to put women who weren't strictly clerical.

Q: What was your job there?

MAUTNER: Basically in the Soviet research area. At the beginning it was basic research on Soviet internal issues, but I was never one who was enamored with deep core research. Then the office set up a current intelligence outfit which produced a lot of pieces about what day-to-day reality was like in the Soviet Union. They might be on Soviet education, or the church system, religion, or anything of this nature. Using all available source material as background, we would produce a sanitized piece that could be made available to journalists for their own purposes. A couple of times we practically won the Stalin prize because a column would appear in the *New York Times* under the name of a well-known journalist which was largely taken from one of these documents. If the Soviet minister of education or another official protested violently about this canard in a letter to the *Times*, that was where you got your greatest accolades.

But the project which did the most for my professional reputation was the "Soviet World Outlook", a collection of quotations from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. I had begun collecting them in Moscow to provide handy citations for inclusion in embassy think pieces, and added more in Washington. These were published as an INR booklet and became so popular in the Department and academia that the Department issued a second edition and charged \$1.50 a copy. Those were the days when everyone was citing Lenin and Stalin to prove a point but no one bothered to read the basic texts. So it was a very handy reference -- several thousand copies were sold.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the organization of OIR at that time? Who was the head of it and was it large?

MAUTNER: It was a tremendous outfit at that time because it was essentially the OSS research office which had been taken over intact by the State Department. It was a very departmentalized operation then. My experience was exclusively with the Soviet side. Mose Harvey was in charge of that particular outfit and he ran it as a personal fiefdom. And very effectively too. It had a very

extensive staff of really serious scholars on Soviet and Russian affairs. One has to remember that OIR was really the only major center for that kind of work in the years immediately after the end of the war. The universities hadn't developed their Soviet Studies schools at that time.

Q: What was your relations with the new CIA? Had they gotten into this at your level?

MAUTNER: Well, you knew some of the people individually, but most of the OIR-CIA interaction was at a higher level than mine.

Q: There wasn't a lot of cross-fertilization at the working level?

MAUTNER: Not at the working level because it was really only a beginning -- before CIA had developed its own research operations on a large scale.

I stayed in the Soviet research office until early 1949 when I was taken out of there and assigned to the Soviet desk in the European Bureau.

Q: What was the relationship of OIR with the geographic bureaus and the policy planning staff?

MAUTNER: There wasn't much, except at the very top. The point was OIR was considered a foreign body in the State Department and there was a big bureaucratic attempt to kill it. The old mainline officers didn't like the idea of having a second-guess outfit there. So, I would say there was a - I wouldn't say hostile relationship, but it surely wasn't friendly - with very little contact.

Q: So, when you moved, you went to the enemy by moving to the desk?

MAUTNER: That was because people I had been working with in Moscow, like Freddy Reinhardt, Dave Henry, Jack McSweeney and others, had been assigned back to the Department.

I was there for a while and then about the latter part of 1949, Kennan asked me to come up to his office as research aide. He had been moved from the Policy Planning staff to the Office of Counselor and Nitze was phasing in as head of the Policy Planning staff. As Counselor, Kennan wanted some help in background research and remembered me from Moscow.

Q: That must have been a real experience for you getting back together with George Kennan. Tell me something about your work with him, what were you doing?

MAUTNER: He wanted a lot of background data. It could be very light stuff or very heavy stuff depending on the circumstances. For instance, when he was going up to New York to a Council on Foreign Relations meeting and traveling on the train with Walter Lippmann, he wanted data that would counter all the arguments Lippmann was making in the newspapers against our containment policy or opposing something that Kennan was advocating. So I would dig up the requisite data. I remember another project when there was talk about world energy resources petering out, oil supplies, etc. That was one time when old OIR contacts were very useful because I got them to put together a big piece showing how the actual reserves were such that we didn't need to worry for some years to come.

The project that fascinated me the most was Kennan wanting a re-evaluation of all of the papers the Policy Planning staff had done from 1946-47 until the end of his tenure there. So I was handed this whole stack of studies dealing with everything from Russia to Middle East policy to Antarctica, etc., and spent my time reading them and trying to evaluate what had happened to them, how much had been put into effect, how much had been lost by the wayside, how much was misdirected, etc. That was really an amazing experience. I still remember there were 3 volumes, leather bound, that had the first drafts of all these reports in them. They were magnificent pieces of draftsmanship and stood on their own. The only one that I can still recall that hadn't been implemented at the time was on Antarctica because it was about 20 years too early. It has been since.

Q: So they were lopped off from the Department and were put into CIA?

MAUTNER: Yes. The whole biographical operation, all of that was transferred over to CIA. That left INR operating with about 400 people. It became more current focused. We were dealing more with current activities, writing pieces on what the Soviets were up to with their negotiating positions, and sending the stuff directly to the Secretary of State.

Q: How did this dovetail with what the Office of Soviet Affairs was doing? Did you work closely with them or independently of them?

MAUTNER: All of the above. The European Bureau always resented having INR as a second-guessing department. They wanted exclusive jurisdiction. But by that time, they also needed access to the data and particularly to the intelligence information that came through INR, which didn't come through the desks. In those days, intelligence was still pretty well compartmentalized; you usually did not have access to it unless you could prove a "need to know." So, you had this competition. We had good personal relationships with our working level counterparts on the Soviet desk and elsewhere, but at the higher level, assistant secretary level, of course, there was always competition.

Q: Who is going to tell the Secretary?

MAUTNER: Exactly. Who gets there first. But nobody got in the way of Roger Hilsman. So, in this sense INR had much more of an entree than it had before. And the pre-war/immediate post-war generation mainliners were dying out. Remember this was also the time the Department was phasing out all of those permanent civil service officers who had been attached to the geographic bureaus -- the ones who were resented by the Foreign Service because they had too much influence. So, the institutional memories that the bureaus had before were gone.

Q: And sadly missed in some cases.

MAUTNER: Very, very definitely. INR could fill that gap, but at the same time it was a foreign body to the regular establishment. But as that older generation died off, more and more of the Foreign Service officers began to accept INR as a fact of life. A lot of them had assignments there and discovered it was rather interesting and did not hurt their careers. Once they discovered it didn't hurt their careers, then you are accepted.

Q: Now you were there during three of the great crises of the 20th century. The Berlin Wall, the Bay of Pigs Operation and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Could you say a few words first about the Berlin Wall and what role INR played in following that.

MAUTNER: Well, INR, of course, was the conduit for all the intelligence information...

Q: Did INR, by the way, have any indications ahead of time that something like this was coming or possible?

MAUTNER: We had lots of indications that something was coming. Nobody really expected an attempt, to quote Ulbricht, "to put a Chinese wall down the center of the city." He said that two months before the Wall went up. He, after all, wanted the whole city.

We had information of building materials being stockpiled in East Berlin six months or a year before, but it coincided with a big campaign for rebuilding the city. Nobody had immediate intelligence of what was going to happen, because the whole thing was held very, very closely by the top echelon of the East German hierarchy. One thing I would like to point out is that nobody, and that includes the German government and every other government, ever really penetrated the top hierarchy of the East German regime. A lot of people thought they had contacts there, but I have yet to discover anybody who had a real inside link. Only the Soviets knew what Ulbricht and the others were up to, and even they, I am sure, didn't know everything. But, the West Germans never penetrated that system. They were caught totally by surprise when the Wall came down too. Their access evidently never gave them any sense of how weak the regime had become.

Q: Unfortunately, the opposite was not true, the East Germans had penetrated the West Germans.

MAUTNER: They had penetrated everything and had pretty good reading of the West German scene, but of course the ones at the top who were making the decisions, had a sort of warped mentality. That is the other thing you must keep in mind. The old communists, whether in the Soviet Union or in Eastern Europe, saw things with certain blinders.

Q: Now you were a member of the Berlin Task Force which followed the Wall. Will you say something about that, its composition, how it operated, etc.?

MAUTNER: Well, if one wants to be cynical, the task force was one of those vehicles that got a lot of publicity for being the coordinating center for all government agencies involved in a particular crisis.

Q: You say coordinating. Was it an advisory or decision making body?

MAUTNER: Well, allegedly it was suppose to be the coordinating body that brought together all opinions and distilled the stuff. That is the theory. In practice, it turned out after the first experiment that they served -- if you want to be really cynical about it -- to create a place where

everybody from all the various agencies could let off steam. There was an exchange of information, but the decision making was elsewhere, in the White House particularly, and the task force was more or less excluded from it, but got the publicity.

Q: And in the White House who was it?

MAUTNER: Basically the very tight circle around Kennedy and, I will say this, those people didn't know very much about the essentials of the problem. There was an arrogance at that level, a refusal to listen to anybody except their circle of friends -- that kind of thing.

Q: No German experience.

MAUTNER: No German experience and a lot of anti-German prejudice and unwillingness to deal with anyone except people they knew. They knew the big gurus from the Soviet field such as Kennan, Bohlen, and Thompson, none of whom had had grassroots experience in post-war Germany. So decision making was based on a limited amount of feel. The task force could provide the information and create pressure, especially institutional pressure which is very useful when filtered up from below. A lot of people of the old Berlin Mafia used that tactic to develop public pressure and institutional pressure to push things. For instance, the appointment of General Clay who was sent over to Berlin was very much a result of the people like Maggie Higgins and Jimmy O'Donnell on the journalist side putting pressure on the Kennedys, pointing out that it would be politically disastrous if they didn't do something dramatic. It was not something that they really wanted to do.

Q: Who ran the Task Force? Technically, I believe, Secretary Rusk was in charge.

MAUTNER: Well, he never attended any of the sessions of the Task Force. Foy Kohler, who was the EUR Bureau chief, and Martin Hillenbrand generally chaired the sessions and delegated assignments. But what happened after a discussion, the Task Force never found out about because the chairmen then went off to the White House. How much they conveyed of Task Force views there, we never knew. Besides, I don't think they were in the inner loop at the White House.

Q: Within the Task Force itself, who carried the greatest weight? The diplomats in the State Department or the military?

MAUTNER: It depended on the issue. Paul Nitze was on the Task Force, the Secretary of the Navy. The Joint Chiefs had their representative and took very serious notes on everything. (Oddly enough, I got the job of briefing the Task Force every day on all pertinent current intelligence data. It was a five-minute briefing at the start of every meeting. And I did this free-lancing. Nobody in INR paid any attention. Hal Sonnenfeldt would sit in, but that was all.) And then there were people from the Operations Center and from various agencies like the CIA, FBI, Treasury. It allowed for a catharsis; you could get things off your chest and you could raise issues. When Clay came to one of the sessions just before he left for Berlin, the question of Steinstuecken came up.

Q: You might mention Steinstuecken. We didn't talk about that.

MAUTNER: One doesn't often. Steinstuecken was a little area located outside of Berlin proper which was still technically part of the city and the Russians and East Germans were always trying to cut off access to it and absorb it into East Germany, East Berlin.

Q: They never quite succeeded.

MAUTNER: They never succeeded. That issue, after the Wall came up, became a hot potato, and at the Task Force Clay raised the question of how could he get out there and show the flag, or do something. When the military argued he couldn't get there because he would not be allowed access, we on the State side piped up that there was always a helicopter. And that is exactly what Clay used when he went to Steinstuecken, showed the flag and registered the desired effect.

Q: How long did the Task Force continue?

MAUTNER: It probably was still in existence when the Wall came down in 1989. We had a regular roster updated every year with people who could be called on in case anything happened. Daily meetings stopped roughly about a year after the Wall went up; we then met on a weekly or monthly basis. Later it would be convened only in the event of a crisis over air traffic or autobahn problems and such.

Q: Well, those were exciting days. Did the trouble with the Soviets over the missile crisis have any effect on you or not?

MAUTNER: Well, we in INR were again the intelligence coordinators on this. There was all the reconnaissance traffic spotting where the ships and missiles were going, what kind of missiles were involved and what the satellite photography showed, anything picked up from the interception of Soviet communications, etc. We were up to our neck in that one, including the reporting that was going on in the Warsaw Pact at the time. Again, rather interestingly, there were a lot of stories we got about the Soviets rolling out petroleum Pol lines in East Germany in anticipation of activity there at the time of the crisis.

Q: Activity around Berlin?

MAUTNER: Yes, around Berlin and East Germany. Those of us who were familiar with the German scene were always convinced that the Cuban missile crisis had very little to do with Cuba per se. We saw it as a Khrushchev ploy to create a military equation which would allow him to put pressure on us to force negotiations on Berlin. It didn't quite turn out that way, but the Soviets were intending to exploit it in that context because when they once got those missiles installed, they would have leverage against us. The idea that they would attack the United States directly to save Cuba was absurd; rather the basic objective was to get movement on the German/Berlin question. Places closer to home mattered to them much more.

One of the things that INR also did involved those conversations at the White House with

Gromyko and Mikoyan and other Soviets who came over here. Martin Hillenbrand was the note taker for most of those sessions and he would allow me to take a look at his notes after each and then I would write up an analysis of Soviet intentions, what they were trying to do and where things were heading. We always had a number of arguments on these, because it was very hard to convince him that Berlin was important in this context. The White House was even more skeptical. Only later did it begin to register.

DAVIS EUGENE BOSTER
Political Officer
Moscow (1947-1949)

Intelligence Officer, Office of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1949-1950)

Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1959-1961)

Political Counselor
Moscow (1965-1967)

Ambassador Davis Eugene Boster was born in Ohio in 1920. He received a bachelor's degree from Mt. Union College. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1942-1947 and subsequently entered the Foreign Service. Ambassador Boster's career included positions in the Soviet Union, Germany, Mexico, Poland, and Bangladesh, and an ambassadorship to Guatemala. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 20, 1989.

Q: You went to Moscow first as a political officer in 1947. What was the situation at the Embassy at that time. Bedell Smith was the Ambassador at the time. What was the nature of our relations with the Soviets in the 1947-49 period?

BOSTER: It was a very strange period because in theory we were war-time allies who had just concluded a war successfully. But in fact relations were not as cordial as one might have assumed. Already the coolness was beginning to show itself. During my period there, in the second year, the Russians who were emboldened by the war-time collaboration, had begun to make social contacts with the international community in Moscow. The Russians who had these contacts began to disappear. You would go to a cocktail party and some one would say that Natasha was picked up last night with a rap on the door at midnight. Know one knew where she was until six weeks later you would find out that she was in one prison camp or another. Things were turning cold pretty fast and by 1948 we had the Berlin blockade and airlift. My first year in Moscow was spent translating the Russian press by dictating to a secretary in the morning. There were about five us doing that. We prepared a bulletin that circulated to the Embassy in the afternoon containing translated articles from Pravda or Izvestia. I had no real contacts with the Soviet Government during this period.

In the second year, I was brought into the Embassy to do political reporting. But my rank was too low for any government contacts.

Q: How would a junior officer in an Embassy under these conditions report on what was happening?

BOSTER: We relied mainly on published information that we sent back. We studied the line-up in the Politburo ceremonies; we tried to find new nuances in the press coverage -- what they covered, what they omitted, what phrases they used. It is not the way one functions in a normal Embassy, but we were reduced to this press analysis by circumstances.

Q: Did you share information with other embassies?

BOSTER: Yes. There was a fair amount of that. Some of them actually had first-hand information. You might get something from the Yugoslav Embassy for example that would not be available to us through our own contacts.

Q: What was the atmosphere in the Embassy under Bedell Smith?

BOSTER: You raise a question of two different styles of Embassy leadership. Bedell Smith was an authoritarian, hard task-master. The discipline was tight and he expected everybody to be super-active in fulfilling their duties. He got that -- it was a fine Embassy with good morale, although everybody was conscious that the "old man" was looking over your shoulder and was not going to tolerate any nonsense. He was a very fine Ambassador -- good mind and very able.

His place was taken a year after I arrived in Moscow by Alan Kirk, who had been an Admiral and headed our invasion forces at Normandy. He came in with a totally different approach. He felt that his mission was to provide the kind of constructive atmosphere in which everybody could do a good job according to their abilities and he understood that he had a fine staff working at the Embassy which didn't need to be stood over. He was just a friendly counselor. He also got results because the staff was excellent -- a first rate group of people.

Q: What was your impression of the "Soviet specialists" which were a special breed at the time?

BOSTER: Without any question and generally recognized, they were a special breed. The Soviet "club" was the first, later followed by the Japanese, Chinese and other area "clubs". But back in 1947-49 the result of the work of Bob Kelley and others in the State Department in setting up a program which sent Kennan and Bohlen to various Russian places, immersing them in the language and culture of the country before they went to Moscow. With people like that, the Soviet service had a special stamp on it. I think it dissipated over the years, understandably, but at that time it was very strong with very able people -- Fred Reinhardt, Dick Davis, Foy Kohler, George Morgan, etc.

Q: How did the blockade of Berlin impact on you and the Embassy? Did you feel that the possibility of war was becoming more likely?

BOSTER: Walter Stoessel, later Under Secretary of State, and I had gone to Moscow at about the same time, both without our wives -- Embassy policy was that wives had to wait one year to join their husbands because of lack of room. Our wives, Mary and Mary Ann, came over on the same ship -- the Gripsholm -- to Stockholm. Walter and I left the Embassy a few days earlier and went out through Warsaw and Germany and eventually got to Stockholm and came back to Moscow with our wives. Before they left the States, I had run into the Air Attaché. When he learned that we were bringing our wives to Moscow he said he would never do that. He said that we didn't appreciate the importance of what was going on. He thought we may very well be at war in the very near future. He was very negative about bringing the family -- I had two little children at the time. Although this was the only conversation I had like that, it was typical of the atmosphere at the time. It was certainly a strain to be in Moscow at the time. After my conversation with the Air Attaché, I had cabled my wife suggesting that she not come. She had also been expressing anxiety about the transfer. She said that the people in Hudson, Ohio were counseling her against coming. I told her I would resign and return to the States and look for another career. She felt that I was about to give up my career just to ease her concerns; so of course she came.

Q: After the blockade and the airlift started, did the Embassy look for signs of hostility?

BOSTER: I am sure that the Ambassador and the DCM and the military Attachés undoubtedly would have had indicators in mind in watching the scene, but to say that all of us in the Embassy, particularly at the junior levels, were always on watch, would be to magnify our responsibilities and our daily concerns too much.

Q: Were you aware of horror stories about Stalin or was the Embassy looking for the positive side of the Russian experience?

BOSTER: I don't think there was a better side to look at. But there was no war psychosis in the Embassy. The Air Attaché statement was an exception, although others may have had it in back of their minds as a possible eventuality.

Q: Were you and others trying to turn the United States' perception around? The U.S. after all had gone out of its way to paint the Soviet Union in rosy colors during and right after the War and then in the late 1940s the realities were setting in. Did you have the feeling that the Embassy had to let Washington understand that the situation in 1949 was the real picture?

BOSTER: That was certainly true. We were trying to bring home to the State Department and the general public that circumstances had changed. Kennan's famous article appeared in "Foreign Affairs" at about this time and that was a fundamental part of the re-education of America. We were contributing our part to that perception of the "real world".

Q: You returned to Washington in 1949. Where were you assigned initially?

BOSTER: The first year I was assigned to the research area, working on Soviet activities in the Far East. I am sure that the whole Department of State was taken by surprise by the invasion of

Korea. I remember a message from our Embassy in Seoul written by a Soviet specialist there, who had made a trip around Korea, which noted the absence of any war-like tensions. He did not point out that the North was about to roll. I was therefore absolutely startled by the news when in June 1950 the invasion began.

Q: After that year, what was your next assignment?

BOSTER: An officer -- Richard Davis -- who had interviewed me when I applied to State and thereafter was instrumental in bringing me into the Foreign Service -- in the Staff Corps, by the way -- took a personal interest in me. He had returned to Washington from Moscow to be the Director for Soviet Affairs. He decided that it would be useful to have on the Soviet desk, not only Foreign Service officers, but also a Civil Service person who could represent continuity, who would not be reassigned every four years. He called me and asked me whether I would be interested. I said "Yes, of course" and was brought to the Division under his plan. Later, I took advantage of the lateral entry program and joined the Foreign Service as a Reserve Officer because during the McCarthy era, all regular appointments had been held up. So when I was assigned to Bonn, I went as a Reserve Officer.

Q: What effect did the McCarthy area have on the Soviet desk ?

BOSTER: That had a devastating impact. It never affected me personally except for the general atmosphere. There were a number of people that one knew that had come under suspicion for one reason and another. It was a very bad period.

Q: Did it have any effect on the reporting you were seeing? Were people slanting their views to appear tough on the Communists?

BOSTER: This subject was frequently the topic of conversation between officers in the Department, with concern being expressed that it would have that effect. I don't recall any specific instance in which you might have made that comment. It was more in the atmosphere than in specific cases, but I am sure it would have had an effect. It would have taken a bold officer to "cross the line".

Q: In 1959, you moved back to Soviet Affairs.

BOSTER: Dulles died. I remember that Christian Herter, who was Dulles' successor, sent word to me through one of his assistants to tell me if I wanted to stay on, I would be welcomed. A finer man than Herter has never set foot in the Department. That message was in keeping with his personality and character. But I decided that I didn't want to continue. I was told that this was one time I could write my own ticket -- more or less. That is to say that if there were an assignment within reason that I wanted, I would get it. I frankly toyed with the idea of trying to go to Rome, where I always wanted to be assigned. But in the meantime Foy Kohler, who was then Assistant Secretary for European Affairs and who had been in Moscow when I was there, asked me to take a job in Soviet Affairs as officer-in-charge of Soviet Union political affairs. Charlie Stephan was leaving the job and Kohler wanted me to replace him. After stewing about the possibility of asking for Rome or Hungarian language training, I simply accepted what the

system suggested that I do and went to Soviet Affairs.

Q: We are now talking about the 1959-61 period. How did you view the internal situation in the USSR?

BOSTER: During that period, Khrushchev came to the United States. I was lucky enough to be included in a lunch for Khrushchev. I remember meeting him then. In general terms, the Soviet Union was still a large black hole as far as our perceptions were concerned. Khrushchev was a rather stimulating, new figure in that black hole. To some degree he was now and then encouraging. There was considerable interest in what he might actually mean for the Soviets. He was not a normal head of the government. His condemnation of Stalin indicated that there might be some hope for new relations. The amazing Gorbachev is more understandable to us after having watched Khrushchev. He has far eclipsed anything Khrushchev did, but the latter did make some signs of taking a more realistic view of things.

Q: When you were looking at the Khrushchev phenomenon, did you see someone who was shaking up things but who had forces opposed to him who would prefer a less adventuresome domestic and foreign policy?

BOSTER: That is probably right, although we were not that sold on Khrushchev. Our interest was aroused by his direction, although always within the context of a Soviet system which was bad. We did not see at that time anything like the upheaval that the USSR is going through now. It is qualitatively different now. But Khrushchev was an interesting figure and gave us more hope than we had before.

I don't think anyone saw a radical change in the Soviet Union. He was not viewed as a Gorbachev.

Q: You served in Moscow as Political Counselor from 1965-67. What was the situation in the USSR at that time?

BOSTER: There had been some relaxation and some contacts permitted between Soviet citizens and the American Embassy. Some of our people were seeing a fair number of Russians -- not the general mass, but people in the fields of the arts, literature, etc. That was different from my previous tour. The results of these contacts formed part of our reporting.

Q: What was the content of these reports?

BOSTER: As always, we were reporting a lot based on the Soviet press. By this time, we had more contacts. We had regular meetings with the British, French, Germans and other colleagues. These were institutionalized to review developments and form a consensus on directions, who was up, who was down, what the policy would be on the Far East and so on.

Q: During this period, we were getting deeper and deeper into Vietnam. Was this impacting in

relations?

BOSTER: Vietnam did, inevitably. I can remember going with Foy Kohler to see Gromyko. Sometime he would take John Guthrie, the DCM, but more often he took me as note taker. There was no budging; it was just a collision of view points. There were no substantive collaborative exchanges on any subject. Gromyko was personally cordial enough, but these were tough days.

Q: Were we looking for opening wedges to develop better ties?

BOSTER: No, I don't think so. We took what was going on as the inevitable consequence of their philosophy against ours. We were trying to manage the relationship in such a way that it didn't result in World War III. I certainly have no recollection of us trying to find a way to entice them into a friendlier relationship. I mentioned earlier the difference between Bedell Smith and Alan Kirk. And again, in the case of Kohler and Thompson, we had two excellent men with very different styles. Foy Kohler was a team man. He seldom sent an important telegram to Washington without calling his senior Embassy aides who had competence in the subject matter to the "secure room" for a discussion and more often than not to work on a draft telegram he had prepared. On a number of occasions, Foy would make changes, sometime important changes, in the text as result of the discussion and the views that he heard. If they made sense to him, he would change. Often he would hear the views, but decide that they were not material. But in this sense, he was a team man and in terms of morale of the people working for him, this was wonderful. I felt a productive part of the machine and that I had a role to play that was recognized and appreciated. Llewellyn Thompson who succeeded Kohler -- second time as Ambassador to Moscow -- had a reputation of a "star" figure which he deserved. I was very impressed by him. But he was not a team man. In fact, the problem was to insure that you were seeing all the material he was sending. That was a marked difference in approach. He had a profound knowledge of the Soviet system gained over many years. He read the Soviet press thoroughly. I don't think he ever took anybody with him when he went to see the Soviet leaders. I think he had a conception of his role as one of doing whatever he could to develop and sustain a close and trusting relationship with the Soviet leadership so that it would trust him to be a reliable messenger. He probably thought that the success of his mission would depend on the development of that special relationship. It was a one-man relationship.

Q: During the 1965-67 period, were there any major developments in our relations?

BOSTER: One of the developments concerned a young American man who crossed the Soviet border and was put in jail. He was from Minnesota, I think. They put him in jail and were of course trying to get him out. This went on and on and the Soviets were not being forthcoming at all. Eventually, he was transported from one prison to another and he slashed his wrists. The question was whether he really committed suicide. We took the matter very seriously. The Soviets had a fundamental attitude which was demonstrated again and again, not only in this case, but in many others that the Soviet borders were inviolable and nobody comes over those borders without consequences. There were a series of incidents with airplanes being shot down. They were doing reconnaissance work close to the territorial limits. The Soviets wanted to establish the fundamental principle that the Soviet borders could not be tampered with. They would pay a high price for inculcating this principle into their own people. It was just a natural

attitude for the Soviet Union in those days. It characterized their whole approach.

EUGENE KERN & EDWARD GOLDBERGER
Voice of America: Shaky Beginnings of the Russian Program
(1948)

Mr. Kern was born in New York and educated at Dartmouth College. After work in the theater and in news broadcasting he joined the Office of War Information during World War II as bureau chief of the motion picture division. In 1945 he joined the State Department as radio commentator – producer and continued with State and USIA, throughout his government career. He served with the Voice of America (VOA) from its earliest days. Mr. Kern was interviewed by Claude “Cliff” Groce in 1986

Mr. Goldberger was born in New York and was educated at the City College of New York. After service in the US Army during WWII he worked in the theater and in broadcasting before joining the Office of War Information. In 1945 he joined the State Department as radio script and drama writer, later becoming Acting Chief of USIA’s International Broadcasting Service. Mr. Goldberger was interviewed by Claude “Cliff” Groce in 1986.

Q: What about Russian?

GOLDBERGER: Russian began in the spring of 1948 under Charlie Thayer and Nikki Nabokov. They recruited the way we must have recruited in the beginning. They went out and grabbed as many people as they could -- people Nabokov knew, people from Novy Mir. The initial reaction of the Embassy to the broadcasts -- in long screeds that would come on the telex -- was: they hated it. They really gave them very bad reviews, worse than Frank Rich in the New York Times. So they decided they had to send somebody up there to try to help them out, and my kind boss Howard Maier volunteered me; I really had no choice. So I went upstairs and sat in the office next to Bob Ross, and down the road a little piece were Thayer and Nabokov. Now understand, I couldn’t read Russian; I couldn’t understand Russian. As far as Thayer and Nabokov went, they really didn’t want to have me there. And I didn’t want to be there! So I did what I could, which was largely to talk with the writers, and to go over scripts with them, as best I could. What they were doing was Russian radio. I showed them how to break it up into voices, how to use different things in their programs, and so forth. This went on for, I guess, about two months, and every time I ran into Muc I would ask him when he was going to spring me from this job.

KERN: Eddie reminds me of something that’s really very important. Up until the days when the Voice started, radio was just one voice reading the news. It was Houseman and Michel and Ernst who started this idea of using more than one voice on the same show. And when the first VOA show went on, the German show, it was a multi-voice show. And from that time on, all news shows had more than one voice -- as many as you could afford. Sometimes we were down to

only two voices, but always it was a multi-voice show. It was a new technique.

GOLDBERGER: Anyway, after about a month or so, the reports began to get better from the Embassy, and after two or two and a half months they were good enough so that I could convince Muc to let me go back to work for Howard Maier. After that I kept in touch with some of the people from the Russian Service but I didn't have to handle that any more. Then what happened was that NBC blotted its copybook in 1948 and Congress decided that maybe it was a mistake to let the networks handle this stuff because they didn't know how to do it. And so they sent the languages back to the Voice -- including English. And Gene was put in charge of the English show.

KERN: Let me tell you how that came about. Before they came back to us, I thought we should broadcast in English, and I sold somebody -- I think it was Bob Ross -- on the idea that I would do, myself, a daily 15-minute English show, later expanded to a half-hour. Alone. I had to write it -- I got the news from the newspeople -- and do the transitions and everything else, and find some feature somewhere and put it in, and put on a half-hour show every day. It didn't last very long, and it wasn't very good, I can assure you. Just about that time the operation was returned, and then, because I had done that, I was put in charge of the English show.

GOLDBERGER: And he went looking for people. So once again my kind boss Howard Maier lent me to Gene Kern. He'd already lent me to the Russians, he'd lent me twice to the news desk when they needed somebody to fill in, once because of vacations and once because of a flap. Do you remember that woman who jumped out the window from the Russian consulate? Well, I was on vacation, and that son-of-a-bitch Maier tracked me down to tell me I had to come back, and to start on the night shift on the news desk right away. Fortunately I was working with two very nice people on that overnight, but still this was a loan. And then I was lent to Gene.

General Barmine didn't come aboard until later. I guess it was 1948. He wasn't there at the beginning of the Russian Service. But the Service had some very good people. Nikki Nabokov was a musician but a very bright guy -- Vladimir Nabokov's cousin.

KERN: Was (Eddie) Raquello the producer of the Russian show at that time?

GOLDBERGER: I'm not sure he was the first, but he came in very soon, and if the reports from Moscow got better it was not because of what I did; it was probably because of what Eddie did.

KERN: He came very early into the Voice. He had worked with the Lunts and for Sherwood, and Sherwood got him in.

GOLDBERGER: I've heard that he first came to the United States as Pola Negri's leading man.

MARY ANN STOESSEL
Foreign Service Spouse/Code Clerk
Moscow, USSR (1948-1949)

Mary Ann Stoessel was born in Washington, DC in 1921. She was a volunteer with the Red Cross during World War II. She married Foreign Service officer Walter Stoessel in 1946 and accompanied him on his overseas postings to: Moscow, Germany, France, and Poland. Mrs. Stoessel was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

STOESSEL: Well we married in June of '46. He was out of the navy by then, back in the State Department. He was in Soviet affairs. Tommy Thompson was his boss. You probably have heard of him. Anyway, we were to go to Moscow. We were all set to go to Moscow, and it turns out Mary Ann is pregnant. No way was I going to have that baby over there. So in August of '47, he went on ahead to Moscow. I stayed back, stayed in Washington where my parents still lived, and had the baby here. When she was three months old, she and I got on the old Gripsholm which had just been newly recommissioned as a passenger ship. It had been a hospital ship. It took us ten days to get to Sweden. But I am getting ahead of myself.

Q: That is all right. So eventually you ended up in Moscow.

STOESSEL: Yes. He was there from August until the baby and I joined him in April.

Q: So April, '48. You were in Moscow from when until when?

STOESSEL: It was a horrible time. I was there from April of '48 until about July, something like that, of '49. I hated every minute of it.

Q: Well, let's talk about Moscow in 1948 when you got there.

STOESSEL: It was the Stalin era.

Q: Oh, very much so.

STOESSEL: People really did disappear in the night. Our apartment was totally bugged. Mind you I was an only child, never been outside of the United States, and suddenly thrown into this very oppressive, scary atmosphere.

Q: How did it work with the baby and all that?

STOESSEL: Well in those days because the housing was so critical, in the embassy, well all over the Soviet Union for that matter, but in the embassy that if a wife went over there and took up the space of a clerk, we had to do that clerk or secretary's work. So while I was home in Washington waiting for the baby, I went to secretarial school so I could learn how to type. I never did learn very well, but anyway I did that. So I went to work in the embassy nine to five. We had, everybody had, a Soviet maid. We actually had two because of the baby, a mother-daughter team. So I would go out to the office, and the baby would be taken care of by these two marvelous women. The mother in particular, my baby grew up calling her "Mama." She considered her that, you know. I was somebody who came occasionally. Plus the fact that she

heard her own daughter calling her mama. So anyway she called her mama. I will to this day never forget the day we left, and we had, her name was Anna. I will cry if I talk about it; some other time. But anyway, we tried to take her away from Anna, and she kept saying, "Mama, mama." She wanted to go back with Anna. She didn't want to come with me.

Q: How was work in the embassy in those days?

STOESSEL: What do you mean?

Q: What sort of things were you, who were you working for?

STOESSEL: Well I worked in the code room. I hated that. I worked, and I didn't like it so they took me out of there, and they put me in publications. I was just sort of a glorified newspaper carrier going around distributing Magazines and daily papers and things to the offices.

Q: The Berlin blockade started in '48. It must have made things quite tense there.

STOESSEL: Yes, quite scary because we were behind enemy lines really. It was interesting. We didn't think about it an awful lot. Yes, you know when you are young, you can handle most anything.

Q: Well could you get out and around at all?

STOESSEL: Somewhat, not much.

Q: How about just going to the theater or...

STOESSEL: Yes, you could, but tickets were hard to get. My Russian wasn't terribly good. We could only travel 40 kilometers outside of Moscow. There was no traveling, and there was a plane, I am not sure I am getting this right, there was a plane that left for Europe I think it was once a month, something like that. And also when we came in, the Soviets confiscated our passports. So even if we could find a way to get out we had no passport. It was a very unnerving time.

Q: Who was ambassador when you were there?

STOESSEL: Bedel Smith. Then just before we left, Alan Kirk, Admiral Kirk. Incidentally we had dinner with his son last night.

Q: How about with Bedel Smith. How did you find him?

STOESSEL: Well, he was joyous. Everybody knows about Bedel Smith. He was a you know very complex man. I didn't have anything at all to do with him. He had a charming lovely wife. We were pretty junior. One nice thing about Moscow in those days, there was no stratification in the hierarchy there. You go to a party and have secretaries, and ambassadors, it was like being on a little island. We were all there together. It was like being in the same boat. The secretaries in

Paris used to write to their friends in Moscow and say, “Moscow sounds wonderful from what you say. Here nobody pays any attention to us. We are totally on our own.” So there was this marvelous esprit, and the friends that we made in those days are friends still today, those that are left.

Q: Did you have any problems with the KGB or all?

STOESSEL: Well sure, they were all over the place. And I said the apartment was bugged. We were followed. The nurse, Anna, and her daughter were KGB.

Q: Were there any provocations or challenges or anything?

STOESSEL: Were we ever accused of anything you mean?

Q: Yes.

STOESSEL: No, I wouldn't be here now if we were. We were very careful, you know, very careful.

Q: What was your husband doing?

STOESSEL: Let me see. Then he was third secretary and consul in the consular section of the embassy. He went from there into the political section. You know for him it was terrible, one woman tried to cut her wrists right in front of him when he told her he couldn't get her out, couldn't give her a visa to leave the Soviet Union and enter the United States.

Q: Oh, boy. Under these circumstances could you meet Russians?

STOESSEL: No. We lived in a country and never had contact with the people. I mean I had contact with Anna and Klava. Those were the two maids in our apartment, and the gardener out at the dacha. This is one godsend for us. The embassy has what is called a dacha which is a summer house outside of Moscow on a little river. On weekends we used to go there, and that kind of saved our sanity.

GEORGE ALLEN MORGAN
Cultural Affairs Officer
Moscow (1948-1949)

Political Officer
Moscow (1949-1950)

Ambassador George Allen Morgan was born in Tennessee in 1905. He received graduate degrees from Emory and Harvard University, where he received a Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1930. His Foreign Service career included positions in

Germany, Japan, and the Ivory Coast. Ambassador Morgan was interviewed by Arthur L. Lowrie on December 23, 1989.

Q: Your first post then was in Moscow?

MORGAN: Moscow, where for one year I was head of USIS. My position was Cultural Officer or Cultural Affairs Officer. Then the second year I was moved to the Chancery and became the sort of main Political Officer for Soviet affairs for a year.

Q: Who was the Ambassador then?

MORGAN: The first year it was Bedell Smith. The second year it was Ambassador Alan Kirk.

Q: Did you work fairly closely with both of them?

MORGAN: Well, as Cultural Officer I wasn't, of course, very close to the Ambassador. I was off in another building and doing the sort of affairs that he didn't have much time to get into, but we were on a good friendly basis anyway. In the case of Ambassador Kirk, I was very close because of my new position as the Soviet Specialist in his Chancery and I even lived in Spaso House, the Ambassador's residence with him and Mrs. Kirk, because it was customary to have a Russian language officer live in the residence for cases when they needed a Russian speaker right there. So I got to know the Kirk's extremely well.

Q: What's your view of Ambassador Kirk in the professional sense?

MORGAN: Fine. I liked him very much.

Q: In a professional sense?

MORGAN: Yes. He was a retired Admiral from the Navy. He had been in charge of the D-Day landings, ferrying our troops across to Normandy when we began invading the continent and then he had been Ambassador to Belgium, I think it was, before he came to Moscow.

Q: Within the Embassy, there weren't any great differences of opinion about the approach to the Soviet Union, about the policy of containment and so forth?

MORGAN: Not that I recall.

Q: Anything that I don't ask but that you feel is important to note, please put it in.

MORGAN: Alright.

Q: Anything more about Moscow in those days and Ambassador Kirk?

MORGAN: Well there were lots of details. I don't know that for your purposes what else you would like to hear.

Q: Well, for example, after serving there, seeing Stalin operate firsthand, did you revise any of your views that you'd expressed in this Foreign Affairs article?

MORGAN: No. I actually met Stalin. I went with Ambassador Kirk when he called on Stalin, so I've shaken hands with the biggest murderer in history.

ROBERT O. BLAKE
Consular/Political Officer
Moscow (1950-1952)

Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1954-1957)

Ambassador Robert O. Blake was born in California in 1921. He received a bachelor's degree from Stanford University and a master's degree from the School of Advanced International Studies. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943-1947 and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Nicaragua, the Soviet Union, Japan, the Congo, and Mali. Ambassador Blake was interviewed on December 29, 1988 by James D. Mason.

Q: I note that you were later assigned to Russian language studies and that you served in Moscow from, I believe, 1950 to '52. Can you tell me anything about that period?

BLAKE: Sure. Before I went to Managua, I became very interested, as everyone was in those days, in what was happening between the United States and the Soviet Union -- the beginning of the Cold War, and the active effort by Communist Parties throughout the world to do us in. I thought that, perhaps, it would be interesting to work on the problems of Communism in Latin America.

I had gone down to Cuba during my grad-school days and spent some time writing about the Cuban Communist Party and its relation to the Soviet Union. I had got to know a number of people in the embassy down there. I met Fidel Castro who was, at that time, the Student Body President of the Law School of the Havana University. He was a fascinating character. And I decided that Soviet specialization would be a very good way to spend at least a few years of my Foreign Service career. So I put in my application as soon as I got to Managua.

In Managua, I had several interesting assignments down there. The first was as commercial officer. And then our administrative officer had to be carted off to the loony bin and, with no knowledge of the job, I was made administrative officer on the spot. The embassy was in a fascinating position because we had no official relations with the Nicaraguan Government. Somoza was in disfavor in Washington because he had thrown out his uncle who was the nominal president. Washington was unhappy about that.

Then, after awhile, I was made political officer and remained in that job for my remaining time in Managua. I dealt with the opposition elements, many of whom were the lineal descendants of the present Sandinistas. As a whole, the country was very pro-American. But my group tended to be fairly anti-American, even though they weren't, at that time, of very much political importance. They were kept down and didn't have, as far as I could tell, any substantial support in the community. Things were prosperous. Somoza, unlike later, seemed to be relatively benevolent in his hold on the country and things were moving fairly well as far as most people were concerned, including most of the poor.

In Early '49, I heard that I had been chosen for Russian language and area studies and went back in April of 1949 to the State Department to take Russian, again in the same old building on C Street. From April until September we spent eight hours a day on Russian language training. Since then they have reduced the number of hours one spends on language because eight hours was a little bit too heavy. After that summer I moved to Columbia University and the Russian Institute. I continued my Russian language work and also got the equivalent of a Master's Degree in Russian Affairs. After finishing at Columbia, I was ordered to Moscow.

Of course, this was the great adventure of all time. Life was very difficult for the Russian people at that time. They hadn't really recovered from the War. The embassy was very carefully guarded and political relations between ourselves and the Soviets, which were already very bad, were made even worse when the Korean War broke out in June, just a few months after I got there.

My first job in the embassy was as consular officer. I had working with me in the consulate three Russians who, it was quite obvious, were reporting to the Soviet Government -- if, indeed, they weren't members of the KGB. We always assumed they were, in any case. The work of the consulate, as far as normal consular functions were concerned, was almost zero, signing a few passport applications, issuing official visas to Soviet officials traveling to the states..

The real problem was the protection of dual national Americans. Most of them were children born in the United States of people who had come to the Soviet Union at the time of the depression but had become very disillusioned with what was happening there. Many of them had managed to slip out and get back to the United States. I don't remember exactly how many of these people were left, but they were a sad bunch. One after another, the active ones were sent to prison camp in Siberia.

I attended several of the show trials of these people. Literally, there was nothing we could do for them. And it got to the point that we were afraid that even the records that we had, which were about all that these people had to prove they were American citizens, might be destroyed by our locals. So one night we took all the records out and shipped them back to Washington. Essentially, we closed down the operation.

Very soon after that I was transferred to political work. No, first I worked for awhile as a general services officer. We didn't have a very big embassy and everything in the Soviet Union, every job, is very political. The general services required people who spoke Russian as it required people to deal with Soviet authorities. It was very good training for other things that one did

later. The general service work was complicated by the difficulty of getting supplies, maintaining cars, and rebuilding buildings in that kind of hostile environment.

Then I went to work in the political section where I spent the rest of my time in Moscow. I worked on the political side of economic development, not much action in that section. One of the highlights of being in Russia was living in Spaso House. I was the inform aide to the ambassador, Admiral Alan Kirk. And being there I was able to participate in all the very fascinating things that happen in Moscow.

Another high point for me was the traveling around the Soviet Union. Despite the difficulties of the times, we did a substantial amount of traveling. I made one very long trip through the Ukraine to the Black Sea at Odessa. And, in fact, I was there and held incommunicado for a day or so when the Korean War broke out. I had no idea what was happening. I just knew that I was being held in our hotel. Then without explanation, I was put on a plane back to Moscow rather than being allowed to continue, as had been planned, to Kiev.

Another high point, of course, was the really interesting people in Moscow's diplomatic colony, not only in our embassy but in other embassies, too -- friendships that I maintained throughout a lifetime -- very, very interesting, well-informed, Russian speaking people from all over the world. Life in Moscow was difficult for the Russians, but for us it was rather pleasant. There was skiing and skating in the winter, visits to dachas in the summer, picnics. All in all, it was at times somewhat hair-raising and somewhat tense, but we had a very, very interesting time.

Q: They say that you were also the officer in charge of the USSR affairs in the Department, I believe, from 1955 to 1957. Do you have any comments on the changes that may have taken place in Russia in between the time you were there and the time you were a desk officer in the Department?

BLAKE: Well, it was actually January 1, 1954, when I came back to the Soviet desk from Japan. I stayed on that job until the fall of 1957, almost four years. I was first the number two on the Russian desk. And then, when Walt Stoessel was transferred, I became the officer in charge.

The big change that had taken place in the meantime, of course, was that Stalin had died. And the period I was there was dominated by the changeover from Malenkov to Khrushchev and Bulganin. Khrushchev was the leading light during that time. We had his first denunciation of Stalin, which was the beginning of some rather remarkable things that Khrushchev did to try to bring new life to the Soviet Union.

I had, in the meantime, been nearly two years in Japan. I had gone there in 1952. I was the political officer working on Soviet affairs and Japanese left-wing politics. I don't know whether you want me to talk about that period or not.

Q: Yes. Go ahead, please. I was trying to tie-in the two Russias.

BLAKE: Right. Maybe you want to go back to finish the Russian part?

Q: Whatever you want to do.

BLAKE: Okay. Well, let's talk about the Russian part for just a minute. The things that stand out most in my mind were the interesting experiences that I had going to some of the big Soviet-Western conferences of the day, the summit conference of 1955, at which Bulganin and Khrushchev met with Eisenhower and with the leaders of France and England. All of us were trying to establish a new, somewhat different relationship than had taken place under Stalin. But, in the end, it was a very Cold War and we could find no real give in the Russian position.

I also was a member of the delegation to the Geneva Conference in 1954 on Indochina and Korea. And that was a fascinating time for observing people like Molotov and Zhou En-lai, the Emperor Bao Dai of Vietnam, a really interesting group of people.

Much of my time on the Soviet desk was spent in trying to move things along for the opening of cultural relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. It was just at the end of the McCarthy period. Senator McCarthy was on the way down. In fact, at one time, I was accused by someone unknown of being a communist and denounced to Senator McCarthy. The reason given was that I was favoring the opening up of cultural relations with the Soviets.

On hearing this, I went right to John Foster Dulles and told him everything I knew. He immediately called up Scott McCleod, the fellow who was more or less working with Senator McCarthy, but was the State Department Security Officer. Dulles told him my story and asked if there was any information other than what was alleged. When McCleod said, "No," Dulles said, "Okay, then, you have to admit that President Eisenhower is a communist because this is his policy and the Soviet desk is carrying out what he wants. And I want to hear no more about it."

In fact, I didn't hear any more. Later when I had an opportunity to review my records in the Department, mention of this charge had been expunged, if, in fact, it had ever been there. That was just a very short byplay, but one sort of indicative of the times.

I spent a certain amount of time with Khrushchev going around the States. He had a rather dramatic tour of the United States. At which point was a trip to Iowa to see Bob Garth and the hybrid corn, which interested Khrushchev very much. He was very interested in US technology, both agricultural and industrial, and spent most of his time looking at that.

Of course, I was involved in all the big events of the moment which concerned the Soviets. Fortunately, despite the tension, but we didn't have any major outbreaks of trouble. It was mostly a period of negotiation. And, of course, much that was happening was happening at a very high level, some of which I didn't even know about. For example, I only had the slightest inkling that something was happening with the U-2 overflights of the USSR. We had a big office with six, seven, or eight officers because we had an enormous amount of work to do in connection with visits back and forth, the first since the war.

Maybe we can go back to Japan for just a minute. When I went there my job was to report on Soviet activity in the Far East and on Japanese communist and socialist activity in the domestic area. It was very interesting. A lot of my information was derivative. It came from Intelligence

sources, the Army and the CIA. They were wired in very well, but they didn't have much on what was happening on the Soviet side.

My most important task was to help the Japanese Foreign Ministry set up an adequate Soviet Affairs Section. The Foreign Ministry had just begun to expand with the end of the occupation and they were establishing the normal kind of regional setup in the Ministry, one that they hadn't had before. The man in charge was Niizeki Kinya, who later became Ambassador to the Soviet Union and then Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was an excellent diplomat. He and I spoke mostly in Russian because he hardly spoke any English and my Japanese, while it got better, was never really high quality. We became quite good friends and did a certain amount of traveling around the country together.

I lived in a Japanese house, which was a little bit like camping out in Rock Creek Park in the winter -- paper and glass walls. What heat you had in the winter came from little charcoal braziers, the hibachi, and from the steaming baths that you took early in the morning as soon as you got up. Japan was a very interesting assignment. I did a lot of traveling in the Far East and would have been happy to stay longer. But, of course, I welcomed the Soviet desk assignment. It was a thrill to get back there for that job.

RICHARD TOWNSEND DAVIES
Political Officer
Moscow, USSR (1951-1953)

After graduating from Columbia College in 1942, Ambassador Richard T. Davies served in the U.S. Army in World War II. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1947, Ambassador Davies has held positions in Moscow, Paris, Kabul, Calcutta and Warsaw. He was interviewed by Peter Jessup on November 9 1979.

DAVIES: After a year there we were sent to Moscow, and arrived in Moscow in the fall of 1951.

Q: Who was Ambassador then?

DAVIES: Alan Kirk.

Q: Oh, yes, the Admiral.

DAVIES: Admiral Alan Kirk - Alan G. Kirk - who I guess after that went to Brussels as Ambassador. A very fine naval officer with very close connections to the Chapin family. His wife, Lydia Chapin Kirk, who subsequently wrote a book called Letters from Moscow, is - I believe she is still alive - a Chapin, related to the Chapin family, which has given so many people to the Foreign Service - Selden Chapin, Vinton Chapin. Selden Chapin was Minister in Hungary, and...I can't remember, but there is a younger Chapin in the Service today. It was a family that sort of alternated back and forth between the Navy and the Foreign Service.

Alan Kirk was there until the end of 1951, and then - I can't remember the dates exactly - he left shortly thereafter, and George Kennan we were told was coming, and of course that excited all the younger officers in the Embassy a great deal because George Kennan was very much our idol. He had published his famous Mister X article on the sources of Soviet conduct in the middle of 1947 in Foreign Affairs, and almost immediately thereafter everybody knew who had written it. After his service on the Policy Planning Council in the State Department he had gone up to Princeton. In fact I think he was at Princeton up until shortly before he was appointed. He had been active in initiating or in proposing the initiation of the Free Europe Committee and the Radio Liberation Committee.

But we were terribly excited to hear that he was coming. He was the person on whom most of the younger officers, I think - certainly those in Soviet studies - modeled themselves.

Mac Toon and I in particular were quite interested because in the fall of '51 the Foreign Service Journal had announced an essay contest for the most - I can't remember, I think they said original and imaginative and best essay on new departures in American foreign policy, and the whole idea of this was obviously based upon the concept - George Kennan had written this epoch-making article which was...formulated the doctrine of containment, and the Foreign Service was, I would say, riding high, the American diplomatic service in those years, because here we had emerged suddenly as a world power without much preparation, and the few professionals who had had extensive service before the war and younger men - relatively younger men like Kennan and Bohlen (Charles "Chip" Bohlen) and Tommy (Llewelyn) Thompson...

Q: Let's see, was Acheson Secretary of State or Foster Dulles?

DAVIES: Acheson was by this time Secretary of State. Foster Dulles came...I guess the election was in 1951, was it?

Q: I am not sure.

DAVIES: Oh no, the election must have been in '52, and President Eisenhower was inaugurated in '52, that's right. Acheson was Secretary.

And the Foreign Service Journal announced this essay contest.

Well, Mac Toon and I, we were very ambitious young officers, and we felt, well...

We submitted an article called "After Containment, What?"

Q: An article done by both of you?

DAVIES: Yes, we collaborated on it, and I suppose we fancied ourselves very much...we thought, if Kennan can do it, why can't we? We were younger than he, but (we thought) we could do it too. I have a copy of the article here, which was sent back to me some time after the essay contest was begun. There is a letter here from Mrs. Lois Perry Jones, the managing editor of the Foreign Service Journal, dated December the 16th 1952:

(reads) "I want to thank you for sending us "After Containment, What?" and to apologize for having kept it so long. I am sorry that it neither won the contest nor was accepted for publication. The board reached the latter..."

Well, she says "the later conclusion" but she means "the latter conclusion" reluctantly because of the article's controversial nature," And so forth.

Of course we heard what had happened. We had fancied that we were emulating George Kennan, and that even if he didn't agree with us he'd appreciate the spirit.

Of course it was controversial. We should have... We said containment was not enough. It was understandable, we said, it was quite understandable that we would have this policy now, but it's not enough, it's a defensive policy.

Q: Foreign Affairs would have snapped it up, wouldn't they?

DAVIES: Well, I don't know whether they would have snapped it up, because George Kennan was an adviser to... - or was on the board, I am not sure.

At any rate we agreed, we rather patronizingly I suppose said, "The goal of containment is correct." We agreed with the goal of it. It only remains for us to examine the policy's major premise here, the probability of the internal collapse of Soviet power." Well, we said there was no probability of the internal collapse of Soviet power.

Q: How right you were.

DAVIES: We, "let's look more closely at those facets of the Soviet system which are regarded as seeds of decay" - those were words that Kennan had used.

And in short we thought it was in the right spirit, but it was quite critical of what George Kennan had written.

And then we proposed - of course one can be as critical as one likes, but one should be constructively critical, so we proposed something to go in place of the containment policy. We said we should replace it with a policy "which will lead to the achievement of our aim, the destruction of Stalinism", we said. You know, we were young, relatively young. And critical. I am shocked to see how critical young people used to be.

Q: They still are.

DAVIES: They still are, yes. (laughs) So then we said, "The strategy to be applied should be the detachment of successive areas of the periphery" - we used long words like that (laughs) because you should if you are writing a serious article - "of the periphery from the Soviet empire." "It should be much easier for the free world to subvert the satellite regimes than it was for Stalin to install them, since the great majority of their subjects are on our side and are potentially our active allies...Upon examination of the Soviet periphery...it becomes immediately apparent that

the one area which best fulfills the requirements [for the area we ought to detach first] is the Soviet zone of Germany, the so-called German Democratic Republic [which] has the longest common frontier with the West," and so forth.

"How would the operation be carried through?" (You may well ask." "The area would be infiltrated by volunteer German agents, acting under central direction, whose task would be to organize tightly knit underground groups." I think we thought that this might be fairly easily done, but I am not so sure now that that was right.

At any rate, "Meanwhile strong pressure would be exerted on the Soviet Army of Occupation...by propaganda and direct action" and so forth, so that may not have been too realistic either.

Then on Liberation Day, "armed bands of German patriots would appear in the streets and move against Soviet installations and an East German Liberation Committee, the cabinet of the underground Parliament would appear."

We based this very much on Polish experience, because both Mac Toon and I had been in Poland and were thoroughly familiar with the history of the underground there. So this East German Liberation Committee - the cabinet of the underground Parliament - which we had postulated would be set up inside East Germany, would appear and appeal for United Nations aid.

"It is probable that such an action, if followed through with lightening speed, could catch the lumbering Soviet machine off guard and achieve its aim before effective countermeasures could be taken.

If, however, such countermeasures should threaten the success of the liberation movement, United Nations troops could knife through the GDR" - it's all rather dramatic - "for example, north and northeast from Hof in Bavaria," where indeed there were American troops in some numbers, "take up positions along the Oder River, and seal the territory off from interference from the East, while other troops move against Soviet installations in support of the German insurrectionaries... The detachment of Eastern Germany would give us a common border with Poland. The Poles need little more than a concrete hope of liberation to undertake a whole series of insurrectionary actions," which I think was quite true at the time.

A "properly conceived and implemented policy of detachment in Eastern Europe could work with the speed of a chain reaction." Everything depended on speed, as you can see - you had to take them off guard.

"Some may question the wisdom of such a policy on the ground that it might precipitate all-out war. Admittedly, there is such a risk" - we were prepared to look facts in the face. "However, there is no evidence, apart from our acceptance at face value of Stalin's threats, that he would initiate World War Three."

"In any event we are already committed to the rearmament of Western Germany, which the Soviet dictator has said he 'will not tolerate.' If this threat is more than calculated bluff, our days of grace are already numbered."

There is a certain amount of casuistry involved in the argument, I must say, now that I look back on it and rehearse it here. It may not have been the most judicious proposal or essay that the Foreign Service Journal received.

"The policy of detachment does not, in our view, accentuate this risk. Rather, it makes our job easier. In the event of Soviet armed action, it offers the assurance of the active support of the peoples of Eastern Europe..."

"Our propaganda efforts up to now have been largely futile, words without deeds. With the adoption of a policy of detachment, propaganda becomes political warfare. We can then offer a positive prospect of freedom to the inmates of Stalin's multinational prison."

Well, as I say we sent that in - it must have been in the fall of 1951, before George Kennan left Washington. George Kennan at the time was in Washington in the Office of Eastern European Affairs, being briefed and reading up in preparation for his coming to Moscow to take up his mission. And Mrs. Lois Perry Jones, the managing editor - it turned out, we heard later - had sent this article over to him for his comments, which struck me as rather an odd way to...

But of course it was inflammatory, certainly, and it should not have been...I quite agree, looking back on it now. I would not...

If I had been George Kennan I would not have recommended that it be published.

In any case apparently George Kennan took considerable umbrage at the presumption of these young pipsqueaks, of these young officers, and was heard to say - we were told later - that these fellows, they don't belong in the Foreign Service.

Q: Really?

DAVIES: Yes. We heard that later, we didn't know that at the time.

So he came to Moscow. It would have been, as I remember now, maybe in late winter, or early spring of '52, and as I say we were prepared to worship at his feet, but of course we got no opportunity to do that.

When he arrived I remember he held a staff meeting, which was very impressive, and he said that when he had been Deputy Chief of Mission to Averell Harriman he had been very unhappy because Averell Harriman had set up a kind of office in Spaso House and spent all his time there, and rarely if ever did he come to the Chancery, and when George Kennan had written things that he thought should go out, then he had to go to Spaso House and show them to Averell Harriman. He showed quite a bit of...

Obviously he had been very displeased with this arrangement.

Averell Harriman's daughter - I am trying to think of her name, I did know it - acted as his secretary and hostess, as a sort of barrier between (him and) George Kennan, I guess, and he said, "Well, we are not going to do that. I mean I want you to know that my door is open," this kind of thing.

But in fact he spent just as much time...

Well, no, that's not fair, because Averell Harriman did have his office in Spaso. They were very short of office space in those days, and it was necessary.

But in fact he spent a lot of time at Spaso, too, and we didn't get the opportunity of sort of learning from the master that we had anticipated.

Q: To get back to the article for a minute - After Containment, What? - that's never seen the light of day?

DAVIES: Well, no, no.

Q: Would you care to include it in the memoir, just as an attachment? Why not?

DAVIES: I think I would. Why not have it xeroxed? Yes. It has a number in sort of oil pencil, "5", so apparently it was read by members of the jury, but I think after George Kennan put his...not his nihil obstat, but the opposite - something obstat. (laughs)

Q: Along with the memoir that would be a useful addendum.

DAVIES: Yes, it would, and it would make clearer what I am (trying to say).

But it was very brash, and certainly injudicious.

Q: But the way you have put it in context, I think it would be very useful, if that's agreeable to you.

DAVIES: Yes. Well, I'd be delighted. I can make a xerox of this, and I will, and bring it along and give it to you.

Now Peer de Silva...

Q: He died recently.

DAVIES: He died recently, a career CIA officer, operations officer who wrote I think, really, a very good book - undoubtedly parts of it were regarded as quite indiscreet two years ago when he first wrote it, Sub Rosa: The CIA and the Uses of Intelligence - New York Times Books, New York, 1978 - (in which) Peer de Silva discusses the question of the establishment of a CIA

station in Moscow. There was a proposal, he writes, to do that, and he went and spoke - he was working in Washington then, I guess - with Charles Bohlen, who at the time was working in the State Department. He says here "Assistant Secretary of State for East European Affairs." I am not sure that's accurate, and I notice a number of inaccuracies in the book. Our Ambassador in Moscow, he writes, was George Kennan, who had arrived in the spring of 1953. That's not right - he had arrived in the spring of 1952. He got the wrong year.

And he was authorized to begin discussions with the State Department at an appropriate level on this matter. He talked with Chip Bohlen. He was reluctant - Chip Bohlen was - and eventually came down against the proposal. He did agree that Peer de Silva could go to London to see Kennan late in June, when the Ambassador would be there briefly on personal business.

The implication was that if Ambassador Kennan concurred we might go ahead, otherwise the matter was closed.

Well, Peer de Silva went to London and saw Ambassador Kennan, who turned down the proposal. But the interesting thing, and the thing I am coming to here, is that he writes, "However, during the conversation I had noticed that the Ambassador was very tense and nervous: he was pale, his hands trembled, and he seemed to have much on his mind. At the end of our talk he said there was something he wanted to ask of the agency" - that is, of the CIA. "There is something you must do for me," he said to Peer de Silva - "I have here a letter." And he then handed me a letter, and I noticed that it was addressed to Pope Pius." "I have a very pessimistic view of our immediate future with the Soviets, particularly at the diplomatic level. I want you to get this letter to Allen Dulles, and make sure that it is passed by secure means to the Pope in Rome."

My questioning look brought the following explanation: "I fear that there is a good possibility that I will wind up some day before long on the Soviet radio. I may be forced to make statements that will be damaging to American policy. This letter will show the world that I am under duress, and I am not making statements out of my own free will."

Q: Who wrote this letter?

DAVIES: Kennan.

Q: I see.

DAVIES: "The letter to the Pope will let him make public my position and the true situation there."

That is Peer de Silva.

"I was astounded at the grimness with which these words were delivered," de Silva writes, "but I was in no way prepared for the following."

Again Kennan speaking:

"I understand that the CIA has some form of pill that a person could use to kill himself instantly. Is this right?"

Q: Meaning, not morally, is it correct that there is such a pill?

DAVIES: That there is such a pill. And so the upshot is that Kennan asked Peer de Silva, according to the latter's memoir, for these pills, and Peer de Silva says that through the diplomatic pouch two pills were sent to Ambassador Kennan. Well, I am not sure it says "two pills" but at any rate, some pills were sent to him.

"Shortly thereafter he went from Moscow to Germany on an official visit, where he made a speech with strong critical reference to the USSR. This speech resulted in his being declared persona non grata on the spot. He never returned to Moscow from Berlin.

"Ambassador Kennan finally came back to Washington from Europe. I made an appointment to see him, and asked what had happened to the pills. He told me with a curious smile, "I have already flushed them down the toilet."

"At the time and in the years since I have always thought that the actions of Ambassador Kennan were the actions of a very brave man.

"During the early 1950s, the CIA was aware that the Soviets were experimenting with drugs and tended to destroy a person's natural inhibitions and controls.

"In the Cold War atmosphere of the times Kennan saw himself as a likely target for a Soviet effort along this line. Nevertheless he went back to that environment of danger and was prepared to take his own life rather than let himself be used by the Soviets in a manner degrading or shameful to the United States."

Well, I was intrigued by this because of my own experiences with Ambassador Kennan in Moscow. He came there - I don't know whether you remember, but before he came he gave - I judge that he gave - two interviews, one to Richard Rovere, which was published in The New Yorker, and one to Marquis Childs, which was published...Marquis Childs was working for the St. Louis Post Dispatch, and it was syndicated.

Well, it didn't quote him, but it said, "People close to Kennan, sources close to Kennan," - but it seemed obvious that it was he speaking behind that journalistic convention, and in these interviews, if my suspicion is correct, he said that it was terribly important, that admittedly no individual probably could influence the course of events that much, but nevertheless since Stalin would leave the scene one day, if it should happen that he died or left the Soviet political stage, while Kennan was there this would be very fortuitous because of course Kennan knew the Soviet Union so well and knew the Soviet people so well, and he would be in a position to interpret to the United States the confused situation that ensued upon Stalin's death.

I think that was the clear (implication).

I don't know whether...

I think he may even have said that.

And this might be crucial, because you know, at a critical moment like that to have somebody so knowledgeable as he there might indeed prove to be the case of the right man in the right place at the right time.

And then he came to Moscow, and of course he found a Moscow which was very different from the Moscow he obviously remembered and had anticipated, I suppose, returning to, much less tolerant of foreigners than even during the '30s, and of course during the war things were relatively free and easy there.

George Kennan plays the guitar, and so far as I know very well. He is a folk singer, and apparently during the 30s when he was there first - he was a young man in the first place - there used to be very pleasant evenings, and it was possible to know and see a certain number of Soviet citizens, of Russians who obviously were if not under the control of the Secret Police at any rate had some kind of permission to mingle with foreigners.

Q: People like Ilya Ehrenburg?

DAVIES: Well, I don't know. Yes, I suppose some of the cultural figures, but there was a kind of... I always called it the demi-monde, which grows up in a place like that - people who are licensed to have contact with foreigners: some of them are rather shady characters, and some of them are pitiable characters, but one assumes that all of them cooperate, collaborate with the police. In any case it can still be rather pleasant, if the ballerinas from the Bolshoi, you know, if...

But when he got back there in 1952, the situation was very different. There were no contacts at all of any kind. It was the period that can reasonably be called the Deep Freeze, and he came back into that situation, with his very charming and strong wife, a Norwegian girl by birth - a very fine woman - and he found no contacts at all. Now here is a man who speaks beautiful Russian, who knows Russian literature and appreciates Russian literature and so forth, and who was completely cut off from Soviet society.

Well, one thing he did in order to try to overcome this was to go once a week to the theater, and part of the time he was there - he was there less than a year, around nine months I suppose - Mrs. Kennan was in Norway with her parents, taking care of the older children, having put them in school somewhere, so he was alone a fair amount of time in Moscow, and he would go once a week to the theater, and he would go with a language officer, and if the language officer was married with the language officer's wife. He'd send his car for them and would have them picked up, and then the car would go to Spaso House to pick him up, and they'd go to the theater, and then come back to Spaso House after the play and have a little midnight supper in his study underneath the famous carved eagle with the microphone in it. We didn't know that there was a microphone in it at that point.

Q: How many months or years had that microphone been there?

DAVIES: Not too long; it had been up in the attic, and I think when he got there he went through it and found it. It is a very impressive carved seal of the United States. But I don't even know whether the microphone was in it up in the attic. I don't think so. I think it was (put in it) after it was hung down there, because as I say he was alone in the house, and out of the house a fair amount. I think there would have been ample opportunity for somebody to stick the thing in it.

In any case I remember my wife and I went with him, and we went to see The Inspector General of Nikolai Gogol. I didn't want to go to that because I had seen it at the Moscow Art Theater, but obviously that was what he wanted to go to see, so we went to see it. (laughs)

The thing that got me a little bit was that we had to pay for our own tickets, and I mean I had seen the thing once. If I'd had my druthers I'd have gone elsewhere. However, one didn't question those things, one just went with the Ambassador.

And so we went to the theater, and of course he had these four goons following - these four Secret Policemen - and we went in and they had free seats there and they sat down. There were four people sitting in the row right behind, and these people, these characters came up, and they really didn't have to say anything, they just looked at the people and they said, "You, out, we will sit there." Which they did - the four of them sat behind us.

Q: Were they rough types or sophisticated types?

DAVIES: No, they were muscle men, and it made him feel very... Well, I was used to this. I had been in Poland.

And the anti-American propaganda of course got to him very much. He took it very personally. He walked to work every morning from Spaso to the Embassy, which was on Mokhovaya Street, right next to the National Hotel, across from the Kremlin.

Q: Would you say that this was a calculated policy to isolate him and render him ineffective and drive him out?

DAVIES: No, no, it had nothing to do with him at all. It was a policy that was applied to everybody, to all foreigners, including even Eastern Europeans.

Q: And it was so solidified and concentrated, but he wasn't prepared for it is what you are saying?

DAVIES: He had no idea that this was going on. He had been at Princeton. Of course we had been reporting all this. The thing that surprised me was that he wasn't aware of it. He obviously hadn't been reading. I can only imagine that he hadn't been reading the Soviet press, because you know the anti-American propaganda was all through the press: you couldn't pick up any publication, any newspaper, without reading some horrible story about the alleged atrocities

committed by American troops in Korea. Some of them were absolutely... You know, they were modeled on the kind of things that the Nazis had done. The effort was to make us look...to equate us with the Nazis, and they had absolutely horrible stories in there, which you know...

I remember one story about American soldiers who were said to have captured a Korean girl, and with their bayonets had cut off her breasts and had mutilated her. You know, the most...absolutely the most...

Well, as he went to the office he would pass these hoardings of billboards with frightful cartoons against the United States on. Of course we all saw them, but we all sort of understood that this was the game that was being played, and what did one do about it? You could protest about it, and we did protest about some of these things, but it was no good.

At any rate this night at the Moscow Art Theater I remember after the first act of the play we went out to the lobby - in Russian theaters they have this famous what they call "gulyanye," the walking around during the intermission, everybody walks, sort of in a clockwise fashion. We didn't walk, we went over in a corner, and in sort of each of the other corners were two of these goons who were keeping their eyes on the Ambassador, and he was very, very depressed, and finally he sort of looked up and he said, "It's just as though there is a great hand pressing down on all of us." I tried to sort of make some joke, but that was no joking matter to him.

Well, then we went back and saw the rest of the play, and then went back to Spaso for a midnight supper. But it was a very morbid kind of evening.

Q: How old a man was he then?

DAVIES: I am guessing, but I would say he must have been in his latter 40s. That was '51, so he would have been in his late 40s, I would think, perhaps not yet 50. (*) George Kennan was born in 1904, which would make him 47 yrs of age in 1951. [transcriber's note])

He spent a fair amount of time in bed in Spaso, and we had to go over there with the messages that were going out to be cleared, and he'd go over them. He'd be in bed, and it wasn't clear to me what this was. I don't know... I suppose it was physical, I don't know.

Q: A Churchillian use of the bed?

DAVIES: No, not at all, no, he was...the whole thing was very depressing. I wouldn't say that he has a sense of humor. He is dour. I am half Welsh. He is a black Gael - the family I suppose is Scottish way back where. But that kind of brooding - what people call black Irish, you know - (was what he had), although I never saw any signs of the kind of extremes of temper that one can get with certain Irishmen.

Well, in any case, to more or less finish this up, I've often been asked how could he, a professional diplomat - at that time he was regarded as the pinnacle of our service - how could he have done what he did in Berlin, and said what he said, which resulted in his being declared persona non grata, comparing the Soviet Union, life in Moscow, with life in a Nazi internment

camp in Germany during the war. And my answer is, well, he found himself in what for him was psychologically an intolerable situation. This is my interpretation, for what it's worth. I recognize the pitfalls of amateur psychologizing. Nevertheless we all indulge in it, and I think what had happened was that he had given these interviews, he had this picture of himself, this self-image, which to a very considerable extent was quite accurate, as the - if not the greatest at least one of the three or four, two or three, maybe two - he and Chip Bohlen, let's say - most highly qualified Soviet experts we had in every sphere, language, knowing the history, having served there before, knowledge of what happened during the war, the whole thing, and on the basis of that he had said to people - not only to Rovere and to Marc Childs, but presumably to others - "I'll be the right man in the right spot at the right time," or "I could be, at any rate."

And then when he got there he found on the contrary this... He was never received by Stalin - a point that he makes a great deal of in his memoirs. In his memoirs he tells about the effort he made to break out of that isolation, having the Deputy Chief of Mission, Hugh Cummings, mention to somebody in the Foreign Office his - Kennan's - desire to have somebody with whom he could speak Russian, to have some contact with somebody. And then a few weeks later this young man coming into the Embassy, obviously in the effort to stage a provocation, saying that he represented an oppositionist group and all they needed was help from the United States, in arms and money, and they would assassinate Stalin, or words to that effect, which was obviously... I think this is his interpretation in the memoirs, or if it's not at any rate the implication is clear that this was the answer to his effort to break out of the isolation, that this was the answer to Hugh Cumming's approach to the Foreign Office.

Q: A provocation.

DAVIES: A provocation was the answer to it.

Q: Did this black Gaelic mood permeate the whole Embassy? It must have had some effect.

DAVIES: Well, it did. It did have a bad effect, I'd say. The morale was not (high). I should say that morale was not bad before he came. Of course we all felt that we were under attack, and under the circumstances there was a certain esprit de corps and a pulling together, and a recognition that everybody was in the same boat and we had to try to help each other. But morale...

I think he had the idea, he projected his depression, his gloom, his discouragement on the rest of us. He thought we were in bad shape. I didn't feel that way at any rate. Of course a lot of us were young and...

And he decided that we must organize ourselves in order to combat this. Consequently he started a number of activities, some of them really quite good. I don't know that ballet classes were possible then, but perhaps they were. But there were a number of kind of hobby groups: painting, you could join a group and sing Russian folk songs - I think he belonged and helped along there, he was really excellent at that, at playing the guitar and singing, perhaps another side of his Celtic heritage, I don't know. One can't possibly...these things are stereotypes.

In any case he set up a study group, which for my sins - which are many, beginning with this article - I was made responsible for. The idea was that at Spaso we were going to meet once a month - on sort of like the last Thursday or something like that - and there would be a lecture.

Oh, no, we didn't really get started until after he'd left there. He was declared persona non grata, as I remember, in December, and Jack McSweeney who was the political counselor, had been pressing me to get on with it and set up a program, and it was with the greatest reluctance that I participated in this, because it involved dragooning people, you know, to make command performances and write lectures, and appear and give speeches, and who had time for it, so to speak? We all were fairly busy with what we considered was our duty.

But no, the Ambassador wanted this, so when he didn't come back Jack McSweeney I think actually was charge then, as I remember - it was the beginning of the Christmas season - and I said to Jack, after the initial shock had passed, I said, "Well, there's one thing, there's one sort of silver lining here. We don't have to go forward with this lecture group." And Jack said, "No, no, no, we are going to go forward with it anyway."

I said, "Why?" I said, "I mean, everybody is grumbling about it."

And he said, "Well, you've got a schedule lined up," which I had by that time, I'd gotten people, and I'd submitted a schedule for six months.

He said, "No, we are going to do it anyway."

Then Jake (Jacob) Beam came as charge. He was in Belgrade, and he came up there as charge. The Beams moved in.

By the time he got there we'd had two lectures as I remember. I gave one of them, and I can't remember who else gave one. Was it Henry Shapiro, the UPI correspondent? I don't remember now.

In any case Jake Beam arrived to find that the house in which he was going to live as charge, Spaso House, was invaded once a month by this motley crew of American and other diplomats and correspondents who would come in and expect to be given some drinks or something like that, and then sit solemnly there and listen to each other lecture. And Jake Beam said, "We'll have one more meeting, at which I will talk on the situation in Yugoslavia, and that will be the end." And that's the way it worked. (laughter) He talked to them, and that was that. After that no more meetings.

But that was already in the middle of 1953 by that time.

In any case, George Kennan - just to finish that part of the story - was going out in December, and as I said I'd been asked how could he have done this.

Well, he sent a telegram before he left, saying he knew very well when he got to Berlin - to the airport of Berlin, Tempelhof - that the correspondents would all be there and would be asking

him what his impressions were, and since, he said, he could not reply honestly to them without saying things that would be incompatible with the continuation of his mission in Moscow, he intended simply to say NO COMMENT.

He sent this telegram, almost as though he were trying to ensure it putting it down on paper.

But indeed when he got to Berlin and they asked him, implicitly he made this comparison and was declared persona non grata.

So my answer when people have posed the question to me has been, well, the man was in an impossible situation: he had, both in terms of his own self-image and of the image he felt he had in the eyes of others, somehow failed, which of course he hadn't - he had not failed. What could one have done? No one else could have done (more). But he felt that he should have been able to do more, or he felt perhaps that he'd promised somehow that he would do more, and he'd been unable to do more, and consequently I felt - and I felt for years, long before Peer de Silva's book ever appeared, and I knew about the pills - that finally...how could he get out of that situation? He couldn't go back to President Truman and say, "I have to resign." That would have been a kind of admission of failure. So how to get out of this? And perhaps that was the way. That was the way he got out of it.

So all this kind of boils down to taking some issue with Peer de Silva's interpretation. I don't really think he feared that - that somehow they were going to slip him a Mickey or a truth serum or the opposite rather. I think his fear was not that, but was less specific, and this was the way he got out of it.

Q: I think maybe that was less of an accurate interpretation of Kennan than the indoctrination and lifelong feeling that Peer de Silva had about the enemy?

DAVIES: Yes.

Q: If you know what I mean.

DAVIES: Yes, yes. Well, that's his interpretation. My interpretation would be rather a different one.

A feeling of great insecurity. He was under attack psychologically certainly, as all of us were, but he much more than the rest of us as the head of the mission, as a man who after all was the author of the best articulation of the doctrine which in fact we were following.

Q: Doesn't that draw a parallel between this career man who couldn't fulfill his promise and the average politician who never fulfills his promise and never thinks about it?

DAVIES: Well, yes, yes, there is something kind of interesting there. He was so conscientious, and of course there's another thing that I think, and it's not being really able to... - what should I say? - to laugh at himself, taking himself so seriously. We are all poor sinners on our way to the grave, and we are going to stumble occasionally, we are not divine beings, and that's why we

have to have religion, or we used to at any rate. (laughs while speaking) I don't know what we do now.

Q: What did Lenin say? We are dead men on furlough?

DAVIES: Dead men on furlough, yes. Somebody said that, yes.

Well, I suppose there is one postscript.

As long as I was in Moscow, after he got there at any rate, I got very bad efficiency reports.

Q: Really?

DAVIES: ...saying that, well, the young fellow has certain elements of promise, but he's shown that he is incapable of conforming to and subordinating himself to American foreign policy. And the same happened with Mac Toon.

Actually Mac Toon was transferred out of there before his tour would have ended, because it was felt that they'd better break up the dirty duo, the troublesome twosome or whatever it was, (laughs) before they wrote something again.

He was sent to Rome, but he got a bad report, too.

Q: Really?

DAVIES: But some years later Mac Toon told me that he'd seen Kennan on some occasion, (I can't remember - it sticks in my mind that it was in Berlin, Mac was assigned to Berlin at one point, but whether Kennan came there I don't know) and had said to him, "Well, you know, the reports that we got..."

Of course he didn't write the reports. They were written by our supervisors. We were down on the totem pole.

But I don't say he dictated or said that the report should be along those lines. But I got two of them like that, and later when I was being considered for assignment to Afghanistan the people in NEA - the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs - who had my file said, "My gosh, this guy, it says here, he can't follow...he doesn't accept American foreign policy. What does that mean? I mean he really sounds like someone who is really insubordinate - that's hardly an adequate word for it."

Ray Thurston fortunately was then the director of the office - or the deputy director, I can't remember which - of the Office of Eastern European Affairs, and he had been in Moscow on an inspection trip during Kennan's ambassadorship, and he wrote a memo very kindly saying, well, there were disagreements in the Embassy, and this was not the only one on containment, because of course Kennan wrote his famous telegram, large chunks of which were published by I think

Joe Alsop in his column, saying that NATO was all a big mistake, that this had been a very bad idea because it had made the Soviets bellicose somehow.

And I kept trying to point out from my worm's-eye position there that contrary to his interpretation we were not...what we were doing was not provoking them - provoking the Soviets, provoking Stalin - to be bellicose. It was scaring him. And the last thing he wanted after the fright he had had during the Second World War was any kind of a military threat from us.

Well, Kennan saw the thing very much in the opposite direction: he thought that the Soviets were beginning to build up, whipping up their population and so forth, to the point where they would go to war against the West.

I had thought that earlier, when I was in Warsaw, but I had gotten over that when I got to the Soviet Union and saw that this was very largely a defense mechanism - all this anti-American propaganda was an effort to inoculate the Soviet people against their natural feelings of, well, I would say even friendliness, resulting largely from the fact that during the war so many Soviet people and soldiers had been kept alive on American C rations, and had admired so greatly our supplies of Studebakers and jeeps which were highly prized, and boots. So many Soviet people would tell you, if you ever got a chance to speak with them, "Oh, your shoes, your boots, they are so wonderful." They were Army boots. "So wonderful, I wore mine for 15 years." You know it wasn't 15 years, but they said they were wonderful boots. And your C rations, and your SPAM. Oh, SPAM! They loved SPAM. It was great, it was a great delicacy. If you had a can of SPAM, one of the greatest delicacies you could give to a Soviet was a can of SPAM of all things. We thought, well, this was second best or third best.

So there was this great feeling of comradeship in arms and fellowship, which came out when the circumstances were right, when they felt they weren't observed. That was their real feeling, in my opinion. And Stalin and the leadership were trying to inoculate them against it, they were trying to drive that out of them by this propaganda.

But George Kennan accepted it somehow at face value, and I just think that was much too simple a way to regard it, particularly in the case of men whose political perceptions tended to be much more sophisticated than that.

Q: Now did Kennan then go on to any other ambassadorship?

DAVIES: No. You remember what happened was, he came back. In the meanwhile the election had taken place, and Eisenhower had been elected. And he came back, and according to the Foreign Service Act of 1946, a man who had held the position of Ambassador - and there were certain other qualifications - who was not appointed to another position for six months, was automatically retired, and he was the only one - Dulles by that time was Secretary, and he utilized that provision of the Act against him, and again he writes about this in his memoirs, and he is very bitter about it.

Q: Then he went to Princeton.

DAVIES: Then he went back to Princeton, where he'd been before, and I think really he was a brilliant reporting officer. Some of the things he wrote - copies of them were available in the Embassy when I was there - were just brilliant, beautifully written, great insights, but not an ambassador somehow.

And again some of these traits came out when he was Ambassador to Yugoslavia. I was not connected with him then, but needless to say I followed with great fascination what he said, what happened to him and what he did.

Oh, and one other thing. I was in Belgrade in - it would have been I suppose 1964 or '65, after he had been Ambassador to Yugoslavia, and he came on a visit when I was there. Adolph Dubs, who was killed in Afghanistan, was charge d'affaires when I visited there, and I was staying with the Dubses, and Ambassador Kennan came on a visit. He came to a dinner party at "Spike" Dubs's apartment. It was a stag party of just men, and some of the Yugoslav officials with whom he had dealt when he was there attended, and it was a very pleasant evening. Finally all the Yugoslavs left and only Ambassador Kennan, Spike Dubs and I were left. He left then - there was an Embassy car to take him back to his hotel. Spike's living room was about twice as wide as this, and it had no rugs. It had a parquet floor with some scatter rugs, but no wall-to-wall carpeting. And as he walked over this parquet, his footsteps resounding, he walked more and more slowly, until he got to the front door. He turned around and said, just sort of, you know, to nobody in particular, "It's so hard for me to think that I will never be part of this again."

It was sort of poignant.

By then he had given up I guess the idea of coming back into the (Foreign Service).

Q: Good evening. This is the second interview with Ambassador Richard Townsend Davies by Peter Jessup from Columbia, and it is nice to have you here this December evening.

I think you remember more clearly where we left off than I do, so I turn it over to you.

DAVIES: (laughs) Well, we did leave off I believe with Ambassador (George Frost) Kennan's statement in Berlin, which resulted in his being declared persona non grata.

I was reading this week a clipping containing an interview by the former Director of Central Intelligence, Richard Helms, with a correspondent of the London Daily Observer, I believe it was, in which former Director Helms was presenting a justification of the MKULTRA program, the agency's involvement in experimentation with drugs, in particular LSD, and he said, among other things, that one reason it had seemed imperative to begin a program to determine what the effects of LSD were was the statement made by Ambassador Kennan.

Q: Which statement was that?

DAVIES: A statement made at the airport in Berlin, when the Ambassador said that he could only compare his - whatever it was - six or eight months in the Soviet Union with the period he had spent in the Nazi internment camp during the Second World War. And Director Helms half said and half implied that this was such an unpredictable or unexpected or astounding result of occurrence that really it could only be explained...or one attempt to explain it involved the hypothesis that the Ambassador had been served something with LSD or some truth drug, with something like that in it, and consequently when he reached Berlin he was unable to do anything but blurt out - that's the implication - what was really in his mind, and was no longer in a position to dissimulate or...

Q: Had you ever heard that?

DAVIES: Well, obviously there is some kind of tie, and I am wondering in fact whether Dick Helms isn't putting some things together, such for example as the material in Peer de Silva's book, because I had never heard this before.

Q: Neither had I.

DAVIES: And our understanding - that is, the understanding of those people who were then in Moscow and who had had a close association, as close as the Ambassador would permit, with him - was that which I tried to outline last time, and which I would summarize by saying that having given the interviews that he did to journalists before he left to take up his post - in which he said that of course no one man could make that much difference, but if any American ambassador could affect future events when Stalin left the scene, then perhaps it would be he with his knowledge of the Soviet Union - I think built up these expectations for his mission, and they were very thoroughly dashed. In the first place, Stalin didn't die soon enough to enable him to play the role that he had forecast in these background interviews he had given, and finding himself in that position, finding himself under enormous psychological pressure, surrounded by suspicion and provocations and the kind of treatment which he being I would say a pretty sensitive person was particularly impressed by - and depressed by - finally there was no other way out for him, although he knew he shouldn't say what he did, than to say something which would result in...

Now that's my hypothesis, that's by belief, and I think it is borne out by a close reading of the Ambassador's memoirs, or reading between the lines, or a Kremlinological analysis of his own memoirs.

I am concerned of course - and I don't think I would be writing this, I wouldn't want to write this, and I intend to be quite careful in controlling what happens to this so long as the Ambassador is alive...

Q: That's understood.

DAVIES: It's not that I feel that there is an obligation after all these years not to talk about these things because they've been talked about and written about first of all by the Ambassador himself

time after time in one fashion or the other, and it's also not that I feel that there is an obligation of loyalty, but there is a certain level of discretion that I think should be observed.

I again don't want to seem to be criticizing my superiors. Ambassador Kennan was and is probably one of the two or three leading American historians of the Soviet Union, of Russia. He has just written now a book on Franco-Russian relations and the Franco-Russian Alliance beginning at the end of the 19th century, which I haven't read but which got excellent reviews. He is an outstanding historian, but to those of us who were in Moscow, who as I said were waiting so to speak to worship at his feet and to learn from him, it was needless to say a terrible shock to find that our idol had feet of clay and I think that somehow the historical record somewhere should have room for that kind of perception.

Q: I agree. I think you have stated it now in summation and went into it in considerable detail in the earlier interview.

DAVIES: The other thing I wanted to say about that period also refers of course to Ambassador Kennan and to the containment thesis which he enunciated, to my way of thinking very correctly and cogently and convincingly in the X article.

Actually I think he was articulating what our policy had already become or was already becoming, but he did it in a fashion which made the basis of that policy clear to people who are interested or were interested in foreign affairs in this country.

After that however he began to have second thoughts, because he felt that the policy had been taken to imply that we should construct a kind of "cordon sanitaire" around the Soviet Union, including, if not consisting primarily of, the military bases. I mean he felt that that was a distortion, and he said later that that was a distortion of his hypothesis or of his thesis.

It's quite clear - and again a great deal has been written on this, there was a whole issue I guess of the magazine Foreign Policy, published by the Carnegie Institution, devoted to the subject, edited by Charles Gati some time ago, and it was called "Containment Revisited" or something like that - the clear implication of the thesis, of the article, and I believe also of what the Ambassador was saying at the time in policy recommendations, was that there was an important military dimension to the thesis, but then I think later he did become concerned and disturbed that that military aspect of the resulting policy was not matched somehow with a comparable balancing or perhaps even overbalancing political dimension. Just what that political dimension might have been and how it might have been developed is a whole other, a whole different subject.

When he was in Moscow he sent several telegrams expressing his concern, one in particular that was I believe published by Joe (Joseph) Alsop almost intact in his column, which objected to the establishment of the NATO Alliance, which of course had already been established a couple of years earlier, I guess. No, actually it was less than that. But he said in the message that he felt this was a mistake. Characteristically he did not circulate the draft of the message before he sent it. He sent it and then he asked us to comment on it - he asked the people in the Embassy to comment on it - which did seem a little futile, but...

Q: Now since this is an age of leakage, and Washington has always been the center of leakage, would that reprinting of a State cable almost verbatim by Joe Alsop have been because someone handed it to him? It wasn't Kennan's doing, was it?

DAVIES: I have no way of knowing. I can't believe it was Kennan's doing. I don't know how it happened, but Joe Alsop did have excellent sources. But I just don't know how it happened. It clearly was leaked to or shown to Joe Alsop, and he had enough of an opportunity to study it and perhaps to take notes on it, so that he reproduced whole sections of it, or paraphrased them only very transparently. But this was clearly - and he described it as such, I believe - a message that had come from Ambassador Kennan.

Walter Lippmann criticized the containment thesis, both in terms of principle, so to speak, and in pragmatic terms, saying what is diplomacy for if it's not precisely to find solutions to some of these problems?

Kennan's thesis on the other hand was that you could not do business with Stalin. I think in retrospect we could find evidence to show that we could have done business with Stalin if we had understood how to do business with Stalin, which we did not understand. (laughs)

Kennan I think understood it, I think (Ambassador) Chip Bohlen understood it, but they came out of a tradition in the American Foreign Service which had been primarily that of reporting, observing, not making policy recommendations. That's evident in many ways, for example in Lynn Etheridge Davis's book - I forget the exact title of it - Davis, Lynn E., The Cold War Begins: Soviet-American Conflict Over Eastern Europe, Princeton U. Press, 1974.) on the origin of the cold war, a very fine book, I think. She interviewed a lot of the Foreign Service officers who were in the State Department involved in our relations with the Soviet Union during the War, who subsequently were very critical of our policy as being too friendly towards Stalin. But when she asked some of these officers - and some of those in fact who later were known at least in the Service as real hardliners, one of whom now is very active in the anti-SALT struggle - when she asked them, "Why didn't you stand up at that time and point these things out?" this officer in particular said, "Well, the policy was what The Boss wanted. He wanted it that way, so we tried to carry it out."

Q: By "The Boss" meaning the Secretary of State?

DAVIES: Meaning President Roosevelt.

Q: Oh!

DAVIES: And of course it's difficult to find fault with that. It is the President's job under the Constitution to form foreign policy. Actually the poor old Foreign Service had had its best shot at opposing the President's views in this regard many years earlier, at the time that recognition of the Soviet Union was being worked out, when Robert F. Kelley, who was then the head of the Soviet or the Russian Desk in the State Department - Bob Kelley, who had been our assistant military attache in the Baltic States at the end of the First World War, and was the father of the Soviet specialization in the Foreign Service, he sent Kennan and Bohlen and Eddie Page and all

the others off to learn Russian in the '20s, before we had relations, in anticipation of the day when we would have relations - (when Bob Kelley tried) to get the President to negotiate recognition - the terms of recognition - with the Soviets in such a fashion that we would get a meaningful quid pro quo, and failed. I think he wrote and said all the right things, but the President was bound and determined to have recognition, and was not concerned with the modalities, and finally had it, despite all the things that Bob Kelley said and wrote, and Bob Kelley's star of course faded from then on, he was increasingly shoved aside, and...

Q: Did he serve with Ambassador William Bullitt over there or not?

DAVIES: No, he was the man who in essence organized the whole thing from back here in Washington. He continued to be the head of the...on the Desk, but as the years went by he was increasingly put to one side. He had built up this fantastic library in the State Department on the Soviet Union, which was probably unique, certainly in this country - I don't know, people said in the West - over many years, beginning with his own years in Russia at the end of the war, through the Legation in Riga (Latvia), through Berlin, through the Eastern European capitals. He had been procuring publications and laws; he was a real scholar himself, and he built up this fine library which eventually was moved out of the old State War-Navy Building - there wasn't room for it there as other activities began to move in and the library I guess eventually was dispersed.

Bob Kelley himself ended up after the War as the representative in Munich of the Radio Liberty Committee.

Q: I vaguely remember him.

DAVIES: A wonderful, wonderful man. He never married, he died here three or four years ago, he never wrote any memoirs, he said he didn't intend to write any memoirs, but he is a character, a personality who should be remembered, and I hope...maybe...

I'd like to see an adequate biography and study done of him. The problem will be - I just don't believe, I don't know whether he kept any papers or not. I think he had a sister.

But that's sort of the story, which again has been thoroughly documented in a number of books.

After that initial effort, nobody really, it seems to me, succeeded in getting to President Roosevelt with the kinds of recommendations that were needed.

Well, I've gotten away from George Kennan in the period of 1952, when he served in Moscow. So, he objected to NATO, he thought that the Soviets regarded this as a warlike move on our part, and those of us in the Embassy whom he asked to comment on this point of view - after he'd transmitted it to the Department - said, well, we really didn't think that, we regarded it as much more an action by the West in response to what the Soviets had been up to, and George Kennan was warning the Department in those years that now Stalin was beginning to mobilize the Soviet people for war against the West. We tried to tell him that that was not the case, that the anti-American propaganda, which had such an appalling effect on everybody, was essentially a defensive reaction and not an aggressive or a threatening one. The Soviet Union after all was still

a shambles, largely from the effects of the war, with 20 million dead and a major percentage of the national productive capacity destroyed.

He was succeeded after he was declared persona non grata...

Oh, I meant to mention one other thing, which again affected him a great deal, and through him all of us.

The American Embassy in those years was on a street next to the National Hotel - Mokhovaya Street, Moss Street, that's where they used to sell the moss with which people chinked their log cabins in the old days, that's how it got its name - right across from the Kremlin, I guess on the north side of the Kremlin.

Stalin ordered us to move. The British Embassy was just across the river, just south of the Kremlin, and the American Embassy was just north of the Kremlin, and it was quite clear that he didn't like...

One imagined him walking the parapets of the Kremlin looking on one side and seeing the Stars and Stripes, and looking on the other side and seeing the Union Jack. He was surrounded.

In any case he gave orders that we should move both embassies. The British, applying the lessons of hundreds of years of successful diplomacy, procrastinated indefinitely until the old man died and never did move. But we being Americans, well, if we have to do it we have to do it - we did move.

We first learned of this requirement from the Soviet Government when Ambassador Kennan called a meeting at Spaso House of all the people in the Embassy, and presented this decision as quite clearly what it was - a move by Stalin out of pique, but designed to show his dislike for us in a tangible way, but one which would not entail any consequences, or at any rate any important consequence for him. And Ambassador Kennan presented it in that fashion, he spoke of the great fondness everybody had for the Embassy at Mokhovaya, which of course not only contained the chancery, the offices, but apartments in which a large number - perhaps half or more - of the personnel of the Embassy lived, and which had been acquired by Charlie Thayer back in the early '30s, the acquisition of which he wrote about in his book Bears in the Caviar. So there was a sort of combined nostalgia and an effort on his part to reassure us that we shouldn't worry, that this was regrettable, but we would all be all right.

Well, I think most of us were a little surprised by this because again it was something that we quite understood. It was part of the game.

Q: You referred in retrospect to the long-standing wisdom of the British, who played it out. Was that evident among the personnel you worked with?

DAVIES: Not at that time, because this was early. The British of course said, "Of course we'll move." They never said, "We won't move."

Like us; we did the same thing.

They said, "Well, show us where we should move to. You control all the property here and the housing, you control the buildings."

And of course this was part of the deal. The Foreign Ministry, which did try I think - to the extent that it had any leeway or latitude in the matter - to be reassuring too and they said, "Of course this is nothing personal, but it's just a question that we have other plans, this and that, urban renewal and what have you, and we'll find not only adequate but superior quarters for you elsewhere, so that you won't regret this at all."

And the British went along with this, but they just kept looking, they were never satisfied with what they were shown. I don't know how many places they were shown, but they were sort of being shown the 20th or the 30th on March the 5th - or whatever it was - in 1953, when the word got out that Stalin had died, at which point the Soviet authorities said, "Now wait a second, you don't need to move now."

By that time we had already started to move. We had found a building which we accepted, the one in which we now have our chancery, on Tchaikovsky Street, on the so-called Garden Ring. The Soviets had undertaken to refurbish it, and we had imported very substantial amounts of American and Western European plumbing and appliances, electrical equipment and what have you, in fact I think several million dollars worth by the time we got done, so we had an investment in the new building by that time, which we could not just write off, and although as a matter of fact the Soviets then did tell us, "You don't have to move if you don't want to, and we'll work out some compensation, we can negotiate a kind of fair value of this equipment with which we are refurbishing your building," and that kind of thing, by that time we had gone so far, and I think by that time too people were beginning to realize that this would be a better deal for us, not right side by side with the Kremlin a hundred yards away from Red Square, but in a very nice location, and the quarters were more adequate, the building in which we had been was old and had never had a fundamental renovation from the day we had moved in, it had been occupied on what one can only call the hot apartment system - one family moved out, and another family moved in the next day - and the furniture was in terrible shape. I was in charge of moving us out of that building, and the filth and decrepitude were really something to behold. The building was in fact falling down around our ears, and under the conditions of crowding that existed there we would never have been able to do the sort of renovation that we needed.

So all in all by that time we decided we might just as well go ahead and move, and we did. The British were still in their fine, old "fin de siecle" - turn-of-the-century - sugar baron's mansion on the other side of the river, and we of course are waiting now to build our new embassy down in the flats of the river bottom behind the present site.

Well, then Chip Bohlen came. As I remember he came right after May Day 1953. We had just completed, or were in the process of completing, moving out of the old building on Mokhovaya Street. I think his only act with regard to the old building was to come down the day that we climbed up and took the seals, the shields, down. They were over the three archways, only one of which was used - the other two were blocked up. But the three seals were there - the Great Seal

of the United States - and he climbed up on a ladder for a photographer, and he ceremonially unscrewed one of the screws that was holding it and had been holding it since 1933 or 1934, whenever it was put up.

We took those down, and they were then taken up to the new building.

He of course was very different from Ambassador Kennan, certainly the world's greatest raconteur. I am even tempted to say monologist - sometimes you couldn't even get a word in edgewise, particularly if you were, again, a young and rather worshipful officer - a great raconteur in any number of languages, obviously in addition to English, French, Russian, and for all I know German, and a man of enormous charm and presence and background again in Soviet affairs, very close friend of George Kennan, they corresponded constantly, both when Ambassador Kennan was in Moscow and of course... No, I guess that was Tommy Thompson (Ambassador Llewelyn Thompson) who spoke at his funeral or memorial service at the Cathedral, and told the story about how Chip... - I am confused now, but I think that's right - about how Chip, when he was off to the Embassy in Moscow, had written to Tommy, who I think had also been asked about it and had sort of said, "Is it all right for me to accept it," which was kind of... (as if to say), it won't offend you if I do.

(the above has many false starts of speech, as the Ambassador is trying to recollect the story, and his voice trails off very often)

A very fine guy.

Q: But Bohlen was not a subordinate or an acolyte of Kennan. They were sort of coequals.

DAVIES: They were coequals. It's interesting. I talked about Bob Kelley. Bob Kelley...

I don't know how this worked out, but Chip wound up going to France to study Russian. He studied at the Sorbonne, and he lived with a Russian emigre family in Paris. Part of the deal was that he should speak nothing but Russian with them, and that's how he learned his Russian.

George Kennan went to Berlin, initially, and lived with a Russian emigre family there, and then went on to Riga (Latvia) where he did the same thing, and learned his Russian there, and worked in the Soviet section of the Legation at Riga, which was before we had relations - it was one of our principal listening posts or observation posts.

So they had been in different places, but I assume they had known each other as young officers in the Service together, and they were always very close, although they were such totally, diametrically opposite people temperamentally.

Q: I know your bracket was Malcolm Toon and so forth, but were Charlie Thayer and Eddie Page older than you?

DAVIES: Oh, yes, they were of that first generation.

Q: I see.

DAVIES: Now I can't remember whether Charlie actually was...I can't remember whether he was in Riga - he may have been - or whether he was somewhere in Western Europe.

Of course Avis Bohlen was his "Charlie's) sister - is her sister. Both he and Chip are dead, but Avis is still very much alive, and she is Avis Thayer, who married Chip Bohlen, so there was that connection. They were of the first generation, and there was I would say an intermediate generation.

Q: Who were some of the other conspicuous people, like Thayer, Page, other early types? I mean the Soviet specialists.

DAVIES: Well, there was Freddie Reinhardt (Ambassador Frederick Reinhardt), who I guess finished his career as Ambassador to Italy.

Q: Yes.

DAVIES: Dick Davis - Richard Hallock Davis - was of a slightly younger generation; he belongs to what I would call the intermediate group. Tommy Thompson is sometimes classified with them, but he was not a Russian language student like Bohlen, Kennan, Eddie Page. I am not sure Freddie Reinhardt was either, although I tend to think he was.

In any case Tommy Thompson served in the Soviet Union before, just on the eve of, and during the war, and his Russian was pretty good. It was not as good as Bohlen's, Kennan's and Page's, who had lived with Russian families and really were as close to being bilingual in Russian as people who had not come from Russian speaking families could be.

Q: You were talking about early service in Poland, and you mentioned the business of Americans of Polish origin, and you made the observation that they could be very good if they were thoroughly versed in Polish and so forth, and depending on their personalities and qualifications. There weren't many former Russians? That was not possible, was it, to have White Russians or Russian-Americans stationed in the Soviet Union, was it?

DAVIES: No, some of the married Whites, for example Angus Ward. Angus Ward was not one of those especially trained people. He went to the Soviet Union - he was a consular officer primarily, and he went there as a consular officer. But he had married in the Baltic States I believe - or maybe in Finland - a Finnish girl, and I believe she was of the Finnish nobility, a baroness or a countess or something like that, who had been educated at the famous school in St. Petersburg for daughters of the nobility before the First World War.

Ambassador Loy Henderson had married a lady who was from the Baltic nobility. There were others.

Q: Ambassador Norman Armour.

DAVIES: Norman Armour.

Q: And Ambassador Henry Villard.

DAVIES: Henry Villard and...

Q: But that didn't particularly propel them into the Soviet sphere at all.

DAVIES: Not particularly, but they were officers who spent most of their time in Europe, and then they went to the Soviet Union, they were assigned to the Soviet Union.

Now there was an interesting thing - and of course it still persists for that matter, so far as some of these people, and in particular some of these ladies, widows now, who are still alive - the officers who were not specialists, educated in the language and hadn't gone to school as Kennan, Bohlen, Page and some others did, who were married to wives from that part of the world, formed quite a different group, for reasons I think that you can well understand.

They did tend to see things against a background of...of recognizing or paying more attention to the viewpoint of what in the Soviet Union are called the former people, that is the former ruling class.

Q: Spencer Barnes was another.

DAVIES: Spencer Barnes was another, but Spencer was not quite...you know...

Q: But is it a correct summary to say that right after World War One in the Foreign Service people were accepted when abroad? They didn't have any home leave and they were often bachelors.

DAVIES: Oh, obviously, yes.

Q: Some were married and emigres...

DAVIES: Inevitably, certainly they did.

Q: Would you explain about how they didn't... They didn't come home every two years.

DAVIES: No indeed, they didn't. Take just as an example Angus Ward, under whom I served when he was Ambassador to Afghanistan.

Q: Oh, we'll get to that.

DAVIES: Yes, but just to take his example, it's kind of interesting.

He was born in Canada in a Gaelic speaking community - a Scots-Gaelic community, I can't remember whether it was in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, perhaps even in Ontario - and came

to this country as a young man, I think. In fact I've heard - and I don't know how true this is, but it wouldn't surprise me - that he only really learned English when he began to go to school in kindergarten or the first grade. He was a high school graduate. He was in the Army then during the First World War. When he was mustered out he stayed in France, he didn't come back to this country. He was employed by the Embassy in Paris as a clerk, and of course the salary was 750 dollars a year or something like that. Then he worked his way into consular work, where he met his wife. I don't really know whether it was in Paris, or later when he was serving in Eastern Europe. She was - and is, because she is still alive - a woman of considerable force of character, very well educated - because that was an excellent school in Petersburg, for any time and place - very strong willed, and he himself was a man of no mean force of character and will power.

But they never came back to the United States. They had no home in the United States. I don't know how much family he had back here, but he spent whole decades abroad without coming back here, or if he did come back it was on very short trips. Mrs. Ward really had no reason to come back here, she didn't particularly like to come back here, she did not like the United States.

Q: And eventually when he retired he retired in Spain, didn't he?

DAVIES: He retired in Malaga, and I believe Mrs. Ward is still living there.

Q: Amazing.

DAVIES: They never came back to the United States, they did not regard the United States as their home, and I have to say that Mrs. Ward did not like America, she did not like American women. I am not sure... I guess she liked...well, she obviously liked one American citizen (laughs). And she made no bones of this.

Q: That's an interesting theory, because he was quite a remarkable man who did great services for the United States, but it's sort of like the mercenary idea. For honorary consul you can hire a person of extreme value and...

DAVIES: Well, of course in the 19th century, before the idea of nationality became quite so important, one did do precisely that. The Tsarist diplomatic service was full of non-Russians, and what's more in many cases people who were not even subjects of the Tsar - they were from France, or Corsica, or Italy, from some of the small states in Italy or the small states in Germany, or at best, if they were subjects of the Tsar, they were Baltic barons, or Poles or something like that, so that the Tsarist diplomatic service, like others for that matter, consisted of people who were professional diplomats and who really, one could say, could represent any country with equal facility if... (laughs)

You know, it was a profession in rather the narrow sense of the term.

And for that matter this country for many years - of course it wasn't really until the end of the Second World War that our Foreign Service became a service which was doing things that most Americans regarded as very important. Before that nobody thought it was doing something very important.

But we had a lot of people for example - in addition to the famous writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne or Washington Irving - who obtained sinecures because they either couldn't live on their writing or wanted to spend some time abroad and didn't have the means to do so, or couldn't find the means to do so in any other way. We had a number of people who came over here as a result of various revolutions or turmoil in Europe, and then more or less turned right around and went back once they'd gotten their citizenships, and became American representatives in various places.

Q: How do you feel about that? Would that tie in at all with that...

I remember Ed Korey's report in which when he was Ambassador to Ethiopia he suggested that we should decide which three or four countries in Africa are of any significance to the United States and have honorary consuls and the rest, and save a lot of money and so forth. Is that a very obsolete point of view, or could it work now?

DAVIES: Well, it makes eminent sense from nearly every point of view except one, and that is the question of the self image of the country concerned. If you have a non-resident ambassador who is sitting let's say in Ghana and representing you in several of the surrounding countries there, and spends his time traveling, each of the countries where he is not resident says in effect, "Well, you don't care about us. You have a resident ambassador in Ghana, but you don't have one here in Cameroon, or wherever."

Q: But that's sort of Third World development.

DAVIES: It is a Third World...

It's a question of why can't I... You know, you are a big, wealthy country, and if you really do care about us you put somebody here.

The same goes for The New York Times, for that matter. If we are such an important country, how come you, The New York Times, only send a correspondent here once every three years when we have an election? You ought to have somebody stationed here.

Q: That's how [things] develop.

DAVIES: That's right. But in Poland when I was there the Times closed its bureau. That was the last American resident special correspondent there. When they pulled him out the Poles were terribly unhappy, and they complained about it, and now there is again a Times correspondent there. They closed the bureau solely for economic reasons - it cost a lot to maintain - but they've come to the conclusion, and I think this is completely accurate, that the potential in Poland is such that they've got to have somebody there to keep following that story on a constant basis.

But the same goes for this business of ambassadors.

I regret terribly that we got involved in this game. It did seem that Benjamin Franklin had the right idea. It was of course done with a certain histrionic effect. I think the reason was his wig had gotten lost en route, but he just clubbed his hair back and went dressed in his rustic American outfit. He knew perfectly how rustic it was because he was a great dandy in fact. But this was...you know, he and the coonskin cap. That was a stroke of great public relations, and we should have continued that. (imitating a sort of southwest accent), "Shucks, I don't want to be an ambassador, I just want to be a minister, and I don't really care," as Henry said, "I don't care, just as long as you call me Excellency..." (laughs) It seems to me we would have been better off not to get into this, but of course inevitably then we say, "Well, then you don't get into the protocol list, and you can't... Actually our Government won't let us become dean of the Diplomatic Corps. We never stay long enough in one place in the first place, and in the second place, even if an American ambassador does reach the point where he is going to become Dean the United States Government in Washington is terribly nervous about that situation, and doesn't want us to do it.

Q: I guess one of the last long term American ambassadors was Wally (Walworth) Barbour in Israel, for about 11 years.

DAVIES: That's right, he was there a long time, and I am sure was - I can only imagine that he ended up as dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

But when that happens the American Government is terribly unhappy. "Oh, dear, you are going to be in the middle," - which of course you will, any dean of the Diplomatic Corps is. I just don't see any reason to worry about that.

Well, Angus Ward really was in a way a kind of expatriate, and many of the people in our service in the '20s and '30s, through no fault of their own - his was an extreme case - simply because the Government paid them so little, did not pay for the home leave - there was no requirement for home leave until the Foreign Service Act of 1946 - didn't pay their way back and forth, during the Great Depression their salaries were cut and on occasion they were not paid... You know, it was a time when unless you had independent means, and not everybody did in those years, it was a very difficult time for people in the Foreign Service. They couldn't get back here. Certainly a young man who went abroad - an unmarried young man - was very likely to end up marrying a foreign girl, and this happened in many cases. I think in most cases it obviously worked out very well, but in some cases the outlook of the officer was inevitably colored by the fact that he'd married a foreign woman.

And that was the case I think with those officers who married women who represented the former ruling class in the Soviet Union. Inevitably they had a more than theoretical or hypothetical antipathy to the Bolsheviks. Some indeed may have had quite intimate family reasons for having very strong emotional reactions to the Bolsheviks. So that when somebody like George Kennan came along, who sort of said, "Well, you know, we have to try to understand these people," this was not regarded with favor, it was regarded like sort of, "Hmmm, can we really trust this guy?" And that was the attitude expressed by some of the older, I'd say, non-specialist people who served in the Soviet Union towards the younger generation, and particularly I think towards George Kennan, who had fallen in love with the culture of the

people. I don't know to what extent he was influenced by his uncle, who was one of the great American pioneers in Russia.

Q: What was his name?

DAVIES: George Kennan, who traveled across Russia in the latter part of the 19th century by dog sled, by reindeer sleigh, on horseback, on foot - just a fantastic man. He wrote amazing books about this country, his great work being "Siberia and the Exile System," about the political dissidents, the prisoners in Siberia in those years.

In any event, George Kennan (the nephew) was in love with the country in a way, and still is, and this was terribly resented because some of the people felt, well, he is prejudiced in favor of the Russians. And he certainly was and is, but obviously he was never prejudiced in favor of the Bolsheviks - on the contrary.

The feeling was not that strong against or about Chip Bohlen, who was less intense and didn't quite have that degree of attachment somehow to the country, although he too was intrigued, to put it mildly, by this peculiar...by the Russian character or soul or whatever you want to call it.

Well, I left shortly after Chip Bohlen got there in July or August of 1953.

SOL POLANSKY
Translator
Moscow (1952-1955)

Ambassador Polansky was born in New Jersey and raised in New Jersey and California. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Russian Institute, New York City. After service in the U.S. Navy, he joined the Department of State in 1952 and was commissioned Foreign Service Officer in 1957. A Russian specialist, he served in Poznan, East and West Berlin, Moscow, Vienna and Sofia, Bulgaria, where he served as United States Ambassador from 1987 to 1990. In his tours at the State Department in Washington, D.C. he dealt primarily with East Europe Affairs. Ambassador Polansky was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: You could almost check the progression of the Cold War through out this time. By the time you got out of there in 1952, did you feel that you were learning about the enemy?

POLANSKY: Yes, I think we did feel academically that we were learning about the enemy, if you will. That was the way we looked at it. I had the opportunity to go to Moscow, for the State Department, as a translator. At that time, the Foreign Service did not have enough language trained Foreign Service officers and there was in Moscow, a translation bureau that was run by the Americans, British, Canadians, and Australians. It was a joint translation service and they needed somebody. They needed a bachelor. I was engaged at the time, but not married. I took the

exam. Bob Tucker was the editor of the joint press reading service in Moscow. I passed the exam and was assigned to Moscow.

Q: This was not the Foreign Service exam, this was a translator's exam?

POLANSKY: Yes. I came in as a staff officer and then was "Wristonized".

The first two years I was in Moscow at the embassy, working as a translator, the atmosphere was a very, very cold one. You had the "Doctor's plot" that was coming up. You felt very much that you were an outsider and you were the enemy. I didn't feel any sense of personal danger, but the political atmosphere was such that, the US was the enemy. There was virtually no contact at the social level. It wasn't a sense of isolation, but no real contact with ordinary Russians, except the few who were working in the translation office with us in a technical capacity. We never really talked about political subjects.

Q: This translation service was an extremely important part of our window into the Soviet Union. I can't think of anything more deadly than reading "Izvestia" and "Politika" day after day. How did you approach this? What were we looking for? What was our coverage?

POLANSKY: First of all, I came in as the new member of the staff and took what was handed to me. The way it worked, in the morning, Bob Tucker and his deputy assigned articles from "Pravda" and "Izvestia" that focused on foreign policy issues or editorials, with the idea of translating those as rapidly as we could into English. You were sitting there with what you were going to translate and a secretary/typist was sitting there with stencil paper in the typewriter and you translated and she typed the translation onto the paper. Then it went into Bob for editing. By the end of the morning, there would be a digest of the major news articles in the day's press and that was made into multiple copies and sent around to the various embassies that subscribed to the service. The afternoon was spent looking at longer articles, either in the newspapers about economic or social issues, or from magazines that would supposedly give a broader picture of what was going on economically or socially. That became a second part or edition of the translation service. All of those that were selected by Bob and his deputy for the political content or possible changes in domestic or foreign policy that might be reflected in those articles.

Q: Were you reaching down into the provincial papers to pick up developments there?

POLANSKY: It was limited to the central newspapers--"Pravda", "Izvestia", "Red Star", and "Trud". You have to realize that at the time, it wasn't always that easy to get subscriptions. The general feeling was that the entire media was so controlled by Moscow that if you were really looking for policy direction, or changes in policy, or hints about leadership changes, that all came out of the central press. The local press was really a reflection of national issues and the local issues were too irrelevant to require much attention.

Q: You were part of this machine that was beginning to feed this new science of Kremlinology. Were your antennae being sharpened or were you too involved in the daily work?

POLANSKY: I think I was so involved in having the right translation, really focusing more on the translations themselves--obviously interested in their content because of my interest in the Soviet Union, but it was up to Bob and his deputy to decide what was to be translated. I think we subconsciously felt that we had done our part and now it was up to the guys in the political and economic sections to do whatever analysis that they could derive from those articles for those who couldn't speak Russian.

Q: What was your feeling about the Embassy? You were there from 1952 until 1955. This was the death of Stalin; the Doctor's plot; the new Troika--it wasn't really a Troika--Malenkov and others. What was life like for you and your impression of the other people at the Embassy.

POLANSKY: Life for us, for me, when I arrived, there were five of us who lived in a house rented by the US government. It was not far from the Foreign Ministry or the Embassy. We had a Russian cook and Russian maids to clean the house. Three of the five were Foreign Service Officers and then there was another translator and myself. At the time we were all bachelors. We all got along well. I work responsibilities didn't keep us separated. We got together in the evening and talked about what was going on. We felt we were a junior part of the Embassy. The other translator and I weren't directly involved in the activities at the Embassy. We weren't excluded from it. After Stalin died, the Embassy itself was forced to move from its location almost on Red Square up to its current location on Tchaikovsky Street. That made it possible to bring together most of the families to one place in terms of apartments. In my case, they went to the Embassy Administrative Officer and DCM and asked if an apartment would be available so that I could get married and bring my wife back to live. They agreed and so I got married by proxy because it was difficult for my wife to get a visa without being married. There were all sorts of problems, but we got that all straightened out. She came and we moved into an apartment in the Embassy compound and we became part of the younger set of the Embassy. Virtually all of the social life at that time focused on the American community, with some interaction with the Canadians, Australians, British, and Germans. There was very little contact with Russians. Not that we didn't look for it; it was a very uncertain period and there was virtually no contact. I spent three years in Moscow the first time. We had a number of chance conversations in Moscow with Russians but we spent our first three years without having actually known a Russian family or individual in any significant way.

Q: While you were there, George Kennan and Charles Bohlen were Ambassadors. I realize they were somewhat removed, but still it was a small Embassy, did you have much contact?

POLANSKY: I arrived in Moscow in time to attend my first diplomatic reception which was given by Mrs. Kennan because Ambassador Kennan was out in Berlin. They wouldn't let him back in. I was saying good-bye to Mrs. Kennan who I had not met before.

Q: He had made his famous statement on ...in Russia, when he got off the plane.

POLANSKY: He didn't come back, so I never really knew him. I met him a couple of times after that. Then Charles Bohlen came. He was a very well liked and respected person and I think he was open to everybody and I think everybody felt that he was very much a leader and we were part of a family in that sense. As a junior member of the Embassy staff by then, I was working in

the Agricultural section because the Agricultural Attache knew agriculture but not Russian, and I knew Russian but not agriculture. So we teamed up. We took many trips and I learned a lot from him and saw the Ambassador in that context. When your a junior officer you hold a senior officer in a certain amount of awe, particularly with the kind of reputation he had. He was very well liked by all the women in the embassy. He was so damn handsome and dashing.

Q: What did the Agricultural Attaché do in the Soviet Union at that time and how did you support him?

POLANSKY: Essentially what we were trying to do was to try and understand what the Soviet agricultural policy was; what the growing conditions were like; what the crops were likely to be, along with the economic and political connotations that that had for the Soviet Union. It amounted to several parts. One was to begin to try to read the pertinent Russian newspapers about agricultural developments. We tried to figure out what was true and what was not. There was also the time when they started their New Lands policy and what that meant for the development of Soviet agriculture, particularly the grain crops. We had that part which was reading the newspaper. The other part, to the extent that we could, was to take trips to the main agricultural regions of the country, either by plane, preferably by train, and sometimes by car. We tried to do that at appropriate times in the growing season, in the harvest season, to try and get first hand impressions as to what the growing season was like and what the crops were like. That wasn't always easy. We had to do all our travel arrangements throughthe Soviet agency that controlled foreigners. We would register a trip and tell them how and when we were going and in effect they would tell us whether we were going and in certain places they would block off part of the proposed schedule. Sometimes they would give us reasons, sometimes they wouldn't. We tried to look as carefully as we could at the crop situation. When we were in cities, we tried to go into as many stores and collective farm markets that we could, to try and get some sense of what the food situation was like; what the food prices were like--whether there were price increases or not. We tried to get some sense of how good the food supply was. This was before the age of satellites so we were, in effect, the eyes and the ears of the US government and of all the agencies that were interested in what was happening in the Soviet Union.

Q: What was the impression of the attaché, whom you were supporting, of the efficiency, the developments in Soviet agriculture?

POLANSKY: In terms of the growing seasons, I think that his general impression was that they were not particularly effective or efficient in areas of land that were particularly well cultivated. There were a lot of weeds and that kind of problem. I think he came from an atmosphere and background that suggested the whole idea of collectivized agriculture was not an efficient way to do things. He tended to have those views reinforced by what he saw--the lack of equipment in the fields; the kind of equipment we saw that was not well tended. We didn't always see a lot of equipment in the field or people working hard. Whereas, if we were in a train or car driving through villages and saw the village private plots, that farmers had, they seemed to be much more densely cultivated. When we went to the market and saw what was available, we came away with the impression that no matter how collectivized they were, people tended to devote more attention, more care, and to the extent they could, to their private plots.

Q: Was there any feel for the New Lands Program? This sort of turned into an ecological disaster.

POLANSKY: I can tell you, we certainly didn't have the opportunity to talk to Russian farmers. We didn't have the opportunity, voluntarily, or otherwise to become part of that exercise. We flew over the New Lands on our way out to Kazakstan, in the fall of 1954, and it went on endlessly. From a plane, we saw mile after mile of newly plowed fields--vast areas. That was really quite impressive. We wondered where all the machinery was that had done it; we just didn't see it. Now I think it is a disaster, in large part.

Q: Of the young officers with whom you were associated with, did any stick out in your mind that you saw later on as the new breed of Soviet specialists?

POLANSKY: Oh yes. Bob Barry is one; Tom Niles is another. Those two certainly stood out. Mark Palmer was also there. In some ways, it is sometimes hard to pinpoint, but you knew that they were exceptional in a very capable group of people. They had entirely different personalities, but they stood out.

Q: This is a period from 1952 until 1955, during McCarthyism. Was this striking at all? Did you get any feel from McCarthyism and this almost anti-intellectual movement in the States?

POLANSKY: I think more in Washington than in the Embassy. I think people were obviously concerned by it, but I can't think of anyone in the Embassy who was affected by it.

Q: How about the security thing? Were the KGB playing games, particularly with you bachelor officers? Or were you pretty isolated from that?

POLANSKY: I think we were subjected to it in various ways. In Moscow, at that time, I don't think it was so obvious. I think we were aware of it and warned against it. I was in Warsaw later and the local security people had gotten to a member of the Embassy. I don't remember security in Moscow at that point, within the Embassy, particularly strong. I think it was there. We were warned about, but I don't think the Embassy security officer was a particularly heavy handed person at the time. It was not a major issue.

Q: How did your wife react to this?

POLANSKY: I think she, in a sense, like I was. Her academic background was not in things Russian. She was an occupational therapist. It sounds strange to people now, but there was really no question about her giving up her possible professional career. We got married and she became part of the Embassy staff. She worked as a typist in JPRS and that added some money so that she could travel on some of the trips that I took. She likes children, so she got involved in teaching younger kids at the Anglo-American school. That was very much part of what she wanted to do and became an important part of making life in Moscow more interesting. She was certainly curious enough about life in the Soviet Union, learned some Russian, interested in the cultural life, went to plays even though she couldn't understand Russian, did as much traveling with me as she could and then with some of the wives from the Embassy. You couldn't travel by yourself

then. I think, for her, it was a marvelous experience. Neither she nor I had an idea of what life in an Embassy, in the Foreign Service, would be like, but it worked out very well. She was thoroughly pleased with the assignment and I think with each assignment that we have had, hated to leave, glad to be back to the United States; hated to leave the United States, but once she got where we were going, got very much wrapped up in it and again, would hate to leave when it was time to go. Although we didn't realize it at the time, the whole business of wives being rated, I think grated on her, and she appreciated the liberation in 1972. She thought it should have come earlier. I suspect this is true for most people, you really don't know what you are committing yourself to in the Foreign Service. I think she took the best possible things out of our career in the Foreign Service.

Q: Had you been integrated into the Foreign Service when you came back?

POLANSKY: Yes.

PHILIP H. VALDES
Administrative/Political Officer
Moscow (1952-1954)

Political Officer
Moscow (1953-1954)

Intelligence Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1955-1958)

Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1961-1964)

Philip H. Valdes was born in New York in 1921. He received a bachelor's degree and master's degree from Yale University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1946 and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in China, Korea, the Soviet Union, Germany, France, and Thailand. Mr. Valdes was interviewed by William Knight on July 11, 1994.

Q: In connection with Russian language study, you had full-fledged language and area training, right?

VALDES: Yes.

Q: Any comment about that training? Was that adequate and good?

VALDES: It was quite good, I think, considering that I'm not really that gifted in languages. The area training at the Russian Institute at Columbia University was very good. The language training involved four months at the Russian Institute and two months at Cornell University,

doing nothing but language study. That was an excellent program. Then I had a tutor and also studied Russian at Columbia, while I was taking substantive courses.

Q: So when did you arrive in Moscow?

VALDES: In July, 1952.

Q: Was Ambassador Tommy Thompson there then?

VALDES: No, Ambassador George Kennan was there. We had just been told by the Soviets that we had to move our Embassy, which had been on Mokhovaya Square, just across from the Kremlin. We had apparently disturbed Stalin by our “imperialist” proximity. We and the British had both been told that we had to move. They were just across the [Moscow] River from the Kremlin.

This became a very serious operation, known as the “Move,” with a capital M. Dave Klein, who went to Moscow at the same time I did and had gone through Russian language training with me, and I were assigned to the Administrative Section to help with the “Move.”

This turned out to be a great assignment, in that I was one of the few people who actually got to speak a lot of Russian -- getting things out of Customs and dealing with a Russian labor force in the Embassy. So it was very good training. By the time that we actually did make the “Move” in May [1953], my [fluency in] Russian had improved considerably. I felt that I had no trouble handling the political reporting that I was doing after that.

Q: I would suppose that the security considerations in the “Move” were tremendous, trying to prevent the [Soviets] from “bugging” the new quarters.

VALDES: Yes. Well, of course, they were building the new building. We had a Danish architect supervising it. There wasn't much he could do. It was a brick building with brick bearing walls, so you couldn't change the size of the rooms very much, or the building would collapse. There were only Russian workers doing the actual work. So, in fact, they did “seed” a lot of microphones in the building, which we later found.

Q: You mean, most of them.

VALDES: Well, I think we found a good number of them. I'm not sure how useful they would have been to the Soviets, anyway.

Q: You mean that our golden words would not shake the world?

VALDES: I don't think that the security of the United States was really seriously harmed by that.

Q: You were doing economic work in Moscow?

VALDES: I was doing political work -- internal political reporting. At that time it essentially

involved reading the newspapers -- some 15 or so a day -- and talking to whatever people we could find to talk to. It was very difficult then.

When I got there [in July, 1952], it was the height of the Cold War. In fact, I'd only been there for six weeks when the Soviets declared Ambassador George Kennan "persona non grata." When he came out of Moscow on the Ambassador's plane on a trip to Berlin, he remarked to a group of reporters that the current conditions in Moscow were similar to what he had gone through in a Nazi internment camp after December, 1941. This remark clearly upset the Soviets. He was declared "persona non grata," and we had no ambassador until April, [1953] when Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen was assigned.

By that time Stalin had died. There were noticeable changes in the atmosphere -- not very great ones, but enough to notice. The time of his death was a really dramatic period. For about four or five days the center of Moscow inside the Ring Road was blocked off by trucks manned with police. You could hear your footsteps echo. We could get through because of our Embassy being there. I listened to Chopin's "Funeral March" for, I would say, 10 hours a day for four days. It blared over loudspeakers. There was a great amount of concern among the people as to what was going to happen.

Q: What kind of Russians could you see in trying to do your political reporting? I suppose you could not really see anybody official.

VALDES: We couldn't see anybody official. We couldn't see anybody, so to speak, on purpose. For private [Soviet] citizens it was dangerous to be seen with us. Sometimes they'd argue about it, but then they'd notice a dark-suited man looking at them rather suspiciously and they'd decide that maybe it was better if they didn't talk to us. Really, the only way you could talk to people was by accident. You would try to create a number of accidents, such as standing in line with a lot of Russians at restaurants, because you were always seated with people. There couldn't be an empty seat, so often you would be sitting at a table with Russians and sometimes they would start chatting. And often on trips out of Moscow [you could talk to people], because the citizenry hadn't been indoctrinated that well on how to behave with foreigners, since there weren't that many foreigners around.

Q: Did the KGB [Soviet secret police], or whatever it was at the time, have enough people so that you yourself were actually followed on the streets?

VALDES: I don't remember being followed very much. Occasionally, I noticed, I was followed. The military attachés tended to be followed very frequently -- most of the time. For other people it was sporadic.

Q: Could you tell that you were not being followed?

VALDES: Well, at that stage I suppose that I did not have any real Russian friends whose homes I could visit. That was pretty much "out of the question."

Now that changed the second time I was in Moscow. There was a great difference. We could get

to know people and could invite them to our apartments. There would have to be some sort of excuse, such as showing a movie. That worked. To do it, we'd have to send the invitation to their institution [or office], such as the Union of Writers, if we were inviting a writer or a translator. The Communist Party representative at the theater, if we were inviting an actor. Sometimes they wouldn't get the invitation and sometimes they would. If you could somehow get hold of them [in advance] and ask them to come, they would say, "Send me an invitation." Some of them would go barging into the Party Secretary's office and say, "I have an invitation from the American Embassy. Do you have it?" Usually, the Party Secretary would back down and hand it to them.

Sometimes it got a little tricky. I remember that a friend, a colleague of mine, was going to hold a party but had to cancel it. I've forgotten why, but he had some reason to cancel it. He sent notices around, saying that he was canceling it. At the office of one person whom he had invited the Party Secretary had obviously decided that "this comrade had already had one invitation from the Americans. I'm not going to let him get another one." So the person who had been invited never got the cancellation notice. He showed up, somewhat angered that there wasn't any party to go to.

Q: Was there anything about your work or living conditions there -- that really surprised you and that you remember, particularly for that period [1952-1954] -- either in the sense of your preconceptions or your ideas about the U. S.-Russian relationship at the time?

VALDES: I would say that the first time I was there [1952-1954] I wasn't really very much surprised by anything, except the friendliness of Russians that you did meet by accident. That surprised me a little bit because, as I said, it was at the height of the Cold War. We were being denounced for "germ warfare" [in North Korea] and everything else that the Soviets could think of. The Russians that we would meet believed some of these charges but some of them they didn't believe. In any case, they usually were quite friendly, when we did meet them. This wasn't always the case, but it was often enough the case that I was surprised.

Q: Then, during your later assignment [to Moscow, 1964-1966], what was the change in that regard? Did they still seem friendly?

VALDES: They seemed very friendly. Both times I was there were exciting periods: the first time, when Stalin died. You could see a change during the year or so that I was there after he died [in 1953]. People were beginning to talk a little bit.

For example, there was my Russian teacher, who had never said anything other than what was necessary to teach me Russian. That changed after Stalin's death. She commented one time, for instance, about the purges [of the late 1930's]. She said that she had worked in a large office with something like 40 people in it. One day she came into the office, and there was only one other person there. The other 38 had "disappeared."

Q: Did they ever come back or were they gone for good?

VALDES: She didn't go into it any further, but presumably they didn't come back.

Q: In the Embassy then, with your political reporting, what was the chain of command above you and who were your direct supervisors? What was your position at that stage, a Second Secretary?

VALDES: A Second Secretary. My immediate supervisor was Dave Henry, a First Secretary.

Q: Was he the Political Counselor?

VALDES: Jack McSweeney was the Political Counselor. The Minister was Elim O'Shaughnessy. He was chargé d'affaires for a long time.

Q: When the Ambassador was there, he would have been DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]?

VALDES: Yes, he was DCM. And then Jake Beam came to be chargé d'affaires, after Elim O'Shaughnessy had been chargé for a while. Jack McSweeney was the Political Counselor, so he was the second supervisor above me, then Elim O'Shaughnessy, and then Jake Beam. And, of course, later on, Charles E. Bohlen. Beam left after Bohlen arrived.

Q: Would Jack McSweeney, in effect, have been doing the same things that you were doing? Was everybody more or less confined to press reporting?

VALDES: Well, he had contacts with the [Soviet] Foreign Ministry. There were some necessary contacts with them. All of us had contacts with the rest of the diplomatic corps, of course.

Q: There was a lot of "incestuous" partying.

VALDES: Right. It was a pretty closely-knit group at the time. There were some pretty good people in the British, French, and Canadian Embassies. Actually, the Yugoslavs were really good people to know because, even though they were on the "outs" [with the Soviets], they had to be considered communists of a sort by the Soviets. So they got to do a lot of things that we couldn't do.

That became true much later, during my second tour [in Moscow, 1964-1966]. There had been a kind of "reconciliation" between the Soviets and the Yugoslavs. They could go and talk to Party Secretaries when they traveled. We couldn't do that. We could talk to government people, but not the Party people.

Q: Charles Thayer may have been there when you were there. He was the author of the book, "Bears in the Caviar." Was that a reasonably accurate description of the atmosphere?

VALDES: He wasn't there when I was there. It was a reasonably good description of the situation, given the fact that it was pretty funny. I think that Avis Bohlen's [Ambassador Bohlen's wife] comment, that she was glad that he'd written a book, because these stories couldn't get any wilder, was very much to the point.

I saw a lot of the Bohlens because for a year I lived in Spaso House, the Ambassador's residence. It had been a tradition that a Russian language officer would live there. When George Kennan and Chip Bohlen were there as Ambassador, there wasn't really any need for a Russian language officer. But I did deal with housekeeping matters.

Q: You were sort of the resident interpreter and translator.

VALDES: Well, I would have been, except that the Bohlens didn't need an interpreter. I did get to know the Bohlen family quite well.

Q: That is sort of an interesting tidbit. Now did that have its disadvantages -- always to be under the eye of the boss -- actually living in his house?

VALDES: Well, in this case, living with that boss, it was good.

Q: You got a little sleep, did you?

VALDES: Yes.

Q: You had your own bedroom and bathroom and so forth?

VALDES: Yes, and if they didn't have a formal dinner, I often ate with them. Otherwise, food was brought in to me by the Chinese staff, so life was quite comfortable.

Q: [Spaso House is] sort of an 18th century palace.

VALDES: Yes.

Q: How did the aides live?

VALDES: It was very pleasant. I had to leave Spaso House because I was married in Moscow. This slot in the residence was for bachelor officers. So I moved out, and my wife took me in to her apartment.

Q: Was she a member of the [Embassy] staff?

VALDES: Yes. She was the DCM's secretary.

Q: Well, that was lucky. All right, anything else about the Moscow phase of your career, either substantive or otherwise?

VALDES: Well, my second tour was equally interesting. About a week after I arrived, Khrushchev was thrown out.

Q: What year was that?

VALDES: 1964. A troika of Brezhnev, Podgorny, and Kosygin took over. Brezhnev was the First Secretary of the Communist Party, so he eventually weeded out the others.

Q: Did you like being reassigned for a second time to Moscow?

VALDES: Yes, very much.

Q: In other words the fact of being a Soviet specialist worked out for you? You liked that?

VALDES: I enjoyed it.

Q: What exciting things happened during your second tour?

VALDES: Well, we did get to meet a lot more people. As I said, we could have them to our house and we could have meals with them. I was invited out to the Writers' dacha [country house] by three or four writers. I got to know some theater people. It was a lot easier to travel, and we could talk more freely with people when we did.

Q: So what was the length of the two assignments again?

VALDES: Two years each.

Q: Personally, was that easy to take or was it terrible because of the winters?

VALDES: No, I didn't find the winters a problem.

Q: So emotionally it was not really a "hardship" post.

VALDES: The first tour there was a little hard because of the atmosphere. The second tour was much less trying. There was still a lot of strain.

Q: Did you get a paid leave outside of Russia each year -- just to get away? To [Western] Europe, for example?

VALDES: Yes. During the first tour we didn't get that kind of leave, except that I banged up a knee and was sent out [of the Soviet Union] to a hospital in Frankfurt and got to Paris after that for a couple of weeks. During the second tour we had a month of paid leave in Western Europe. I think that it was on the basis of paid travel, probably to Frankfurt -- I don't remember. My wife and I went to Rome.

Q: Probably "hooked" a ride on the Attaché plane, or something like that.

VALDES: Well, on that occasion we took Aeroflot the Soviet airline, an Aeroflot turbo-prop aircraft from Moscow to Rome. And then we took the train back.

... I left the French desk in the middle of 1961 to go up to the Office of Soviet Affairs and was there for three years. I handled multilateral affairs, rather than bilateral Soviet matters.

Q: Was the Soviet desk fairly large in those days?

VALDES: Yes. It was an Office -- the Office of Soviet Affairs.

Q: How many people were assigned?

VALDES: Oh, the director and his deputy, about four officers in bilateral affairs, four in multilateral affairs, and two in economic affairs. So that was pretty big.

Q: What were you in that structure?

VALDES: I was in multilateral affairs. During my last year of that assignment to Washington, 1963-1964, I was in charge of multilateral affairs. What I handled particularly was disarmament matters having to do with the Soviets. When I took charge of multilateral affairs, I was involved in Berlin matters.

Q: Were your contacts primarily in other areas of the U.S. Government on those issues or with the Russians themselves in the Soviet Embassy?

VALDES: Not so much with the Russians but primarily with other areas of the U. S. Government.

Q: And other embassies in Washington?

VALDES: Other embassies, yes. I went to Geneva -- I think that it was in 1962. I went with Hugh Dryden, the Deputy Administrator of NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Agency] as State Department representative to talks between NASA and Soviet space people. That was a fascinating 10 days or so.

Q: Why was it fascinating?

VALDES: Because it was the first time that we really seemed to be getting somewhere. We realized that the Soviet space people were really interested in cooperation with NASA. Various lines of agreement came out of these discussions.

Then I went up to the UN in the spring of 1963 for the outer space meetings, where we continued negotiations with the Soviets and reached agreements on assistance to astronauts and cosmonauts in distress and on exchanging information on peaceful uses of space.

Q: Why did you feel that the Soviets were "open" then, when they hadn't been before?

VALDES: Well, I think that they'd always been "open," but for some reason they'd gotten a chance to do something about it -- why, I don't know.

I think that there was a feeling at the beginning of the Kennedy administration [in 1961] that maybe the Soviets thought that they could engage in some useful negotiations with the U. S. The process bogged down. There were some problems. For example, the second meeting I had with the Soviets on outer space, in the spring of 1963, was shortly after the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962. But the Soviet representatives put that aside and seemed willing to make agreements.

Q: Were they being pinched by shortages of money and scientific know how? Did they want to get that from us?

VALDES: They realized that they could get a lot from us. I think that they also believed that they had a lot to offer us -- which, in fact, they did.

Q: So to some extent they were interested in the substance of the space operations.

VALDES: The Soviet science people were, yes. What the motive of the Soviet regime was -- I'm not really sure. I think it probably hoped that it could get some space advantages, but it seemed to involve more of a willingness to go along, rather than any actually great desire to "diddle" us in anything.

Q: Any comments on their negotiating system or negotiating techniques in that field?

VALDES: In that field they had a man from the Foreign Ministry who tended to slow things down.

Q: I've read, in general, that on the really tough negotiations the Russian stance is absolutely rigid, turning everything down, until finally someone at the top says, "We have to reach an agreement." And then they abandon their previous position.

VALDES: They can be very rigid and tough. In this case they weren't. They were trying to "push" things and were being held back a little. I think that they weren't trying to "push" to any extreme extent. I think that they knew the realities of what they could hope to get from their government in an agreement. The Soviet scientists were more forthcoming than...

Q: They had a certain amount of negotiating room. It happens that...

VALDES: They had a man with them to see that they didn't exceed their negotiating room.

Q: Everything was reported back to Moscow for approval?

VALDES: Oh, sure.

Q: As, in effect, we did, also.

VALDES: They never went way out on a limb.

Q: Right. So those agreements, when they were concluded, were actually implemented?

VALDES: Yes.

Q: What about other agreements in other fields that you were associated with? Was that also true of those?

VALDES: I was a little bit involved in disarmament, working with the Disarmament Agency [Arms Control and Disarmament Agency]. This was the time when we reached the nuclear test ban agreement.

Q: Did you have a particular, "tame" contact in the Soviet Embassy for this work when you were in the Office of Soviet Affairs?

VALDES: No, no particular person. The bilateral people in the Office of Soviet Affairs had much more contact with the people in the Soviet Embassy than I did.

Q: So they didn't come around to you for assistance in contacts with other parts of our bureaucracy?

VALDES: No, they'd raise questions like that with the bilateral people.

Q: That's one thing that the Austrians were always doing. They would come to the Austrian desk officer and ask him to solve their problems for them.

VALDES: We had an office that dealt with questions like that, I'm happy to say.

Q: Anything else on the Soviet desk period? How did the desk play its part in the Department of State and the White House bureaucratic structure?

VALDES: It was pretty far down the ladder. Ambassador Tommy Thompson was really the person who "created" policy toward the Soviet Union, I would say.

Q: Where was he at that point?

VALDES: He was, I think, called "Ambassador at Large." But in effect he was the Soviet specialist in the Department, outside of the desk. The Office of Soviet Affairs would run things through him for approval.

Q: Were you kept adequately advised of what was going on?

VALDES: Yes, enough to do what we were doing. I'm sure that there were things that we were not kept advised of -- but nothing that seemed to make a difference in what we were doing.

JAMES F. LEONARD
Publications Procurement Officer
Moscow (1953-1956)

Ambassador James F. Leonard was born in Pennsylvania in 1920. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942-1946 and entered the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included positions in Syria, the Soviet Union, France, China (Taiwan), New York (the United Nations), and Washington, DC. Ambassador Leonard was interviewed by Warren Unna on March 10, 1993.

Q: Then, you went on to Moscow. Since much later in your career you did a lot of negotiating with the Soviets, how much baptism did you get in this first exposure? You'd already studied the Russian language.

LEONARD: We'd studied Russian, yes. The Department gave me first the language training, six months, then nine months at Harvard. Though I had a rudimentary knowledge of the language. I was lucky, I got a job there which called for me to be out on the street a great deal. It was buying books for the Library of Congress because there was no normal exchange of published literature between the US and the Soviet Union at that time and the people back here were very thirsty for whatever was coming out. I'd just go out to all the book stores and buy stacks of books and bring them back, wrap them in brown paper and ship them back to the US. In that way I was able to get some contact with Russians because this was a few months after the death of Stalin in the summer of 1953. The Russian people were terrified of foreign contacts. It was very difficult to have any real sort of relations with anybody other than the diplomatic corps and a few correspondents.

Q: This was the time that Beria ...?

LEONARD: He was arrested actually just a month or so before we got there. It was a dramatic incident which we didn't see. The tanks apparently drove down the main boulevards in front of the Embassy building. The people that saw them didn't know what it was and found out the next day that the tanks were on their way to surround various residences and take him away. In fact to this day it's not really known whether he was killed on the spot or was simply imprisoned and executed later.

Q: And you as part of the Embassy were pretty much in the dark on this?

LEONARD: Yes. The Embassy was really very isolated.

Q: Who was Ambassador then?

LEONARD: Ambassador Bohlen. Chester Bohlen.

Q: And through the Library of Congress book acquisition did you get any familiarity on how to deal with the Russians as you later had to do?

LEONARD: Well, a little bit. Although I must say it was a completely different game many years later when I went to Geneva and was dealing with them face to face on issues of substance. I think in my two years in Moscow I went possibly twice to the Foreign Ministry to go along and take notes when some more senior officer was making a demarche. But our relations were so frosty. The Ambassador had I think meaningful contacts, discussions with the Foreign Ministry and even with I think it was ...

Q: Molotov, was it?

LEONARD: Molotov. But Gromyko replaced him about that time. I guess it was still Molotov when we arrived. But more junior officers had very little dealings of any sorts with any Russians.

Q: Did you get clued in from the top, from the ambassador, or at least ...?

LEONARD: Yes, he was very good. He would discuss problems and our task really was more that of trying to decipher what was going on from the press. In fact, not I but some of the people in the political section did a pretty good job of figuring out that there was a power struggle underway. It turned out to be Malenkov on one side and Khrushchev on the other. A struggle which eventually Khrushchev won.

Q: But Malenkov won on the first ...?

LEONARD: Malenkov was on top to start with.

Q: Wasn't this the period when Malenkov said we were preparing an H-bomb, or the tests began on this?

LEONARD: The H-bomb had already been detonated by that time, their H-bomb. The thing that Malenkov did, which caught everybody's attention was to make a speech which was then reproduced in the paper, that a nuclear war would mean the end of civilization, or the world, or such. He said the first sober thing about the consequences of nuclear weapons that any Russian or any Soviet had ever been known to say, and it was used against him, it appeared by Khrushchev. He was made to seem afraid of the American nuclear weapons in the controversies that went on then. In effect the Soviets repudiated his statement, but it was very interesting that you did begin to see some discussion already in '53 about nuclear weapons, and I remember one of the officers in the political section saying to me that he thought the Soviets really were sincere about wanting some sort of arms control. It didn't happen for quite a while longer, but you could see a bit of intellectual ferment reflected in the press.

Q: So this was your first taste of later arms control, even though you were not part of it at this time?

LEONARD: Yes.

Q: Now, this was Eisenhower's presidency?

LEONARD: This was Eisenhower's.

Q: Eisenhower's and Dulles's? Was the U2 part of your period or not, when that was shot down?

LEONARD: No, that was 1960. Exactly where was I then, I don't know. Either in Taiwan or on home leave.

Q: What about the UN proposals to share nuclear matters. Was that earlier then?

LEONARD: That was being prepared in Washington, although I had no part in that. In that period, Eisenhower, as we know now, was much more uneasy about nuclear weapons than he let on, and so was Dulles. In fact Gerry Smith has dug up some material on Dulles's thinking of that period which indicates that Dulles was not all that happy with massive retaliation, etc. But what it came down to was the proposal, I think it was in 1957, for Atoms for Peace. Arms control was gestating in this period. There were the beginnings of talks but they focused on the problems of Europe, Berlin, Germany, you know, "would some sort of German reunification be permitted?" and things of that sort, because this is the period when in the West we were beginning to crystallize NATO, and consider German rearmament. And that, believe me, got the Russians' attention when we began talking about rearming the Germans.

JOSEPH WALTER NEUBERT
Political/General Services Officer
Moscow (1953-1956)

Mr. Neubert was born in Montana. He attended Yale University and served in the US Army in World War II. Entering the Foreign Service in 1947, Mr. Neubert served as Political and Economic Officer in Yugoslavia and Tunisia. Following Russian language studies at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, Mr. Neubert was posted to Moscow, Soviet Union, where he served as Political and General Services Officer. From Moscow he was assigned to Tel Aviv as Political Officer, where he served during the 1957 Arab-Israeli War. This Oral History is a self interview, done in 2007.

NEUBERT: There isn't any need to dwell upon Russian language training, first in Washington and then in New York. There are those happy folk who find learning a new language a lark. I'm not one of them. I find it tedious and difficult. But, in the end, I learned enough Russian to be fascinated by going to the U.S.S.R. with some confidence I could communicate with the natives.

After a bit of home leave, I left Seattle on July 4, 1953 en route to Moscow via London. The date provided me with an unexpected bonus. The United Airlines Boeing Stratocruiser I was on had only one passenger to Chicago. Me. In those easy days before terrorism, the captain invited me to ride the co-pilot's seat. And, on a beautiful cloudless day, I watched the glorious West unfold.

In New York, there was excitement of a different kind. On July 5, again in a Pan Am Stratocruiser, we left Idlewild for London. The day was very hot and the captain had elected full fuel and no stop at Shannon. Even though there were only six passengers, he barely bounced off the end of the runway (the outside temperature was over 100 F.) We skimmed out over the bay watching fishermen in boats duck and seeing sheets of spray kicked up by the propeller wash. Then, finally, we climbed away -- to London. The captain had the grace to come back later and say he had misjudged the temperature equation. It is hard to believe this sort of thing in this day of excessively powered jets. No wonder they no longer care what your luggage weighs!

I spent ten days in England becoming, of all things, a spy. At least, I am sure, in Soviet eyes. I was escorted around England and told what various factories made and how to identify them. Do you know that you can tell how much electricity a power line carries? You can, just by looking at it. Or what blue smoke coming from a factory chimney means? You can.

Anyway, I mostly enjoyed the ten days because of the country homes we stayed at. Most, it seemed, were built by Wren and were absolutely delightful. British companies may have had their faults but providing places for guests to stay was not one of them. Not the least of my pleasures was the company of a British brigadier who was later a good friend in Moscow.

In Helsinki, I joined up with Meg and Coby Swank (Coby was later Ambassador to Cambodia) for the train trip to Moscow. We paused for two days in Leningrad and stayed at the Astoria Hotel (both city and hotel later became very well known to me). Then we went on to Moscow in the creaking old prewar Wagon-Lits cars still used on that Helsinki Moscow route. But they are very comfortable, with a lavatory between each two compartments. More than can be said for the modern Red Arrow between Moscow and Leningrad. We all enjoyed our first introduction to the city founded by Peter I and our visits to the Hermitage Museum. I decided then that this had to be the best city in Russia and I believe it even more now, having lived there for the past three years.

The Embassy in Moscow was then (July 1953) the same one that recently burned. But then it was a brand-new converted apartment house into which the Embassy was just completing its move from the former Embassy on Mokhovaya Street, across from the Kremlin, next door to the National Hotel. It all seemed spacious and nicely furnished.

Both Coby Swank and I had been assigned as "political officers." But, when we were ushered in to meet Ambassador Charles Bohlen, it became apparent that these titles had little meaning. Bohlen, clad as usual in flannel "bags" and sport jacket, informed us that Coby would be the administrative officer and I the general services officer (housekeeper). He added, grinning, "Your offices are on the first floor. If you never see me there, it means you're doing a good job." We never saw him -- but we were admittedly deflated as we left his friendly presence.

As General Services Officer (or housekeeper), I had some sixty Russians working for me, only one of whom spoke any English. The rest were carpenters, mechanics, painters, plumbers, laborers, what have you. Two things happened immediately -- I changed the sign on my door to read "Genial Services" and, secondly, I set out to work with my "team." I won't say we were

totally successful. We tried to keep people (including Mrs. Bohlen) happy by doing what we could. And, I think, by and large, we succeeded.

There were, of course, some people who could not be kept happy. Like the Air Force Attaché (departing) who called up in a rage one day because we had dismantled his daughter's bicycle to be shipped home. Did we realize it would cost him money to have it reassembled in the U.S.? We put it back together for him -- forget the U.S. taxpayer.

I suppose (in retrospect) the most amusing job I had as GSO was washing the rugs in the main salon at Spaso House. There were, at that time, two Belgian patterned rugs under the awesome main chandelier. After fruitless negotiations with the city organization for dealing with foreign embassies we finally decided it was necessary to do it ourselves. So I and half a dozen Soviet employees got down and washed them ourselves. I can't say our results were spectacular. But I appreciated them twenty years later when one of those rugs turned up as the main rug in the salon of the Residence in Leningrad.

There were other amusing aspects to the job of GSO in Moscow. For one thing, we still had to care for "American House," a barn-like brick structure down on the river. There, the male single staff, military and state, lived. And they had their "bar" -- a large and handsome area -- and their quarters. Their quarters were interesting because they were in what was formerly a morgue. There was many a joke about this, but it was true. During the war, Ambassador Averell Harriman had insisted that the Soviets provide quarters for the American military mission. Eventually, these were the quarters provided -- and converted. A former morgue.

It was, in fact, the best bar in town -- with dances and all. The first orchestra (of Embassy employees) was called the "Dremlin Krows." This eventually was complained about and (the same orchestra) became known as "Joe Commode and his Four Flushers."

My second year in Moscow involved being in the political section. This made life much easier. I received all the local press at my door every morning at eight, went back to bed, read it, then went to the office at noon to dictate the "Daily Press Telegrams." After that, my days were my own. That is to say that I had to do a normal day's work, no matter how long it took.

Still, during this last year, there was some fun. For example, I was at a reception where Khrushchev, Malenkov, and Mikoyan were present. Like every other junior Embassy officer in town, I was breathing down their necks. Suddenly, as I was standing behind Mikoyan, he stepped backwards, and nearly broke my instep with his heel. He had the grace to turn and apologize.

Again, at the American July 4 Reception in 1955, I saw Marshall Zhukov standing grimly alone, with all his medals. I sent up and introduced myself and referred to the presence of an American Chess Team. I asked him if he played chess. He eyed me coldly. "No," he said. I said I was surprised, that from reading Russian novels I assumed all Russian military officers played chess.

Zhukov smiled (sort of) and said that I had been reading the wrong authors. He added, "If you give me my choice between officers who play chess and officers who have never heard of the game, I will take the latter. Under conditions of modern warfare, you must decide quickly, not

think -- and chess players always want to think.”

It was during this year that Senator Ellender came to Moscow. Just why was never very clear. He was on a boondoggle involving U.S. aid programs of one kind or another. He had a meeting with the Embassy officers at which he spoke of the evils of aid programs to people who were not very friendly. When reminded, gently, that we had no aid programs to the Soviet Union, he ignored the point and went right on. Well. After that, he wanted to go out and visit a collective farm. For lack of anyone else, I was told off to go as his interpreter. Ha! All I knew of collective farms was what I had read in the press. That, I decided, was enough. So I went. But, it turned out, he didn't want to learn about collective farms; he wanted to tell the Russians about farming in Louisiana. Quite another kettle of fish! I learned a lot about farm terminology and Louisiana that afternoon-- to my eternal embarrassment as the Foreign Office types helped me become an interpreter. Happily, “compost” was still “kompost.”

A day or two later, Ellender went to the Kremlin to meet (for whatever reason) with Mikoyan, the eternal Minister of Foreign Trade. For some reason Mikoyan deprecated “unemployment” in the U.S. and Ellender, quite sensibly, observed that in the U.S.S.R. they had a great deal of “structural unemployment,” that is, they paid people to do little or nothing. Mikoyan got red in the face and, pounding the eternal green baize table, said, “There is no unemployment in the Soviet Union, as God is my witness -- although, of course, I don't believe in God.” That broke up the meeting.

Earlier that year, I had had, at a much lower level, another interesting encounter with the Soviet bureaucracy. The Catholic priest resident in Moscow, Father George Bissonette, had been declared “persona non grata” and told to go home. He left his Chevrolet in my custody. So I set out to get a driver's license. This was not simple. In those days, the Embassy required that any Embassy officer driving in the Soviet Union should -- indeed, must -- have a Soviet driver's license. To get one was not easy, even though the Soviets had just come to recognize that not all chauffeurs were professionals and, therefore, had to be auto mechanics as well as drivers.

A word of explanation is perhaps in order. Until 1954 or so, all drivers in the U.S.S.R. were “professionals,” driving state vehicles. About 1954 a few “lucky” Russians began to get cars of their own. Was it reasonable to insist that those too should be mechanics capable of maintaining their own vehicles mechanically? Obviously not, since the first people in the Soviet Union to have private cars were party big-wigs and their wives. So the laws were changed. A new category called “amateur chauffeur” was introduced. To get a license as an “amateur chauffeur,” it was only necessary to take an examination on “the rules of the road,” not on carburetors, etc.

I applied for a license under the new regulations, first having obtained and memorized the “Rules of the Road.” And it was well I had done so. The examination was individual. I sat across a “sand table” from three steely-eyed inspectors, chief of whom was a tight-lipped woman. We ran through all the hypothetical traffic situations on the “sand table.” Then went on to such questions as “Under what eleven conditions may you not back up?” Fortunately, having memorized the book, I could answer such otherwise unanswerable questions. Finally, however, when I began to feel all was well, the examiners stumped me.

The question, posed by the Dragon Lady, was, “You are stalled on a level railroad crossing. What do you do?” My first reaction was instantaneous, “That’s not in the book.” She smiled acidly, “Even so, what do you do?” I asked, “Which direction will the train come from?” She said she couldn’t say. I said I would put the car in reverse (the lowest gear) and grind it off on the battery. She refused that. I said I would get out, flip a coin to decide whence the next train, and run down the track to try and flag it down.

All to no avail. She informed me I had failed the examination and added that I could come back and do it all again in thirty days. I was not terribly amused and told her the least she could do was tell me the answer to her unauthorized question. She told me I should, under the postulated circumstances, honk the horn three times, and railroad workers would appear and remove the car from the tracks. I’m sure I looked astonished. I said, “But, what if there are no railway workers?” She smiled, sweetly this time, “In the Soviet Union, there are always, railway workers.” And, to give her due credit, I’m sure there are.

Anyway, a month later, I returned to listen to one or two perfunctory questions, and my “amateur chauffeur” license was granted with no further ado. Even the “road test” consisted of driving around the block.

My involvement with Father Bissonette led me to other adventures, prior to his enforced departure. He, obviously, was celibate and I was a bachelor. We spent a certain amount of time having dinner together, playing chess together, and so on. Whether because of our occasional get-togethers or other reasons, his chauffeur and my housekeeper (both Soviets) fell in with each other, and one day my housekeeper announced she had to go off on maternity leave. As one can imagine, I was the butt of a good deal of ribbing, but it was clear where paternity lay. Anyway, she finally left and I asked for a temporary replacement.

After a bit, the Soviet authorities provided me with a grossly fat woman, obviously fresh from the farm, but apparently good-natured. I took her on (partly because I was sure no one else would be offered). Soon, it was born in upon me that there is indeed such a thing as the “envelope” within which people prefer to operate. I am one of those people who prefers generally a distance of three to four feet between me and others. My new housekeeper accepted the “three to four” but substituted inches for feet. And she ate garlic. And she had strong body odor -- mostly stale perspiration. And I couldn’t stand it!

What emerged each morning was indeed a comedy. As a bachelor, I had to give her marching orders for the day. But, as I talked, she got closer and closer, until I was bouncing off her ample “front porch” and trying to evade the garlic. It got so that I would back around the dining room table-pulling out the chairs to create obstacles -- as I ticked off the order of the day.

The whole thing ended rather unfortunately. I came home one evening about five to take a shower before a reception at the Ambassador’s residence. As I was standing naked in my bedroom, about to put on my robe to go shower, she trotted in for some reason or other and I told her -- in mean Russian -- to get lost. She flounced out and I never saw her again. But the Embassy did get a note complaining that I had used abusive language to my housekeeper. Which I had. We never answered the note. And, happily, my regular housekeeper shortly returned.

In the period after I obtained a driver's license I went off on various excursions about the Soviet Union. One of these took me and some of my friends to Kharkov, Poltava, and Kiev-and back. This was instructive for a variety of reasons. On the way Kharkov from Moscow -- a distance of perhaps 600 kilometers -- we met ten vehicles coming toward us and passed twelve going in the same direction. We also encountered one gasoline station. The "year of the automobile" was not yet upon the Soviet Union. Needless to say, the road was rough two-lane macadam all the way.

The road from Kharkov to Poltava and Kiev was no better. Poltava was fascinating because of the museum dedicated to Peter the First's defeat of the Swedes in 1709. But the hotel (allegedly Intourist) was less amusing. It was a two story structure left over from before the war. The rooms were commodious and each had a sink and bathtub. But the toilet facilities were something else again. There was, to be sure, a "ladies" and "gents." But the "gents," at least, had not been cleaned in weeks and none of the plumbing was working. To enter was to enter the Augean stables. Incredible! I, at least, elected to try the back courtyard. But so had everyone else, so this was no improvement. I gathered, without directly inquiring, that the "ladies" was no better. So we hastened on to Kiev.

I should mention, in passing, that the most common question asked us in Poltava, once folk knew we were Americans, was "Lucky Strike?" meaning, "Do you have a Lucky Strike?" All of the townspeople remembered the short-lived U.S. air base at Poltava in 1944 and remembered American cigarettes.

In Kiev we had a wonderful time. The architecture and the people seemed warmer than in Moscow. Perhaps simply because they were more southern. It started when we went up to the rooms and, bags delivered, I offered the bell-boy a tip. He looked outraged and refused. I stepped back into the room. He followed and grinned. "That was just for the 'duty' woman at the key desk." He fidgeted, "I can always use more money. Can't we all?" So he accepted a tip. And was our good friend and consultant thereafter.

The next morning I discovered we had a flat tire. So I changed tires and took the car out to a garage to have the flat fixed. I had to return the next day. I hired a taxi. As we sped -- and I mean sped -- along the rough streets I asked him if he was a Communist. He almost broke up (himself and us) as he guffawed over that. Then he calmed down enough to say, "Why should I be a Communist? They think that people's arms are made to push things away. In fact, they are made to bring things to you." This sounds perhaps innocuous. But he was demonstrating with his arms -- off the wheel -- as we sped along. So I am delighted he and I survived his political lecture. With the point of which, incidentally, I agree. He had it in a nutshell. You can't change human nature. Even the "new Soviet man," I suspect, very much resembles the "old non-Soviet man."

One of the aspects of driving around the Soviet countryside in those days was that you were always followed by KGB vehicles, a fact difficult to hide since there usually were no other vehicles for miles around. I was younger and gayer in those days, and even Chevrolets had more get up and go than Volgas (they still have) so I could resist from time to time stepping it up and watch the pursuing Volga or Volgas drop back, and vanish. Then we would turn off, stop, and have a picnic lunch, and finally wave to the Volgas as they sped painfully past. And, of course,

we waved to them again as we went on after lunch. And they picked up the fresh scent. Just what it was they thought we were up to never became clear. But, perhaps it was as much a holiday for them as for us, so perhaps it all came out even.

Sometimes the business of being followed became ridiculous. Once, the Agricultural Attaché, my good friend Horace Davis, and I were making our way south of Kiev toward Odessa, across the “breadbasket” of the Soviet Union. We were not following usual roads but we were in “open” areas. Every once in a while we would stop and finger the wheat crop -- not that I knew anything about wheat, ready or unready. Then we would eat. The funny thing was that in all this emptiness -- and it was empty -- there were one sedan, two jeeps, and one motor cycle with sidecar behind us. About two hundred yards behind us. A flat plain. Nothing for miles. Then this oddly spaced caravan. We had field glasses. They had field glasses. I watched them from time to time as they watched us from time to time. We had lunch. I was never able to observe that they did. Supermen, no doubt.

We almost got our comeuppance. I was driving. Suddenly there was a hole in the road. I swerved but a rear tire dropped in. We stopped. There was nothing sinister in all this. There was a row of holes, obviously for a new fence. One was in the middle of what passed for a road. But there we were. Stuck.

The reaction of our four escorts was interesting. Would they come to help us? Scarcely. They stopped and watched with field glasses. I hope they learned something.

First, Horace and I opened the trunk and got out two iced cans of beer. Then we sat in the shade of the car and drank the beer while we considered the problem. We rapidly concluded that there was no problem -- so we had another beer. After that we decided we might as well move on, so I got out the jack and jacked up the immersed wheel and stepped back while Horace drove the car off onto level ground. We put away the jack, opened another beer, and went on our way, no thanks to the KGB.

Our travels that day in the direction of Odessa became more complicated. We kept running into military types posted at crossroads, who kept pushing us eastward. Finally, about 10 P.M., we arrived at Drevoi Rog, a far cry from Odessa. But there we were and, curiously enough, they had a room for us at the station hotel. (Did they know something we didn't?)

The room was fine, but it had no bath. We insisted on bathing. Fine, but this was possible only two nights a week and this was not one of them. I got on my high horse and insisted on a bath. After a great deal of hoo-hah, it was agreed that we could bathe. And (I can't speak for Horace) it turned out to be a heart-warming experience. I went first down to the basement where an elderly man had a wood-fire under a boiler and, in the adjoining room, there was a large, old fashioned bathtub. The tub was filled -- no nonsense -- by an overhead pipe from the boiler. The attendant added cold water to my taste. Then I got in and, with touching politeness, he asked if I would like him to scrub my back. I said yes, and he washed me and helped me dry off and could not have been pleasanter. When I left, I tried to offer him money, but he refused. He did not, however, complain when I said I had no further use for the bar of soap I had brought and left it beside the tub.

ROBERT R. BOWIE
Policy Planning Staff: U.S. View of Soviet Union: Solarium Exercise
Washington, DC (1953-1957)

A University Professor and senior level Public Servant, Dr. Bowie was educated at Princeton and Harvard Universities. He practiced law in Baltimore before entering the US Army, where he served from 1942 to 1946. After the end of World War II he served in Germany as Deputy Military Governor. His service with the US government included Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Counselor of the Department of State and Director of Policy Planning for the State Department. He was also Professor at Harvard University. Dr. Bowie was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988.

Q: Could we look now at a few of the areas where you obviously were very much involved. How did you and the policy planning staff view the Soviet Union in the period you were there?

BOWIE: Well, as you may remember, Stalin died almost immediately after Eisenhower took office. I think it was March, wasn't it, '53? And in a month or so, Eisenhower decided he would have a major exercise to consider what ought to be the general policy towards the Soviet Union. And he started something called the Solarium Exercise. This was based on the notion of having three teams, each of about five or six, who would be given a particular approach to the Soviet Union and would make the best case they could for it, analyzing the purposes of the Soviet Union and what our interests were, what our means of influencing it were. And one of these teams, by the way, was headed by George Kennan.

Q: So I've often heard that Dulles sort of turned his back, I mean dismissed Kennan out of hand?

BOWIE: Well, there was certainly not a good feeling between them because there had been some sort of a misunderstanding. I think shortly after the Administration took office George, who had been--I think he'd been at the War College--I believe he went out and made a public speech which was highly critical, essentially, of views which he attributed to Dulles. And Dulles took this amiss and I think the result was that he simply let Kennan go. But some of the people on these task forces were brought in from outside the government, and so Kennan actually was asked to head the team which was given the task of making the case for containment. And then there were two others. It's not worth getting into those. But they were different ways of dealing with the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], including roll-back.

Q: Roll-back?

BOWIE: This was the idea that we would pressure the Soviets to force them to retract their power, particularly in Eastern Europe, which was an idea which had been talked about in the campaign.

These teams had about three or four weeks to prepare the material, then there was a full presentation before members of the Cabinet and before the assistant secretaries and the Planning Board, almost all the top military officers and a number of other people. And at the end of it the President made his own statement.

Q: The President was at the presentation?

BOWIE: Oh, yes. It was principally for him and the members of the NSC. At a meeting in Princeton a couple of weeks ago for the 100th anniversary of Dulles' birth, which Kennan once more repeated what I had heard him say before, that at the end Eisenhower made an extemporaneous summary of his reactions. Kennan said it showed that he had no peer in the room, that he really had a grasp of the subject which was outstanding. And from George that's quite a high compliment.

In any event, this was the first effort to take a look at Soviet policy, and on the basis of those reports, there was discussion in the NSC. Then we prepared a paper in the NSC Planning Board which was later approved in the NSC which was the First National Strategy Paper (NSC 162/2). Well, by chance in preparing for this conference at Princeton a couple of weeks ago, I went over some of these documents which have been declassified and I reread 162/2 which was prepared in October 1953 - it was the document that took account of this Solarium exercise and was the first so-called National Security Strategy Paper or something of that order. And it was essentially a presentation of our broader set of purposes but also in particular our approach to the Soviet Union. And I think reading it over it was a pretty balanced approach. Essentially it took the view that the Soviet Union was not at all likely to launch any aggressive war in Europe, that it had very substantial military capabilities but it would try to use them politically to extend its influence; that it was engaged in trying broadly to extend its influence wherever it could; that it was on the whole cautious in its pursuit of that purpose but nevertheless unflagging; that its control of the satellites at that point was firm and was not likely to be disrupted because of its military capability to put down any uprisings.

With respect to China, it took the view that its relation with the USSR then was close and cooperative but that over time it seemed unlikely that this would be able to persist, that there were almost sure to be cleavages because of the somewhat different interests of the Soviet Union and China, and that it was quite likely that over time there would be a fissure in that relationship. Not predicting any time, but simply taking the view that it was not forever a solid kind of relationship.

And then the general approach, as I said, stressed our interest in trying to promote development in the developing world, our interest in trying to promote European integration, the importance of NATO as a basis of containment. Toward the USSR, I would say that in general the paper carried forward the basic concept of containment as formulated in the Truman Administration but modified the military strategy to take account of the growing nuclear capability, and to incorporate the "New Look".

I think looking back that it was a pretty balanced appraisal and not extreme or very doctrinaire.

Q: The historians are always revising themselves, looking back on it, but at the time were there any opportunities that maybe we missed of defusing the Cold War? Or do you think that was in the cards in those days?

BOWIE: I don't think there were any missed opportunities myself. But of course as you say, trying to construct alternative theories of history, it's all speculation. You remember an early claim about a lost opportunity in 1952 when the Soviets sent a note to the Truman Administration in which they seemed to say, why don't we discuss the unification of Germany and neutralization of Germany and so on. And this was entirely out of line with the general Western effort to construct Europe that included Germany and the Truman Administration didn't pursue it. Some, including some German historians, treat this as a lost opportunity. I don't think so myself. I don't think at that point the Soviet Union dared to liquidate East Germany. I think what they were trying to do was to start a discussion which they hoped would derail the efforts to create a more unified Europe and NATO, and which didn't necessarily require that they pursue it, if they could get a discussion going which would create tensions and turmoil in Germany itself. Because at that time Schumacher you remember, and his party, was strongly opposed to the integration of Germany into the European Community and into NATO. And I'm sure they thought--

Q: Schumacher was the Socialist--

BOWIE: He was the leader of the SPD. And I can't remember exactly, he died relatively early on, but his party continued the same policy until '58.

Well, my own feeling is that after the death of Stalin the Soviet leaders were very much caught up in their own turmoil about who was to predominate, who was to be the leader. They began with collective leadership, and you remember they put Malenkov in charge to start with, but it was perfectly clear from what went on later that there was constant turmoil among them, and struggle to see who would prevail until Khrushchev took over in about '56. But you remember they shot Beria very early on because he was obviously trying to use the Secret Police as a means of taking charge. They went long for a while under Malenkov, then they demoted him, put in Bulganin, who was nominally in charge at the time of the Summit meeting in '55 in Geneva. But at that meeting while Bulganin was the spokesman, Khrushchev, who was also there, was very self-confident and pretty clearly the principal member of the delegation, although he was not nominally so. About a year later he essentially asserted his authority and, you'll remember, put down the so-called anti-party plot in which some of the others had attempted to oust him.

Our view then was that during that period the Soviets were not in any position to take any explicit initiatives of any major sort. They were interested in keeping things calm, not letting relations with the West get tense, so they conducted a sort of peace initiative. And as a part of that, after NATO finally took in the Germans in '55, they agreed to the Austrian state treaty which had been held up by them for 10 years.

In short, my feeling was that through '56 the Soviets were not in a position, just because the leadership hadn't yet been settled, to make any major changes in the ongoing policy. What they did do was try, as I said, to remove a certain number of lesser disputes or frictions inherited from

Stalin, including such things as the Austrian state treaty. But I don't think they were in a position to make a major change. The West had various meetings with them including one, the Foreign Ministers meeting, in January and February of '54--

Q: Berlin.

BOWIE: Berlin, in which we discussed the whole question of German unification and the situation in Europe. And it was very clear that Molotov was simply not prepared to make any major change which would possibly imperil the continuance of Eastern Germany. Various proposals were made by him that there be some sort of confederation between the East Germans and the West Germans but they were clearly not going to go on and make decisions about whether or not you had elections and how and so on. It was perfectly clear that East Germany wasn't going to commit suicide and these were all just devices for trying to create discord in the West. But fortunately there was a unified view across the board, the French and the British and ourselves, and also the Germans under Adenauer, that we shouldn't be sucked into something that was a mirage.

So I repeat, certainly we didn't think at the time that there was any opportunity that we missed and on the basis of hindsight, trying to reflect on it, I don't see any.

Q: Did you have on your policy planning staff somebody sort of looking for signals? I mean, was the thought that we don't want to miss this if it comes up but just to have somebody sort of you in-house dove or something like that?

BOWIE: Didn't have anybody explicitly designated for that purpose, but we were all constantly reappraising, you know, what was the situation vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, what were the Soviet purposes and whether or not there were changes. It was recognized that there were certain changes in the Soviet Union after Stalin, particularly after Khrushchev came into power there was a loosening up and so on. And certainly there was an end to the use of purges in the way in which Stalin had done. Except for the shooting of Beria, when they decided to demote one of the leaders, as in the case of Malenkov, they sent him off to a minor job.

Q: Hydroelectric station.

BOWIE: But he continued to live and make his way. And the same was true even when they came later on to toss out Khrushchev. As a matter of fact, I think Khrushchev, after he has been demoted, removed as the head of the government and the party, says that perhaps his major contribution to the Soviet Union was that he had helped create an atmosphere in which a leader could be demoted and still be allowed to live and to simply retire. And I think that's true, that was a very profound change in the whole political culture in the Soviet Union which, you know, was a real milestone. And they haven't gone back on that. They're not essentially engaged in anything remotely like Stalin's way of governing.

Q: Was the NSC involved, not really the NSC, the policy planning staff, involved in sort of crisis management? Let's say when there were the riots in East Berlin and the Hungarian Revolution?

BOWIE: Well, as I indicated, as head of the policy planning staff I was free to attend any meeting I wanted, and so when meetings were held about Hungary, obviously I took part. I can't really say that the Policy Planning Staff, as such, made some unique contribution to these kinds of things, but we tried--the Hungary case was terribly frustrating because the truth was we didn't see how we could do anything useful at that point to significantly change what was going on.

Q: Right from the beginning this was almost self-understood?

BOWIE: Pretty much I think. I think there were some people in the government who sort of thought--

Q: This is the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

BOWIE: 1956, yes. And there were some people I think who felt that we could at least do things which were more like gestures, like dropping supplies and things like that. But I think that Eisenhower and Dulles thought that those kinds of gestures might even make the Hungarians think that we were going to do more than we were and that they were therefore ill advised because they might just help cause people to sacrifice themselves under a misapprehension of the degree to which we were going to help. And I think realistically the conclusion was that if you tried to intervene you risked a third world war because of the fact that the control of the Soviet Empire at that time was seen as so vital to their own interests. And if it appeared that the West was really trying to undermine that control in a forceful way, it could produce the kind of a conflict that nobody wanted.

Q: Did Dulles sort of acknowledge that he was having to sort of backtrack on some of the rhetoric? You know, there was talk about rolling back Eastern Europe and he--

BOWIE: I think the truth is that that had been buried at the time of the Solarium Exercise in '53. As I said, one of the task forces in that exercise was given the job of making the best case for essentially trying to roll back Soviet power. And in the discussions of the results of those presentations, and in NSC 162/2, that was simply not pursued. And therefore, to tell the truth, I don't think it was ever a live possibility under Eisenhower, and I think part of his purpose in the Solarium Exercise was to make sure that everybody understood that the basic policy was containment and not roll-back. And of course that was underscored with the riots in East Berlin in June 1953 when there was rioting and the West simply did not try to intervene, for the same reason, which as I said, later on caused people not to think it wise to try to intervene in Hungary. So I don't really think by the time of Hungary that this was thought of at all as a live possibility.

Let me say this. I don't think that meant that people assumed that control by the Soviet Union of Eastern Europe was forever, but I think that what they recognized was that it would have to be domestic or internal forces and historical forces and the ferment within the system over quite a long time which would ultimately probably change the relationship between Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. So it wasn't assumed that this was going to be the status quo forever, but it was certainly recognized that it was not going to be changed by anything we did specifically directed to that end and was certainly not going to change in any short time.

EMORY C. SWANK
Political Officer
Moscow (1953-1955)

Intelligence Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1955-1957)

Deputy Chief of Mission
Moscow (1967-1969)

Ambassador Emory C. Swank was born in 1914 and raised in Brunswick, Maryland. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in China, the Soviet Union, and Romania, and an ambassadorship to Cambodia. Ambassador Swank was interviewed by Henry Precht in January and February, 1988.

Q: Tell us about your first tour in Moscow. As I recall, Stalin had died in the spring of 1953. It must have been an exciting period.

SWANK: Indeed so. The political process had congealed under Stalin, and we were witness to both a relentless struggle for power among his successors and a gradually unfolding transition to new policies. The best account of this period is by Charles E. Bohlen, Witness to History 1929-1969, who was the U.S. Ambassador. Chip Bohlen was a warm and vigorous man, a gifted briefer and conversationalist, and he took a particular interest in young officers. Following the process of the “thaw” was fascinating. A major effort was made to assure the Soviet people that larger resources would be allocated to producing consumer goods. Political prisoners were quietly released from prison camps -- the Gulag Archipelago Solzhenitsyn later wrote about so eloquently. Externally, the new leaders moved out of the isolation of Stalin’s years. They invited Nehru and others to Moscow, repaired ties with Yugoslavia, and made the first arms sales outside the bloc to Syria and Egypt. In a remarkable speech before he lost out in the struggle for power to Khrushchev and Bulganin, Georgi Malenkov, who had been considered Stalin’s heir apparent, spoke of nuclear war as a conflict no one could win. Negotiations with the West over Germany and Austria were resumed. This period marked the first post-war “detente,” evoked by the media as “The Spirit of Geneva,” where the leaders of the USSR, the U.S., Britain and France met for summit talks in the summer of 1955.

A memorable precursor of that meeting occurred in Moscow on July 4, 1955. In an unprecedented gesture of cordiality, the entire Soviet Politburo turned up *en masse* at Spaso House, the American residence, to help celebrate Independence Day. As protocol officer for the event, I recall being increasingly intrigued as the evidence mounted in the form of phone calls from the Foreign Ministry that “the Russians were coming.” U.S. officials had become accustomed to consider themselves fortunate when a Deputy Foreign Minister such as Andrei Gromyko appeared. No more striking manifestation of the changes occurring in Soviet policies could have been devised.

Q: Did you enjoy your tour in Moscow?

SWANK: Those of us who spoke the language found Moscow exciting. But life was full of hardships, even for diplomats with privileged access to a country dacha, food imports, and occasional tickets to opera, the ballet, and the theater. We lived in cramped, poorly constructed apartments. Soviet personnel and listening devices in the walls spied on us. For eight months of the year markets contained only cabbages and potatoes. Cuts of meat were either unavailable or unrecognizable. Winters were long and dreary. The Soviet people were sullen and generally fearful of foreigners. If not fearful, we immediately suspected them of being agents. Soviet media, literature, and art parroted the Party line. Foreigners were under round-the-clock surveillance.

As a consequence, we experienced an exhilarating feeling of liberation when we left the country. West Berlin, itself only an island in a Soviet sea, seemed to us paradise after six months in Moscow. Visitors to the U.S.S.R. still experience this uplift on departure. I accompanied a group of American business executives to the Soviet Union on a two-week visit in 1983. When our Finn Air flight left Moscow, they breathed a sigh of collective relief. It was as though a blanket of hostile suspicion and surveillance had been lifted.

Q: In addition to attendance of Politburo members at the July reception in 1955, were there other indications in your relationships with the Russians that a new era had begun? Do you recall other significant events?

SWANK: Let me make the point that few of us mistook the “thaw” for genuine friendship with the West. Soviet actions reflected the conviction of the new leaders that the country could exploit its potential as a great power only by moving out of Stalinist isolation. In unguarded moments they even articulated this motivation, as when Khrushchev announced to a startled U.S.: “We will bury you!”

My following assignment was as an analyst (1955-1957) in State’s Division of Research and Intelligence for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Its chief was Boris Klosson, a civil servant (later an FSO) specializing in the Soviet field, and my immediate boss was Frank Siscoe, Chief of the External Branch. Because of the recent summit and innovations in Soviet behavior, there was intense high-level interest in Soviet affairs. Klosson briefed Secretary Dulles weekly on Soviet developments. The Director of CIA was Allan Dulles, John Foster’s brother, and this amity at the top was reflected in close working relationships between State and CIA personnel. My job in State was to write about the accelerating Soviet economic and military aid “offensive” and Soviet efforts to coordinate and develop the economies of the Warsaw Pact nations. I also served as a staffer of the Watch Committee, an interagency group in the Pentagon which had access to all the intelligence available to the U.S. on the U.S.S.R. The Committee produced a highly classified weekly document circulated to the heads of concerned departments and agencies in which it assessed Soviet capabilities and intentions in crises that could lead to involvement of U.S. forces. The period was rife with crises, including the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt and the Soviet invasion of Hungary.

I was promoted to Chief of the External Branch in 1957 and anticipated spending another year or

two in Washington. I enjoyed being privy to special intelligence (although since retirement I have found that one can be remarkably well informed with access to the multiple unclassified sources that are available), and I developed a much crisper writing style and improved analytical skills on the job.

Q: What was your opinion at that time of the analytical strengths of the American research and intelligence establishment?

SWANK: The analyses of Soviet bloc developments were first rate. The CIA in particular had people who took a level-headed and non-ideological view of Soviet developments, an approach which I approve, and it seemed to me that the estimates they made were usually on the mark.

Q: Were there occasions in which the American intelligence establishment was caught out -- that is, failed to see developing trends -- that you would like to recall?

SWANK: No one forecast that the revolution in Hungary would develop in so dramatic a fashion. But the coverage of what was happening in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was excellent. The problem there was that no one could read Soviet intentions. We had not penetrated the Politburo.

SWANK: My second tour in Moscow lasted from June 1967 to May 1969. After two years in Laos, I was sufficiently disenchanted with the situation in Southeast Asia to write Ambassador Foy Kohler requesting he consider me for the position of his deputy in Moscow. I explained that I was anxious to reestablish my connections with Soviet affairs after a series of assignments elsewhere. Foy approved my assignment but was in the meantime reassigned himself to Washington. The new ambassador, Llewellyn Thompson, graciously accepted me as his DCM although he was not well acquainted with me. Tommy Thompson's second tour as Ambassador in Moscow -- he had served there with distinction from 1957 to 1962 -- was a disappointment to him. He had been persuaded by President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk, somewhat against his better judgment, I always believed, to return to Moscow. He was troubled by a stomach ulcer that sapped his vigor and resilience. But the main cause of his depression was boredom. He no longer had the entree to the Kremlin he had enjoyed with Khrushchev, the Brezhnev regime proving to be both dull and impenetrable. Serious external distractions also weighed against progress in bilateral relations, notably the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The favorite preoccupation of all Soviet watchers was to speculate whether an invasion would take place. Tommy confided to me his personal doubt that Brezhnev would be able to stomach Dubcek for long, but he nonetheless decided that he might as well take a deserved vacation from Moscow. He was absent in August when the invasion took place. As Chargé d'Affaires I adhered to the NATO-agreed policy of abstaining from contacts with the Soviet Foreign Ministry and of suspending bilateral programs -- the extent of the sanctions the West was prepared to impose. Within two to three months, normal contacts were resumed.

The framework agreement on construction of new chanceries and residential quarters for the Soviets in Washington and U.S. personnel in Moscow was negotiated in this period. Many of my

visits with Georgi Kornienko, then Director of the American Section of the Foreign Ministry, dealt with the principles which were to govern construction in Moscow. An agreement was signed on May 16, 1969, just before I left Moscow. Almost 20 years later, the Embassy offices are still unoccupied in Washington and Moscow because of overriding security problems that have emerged over the intervening years.

I suppose I am more philosophical than incensed about this development. I have the impression from media coverage of the problems that some U.S. officials may be looking for perfect security for our buildings in the U.S.S.R. Perfect security is an illusion. We will always have to proceed on the assumption that new technological breakthroughs will occur and that Soviet efforts to penetrate our mission will be unremitting. Our ultimate security rests less on technology than on the loyalty, common sense, and disciplined discretion of our officials in Moscow.

Q: What was the situation with respect to security at our Embassy during your 1967- 1969 tour?

SWANK: Security was a daily preoccupation. It took up at least a third of my time. The Security Officer, the Technical Security Officer, and I worked closely together. Monthly reports were submitted to Washington recapitulating suspicious actions by Soviet personnel or other Soviet contacts which might be efforts to recruit Americans. There were never fewer than 20 such suspicious incidents a month. I spent much time reviewing these penetration attempts, keeping the staff informed of their responsibilities to report incidents promptly, and handling major provocations, some of them inevitably of a sordid character. I shall cite just one of these, involving an FSO who was accompanying a prominent U.S. politician on a trip outside Moscow. The officer was unknowingly photographed by the KGB in a sexual act in a hotel room with a woman whom he had met on the flight from Moscow. Some weeks later a Soviet writer acquaintance of the officer confronted him with the photographs and sought to recruit him as a spy. To his credit, the officer made a clean breast of the incident to the Ambassador, the Security Officer, and me, and of course to his wife as well. We arranged for his prompt departure from Moscow with his wife and family and recommended that he be continued in the service because of the personal courage and honesty he had demonstrated. The officer served with distinction for more than ten years afterwards.

I'd like to make a comment on listening devices, which have received perhaps undue attention in the media. Everyone assigned to a Soviet post or to a post where Soviet clandestine operations are presumed feasible is thoroughly briefed on the likelihood of acoustic monitoring. In the period 1967-69 the U.S., British, French, German, and Canadian Embassies, to my personal knowledge, were equipped with special acoustically secure rooms for conversations of some import and delicacy. But these facilities were limited, and we had to rely basically on the individual's good sense and discretion. Officers did not use dictation; confidential family discussions were held in places that could not be monitored. I have always doubted that much valuable intelligence is picked up through listening devices. This doubt was fortified when I read British intelligence expert Peter Wright's book, *Spycatcher*. He confirmed that MI5, British counterpart of the FBI, received little useful material from its monitoring of Soviet and satellite diplomatic establishments in London.

Q: Could I ask two questions on security? First, in the negotiations of the agreement for the construction of offices, was there adequate concern on our side for preventing technological penetration of the structure?

SWANK: As I recall, the agreement provided for continuing access by Americans to the structure during all phases of construction.

Q: Second, with reference to the recent problems of Marine guards in Moscow, can you say a word about how they were dealt with during your tenure?

SWANK: They were very closely supervised by the non-commissioned officer in charge of them, and both the Security Officer and I paid continuing attention to their morale and their social activities. They were excellent men. I cannot help but attribute a good measure of the recently publicized problems -- which appear, by the way, to have been exaggerated as to their degree of seriousness -- to inadequate supervision by Embassy staff.

Q: Your second tour in Moscow, like your first, lasted two years. Is that customary?

SWANK: For junior officers, yes. For senior officers there is greater discretion. Meg and I had hoped to remain a third year, particularly since we had known and worked with Jake (Jacob D.) Beam (who replaced Tommy Thompson in March 1969) in Djakarta. But as soon as he arrived in Moscow, Jake informed me I was to return to Washington to become a Deputy Assistant Secretary in European Affairs with responsibilities for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

May I offer at this point some reflections on U.S.-Soviet relations? They are based on almost 40 years of observation and study, including the decade since my retirement. I have several points to make.

First, it is highly important that State maintain a corps of Russian-speaking specialists with service in the U.S.S.R. Comparable English-speaking Soviet specialists on the United States are, I believe, more numerous than ours and better trained in English than our men and women are in Russian. They also tend to remain in their American specialization longer than our officers in Soviet specialization. If anything, our corps of Russian-speaking specialists needs to be expanded.

Second, as promising as the Gorbachev reforms appear, it is prudent to recall the cyclical nature of both Russian and Soviet history -- repression - relaxation - repression. The record of other than centralized autocratic rule in Russia is nonexistent up to this point, and overmuch decentralization could threaten the cohesion of the Soviet empire, just about the only empire still extant. For these reasons, we should welcome glasnost and perestroika but retain some skepticism as to their durability and their impact on Soviet society. I am among those who hope for an eventual evolution of the Soviet nation into a country we can live more comfortably with than we do now. But it is bound to be a long and tortured process. We must be patiently hopeful.

Third, having expressed this skepticism based on history and experience, I must also note with optimism signs that we may now be at the beginning of the end of the Cold War. There is some

prospect that the new Soviet leadership perceives limits to the utility of a continuing over-allocation of resources to military purposes. As early as 1955 I remember asking myself why in a society still so poor so many resources went to the military. Since then the U.S.S.R. has reached rough military parity with the U.S. and is by far the strongest nation in Eurasia. There is no longer any legitimate Soviet military concern other than avoiding the disintegration of the empire. Perhaps Gorbachev perceives this and is ready to negotiate some reduction not only of nuclear but also conventional forces. The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan also bespeaks a new realism in Soviet policies.

Fourth, experience suggests that Americans need patience, prudence, and steadiness in dealing with the Soviet Union. We and our political system are not overly endowed with these qualities. Maintenance of military parity between West and East is essential as the Soviet Union goes through its transition to an undisclosed future. Both potential adversaries have been kept prudent by the perception of mutually assured destruction (MAD), and MAD will surely continue to be the governing strategy over the next generation, even if nuclear arsenals are reduced and even if a limited strategic defense is achieved. So we need a Soviet policy for the long haul, one based on the concept of an uneasy, half-truce between us.

Q: May I ask a question on your reflections on the Soviet Union over your tenure? Would you say that the pragmatic view -- so I would describe it -- that you have of the Soviet Union and its relationship with us has been shared by most FSOs, or were there people who held views to the extreme hard-line right and soft-line left?

SWANK: Virtually all the FSOs have been pragmatists. If you opt for Russian language and area training and are prepared to live in the Soviet Union, you are open-minded enough to "deal with the Devil." Conversely, no one can live in the Soviet Union and ignore the oppressiveness of the society and the significant failures of the system. They are an antidote to the fallacies of the soft-line left. Apart from Alger Hiss, who like the British defectors shared an ideological affinity with communism, no American FSO has gone over to the Soviets.

Q: Would you say, then, that the pragmatism of State was shared in defense and CIA?

SWANK: By working professionals, yes. Political appointees are another matter. Anti-Soviet attitudes were pronounced and apparently unshakable in several Reagan appointees to the Pentagon.

Q: Why haven't we done better in training our officers to serve in this important post? Is it a failure of length of assignment, training, or motivation?

SWANK: I would not agree that our personnel policies have failed. I have known many Soviet specialists over the years and almost all of them were top caliber, representing as good men and women as the Service could offer. The problem rests at the political level, with our leaders unwilling to trust career officers in important positions such as those held by Bohlen, Thompson, and Kohler. In degree, the diminished position of the Department of State vis-a-vis the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, and the CIA may also be a factor.

Q: Is it your impression language and area officers are adequately rewarded? Does their dedication and hard work pay off?

SWANK: I cannot cite any officers who have suffered from Soviet specialization. Many assignments are open to them outside Washington and the Soviet Union because of the active role of the U.S.S.R. on the world scene and the centrality in U.S. policy of East-West relations. At one time there were limited assignment opportunities for Chinese language specialists. That has never been a problem for Soviet specialists.

Q: One more question on Soviet affairs, Coby. When Gorbachev took power and began to institute reforms, the American community of Sovietologists seemed taken by surprise. Based on your experience, how well do you think experts within the government really understand the Soviet Union? Obviously there are great difficulties reaching an intimate understanding of such a closed society. How well have we managed to get around these barriers and obtain an in-depth knowledge of the workings of that system?

SWANK: We do not have an in-depth knowledge of the Politburo. We would give a great deal to penetrate its processes, which are kept very secret even from Soviet citizens. The Russian Tsars operated in much the same way, with a passion for secrecy. Having admitted this important shortcoming, I think that the academicians, journalists, and diplomats who constitute the main body of U.S. Sovietologists have excellent insights into Soviet behavior. Several journalists have written exceptionally perceptive books about Soviet society -- Hedrick Smith, Robert Kaiser, and David Binder, to name only a few. Nor is there any country in the world that is the object of such intense scrutiny by our intelligence community. Concerning your question about Gorbachev, his rise to power was anticipated but the scope and rapidity of his proposals for change astonished many of us. In general, Sovietologists share varying degrees of skepticism, based on experience and example, that the reforms are going to work. On the other hand, most of them are heartened that he's making such an effort to restore dynamism to an inert society.

TERRENCE CATHERMAN
Soviet Studies
Columbia University (1955-1956)

Special Projects Office, USIS
Vienna, Austria (1956-1960)

USIS Officer
Moscow (1960-1964)

Head of Russian and East European Language Broadcasting, VOA
Washington, DC (1964-1967)

Terrence Catherman was born in Michigan and attended the University of Michigan in the early 1940s prior to joining the army. He completed his

bachelors and master's degrees in political science. He joined the Foreign Service and received his first post in Tel Aviv, Israel. His Foreign Service career also took him to Germany, Russia and Yugoslavia. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in January 1991.

Q: Lets go back to your academic year at Columbia.

CATHERMAN: Right. Pic Littell, my colleague from USIA, and I were the first representatives to get an academic year at government expense for the honing of our professional skills. In our case at Columbia University where we were both in Soviet studies. This was 1955 and 1956.

From the Russian Institute at Columbia University, Pic Littell went directly to Moscow and opened a USIA office in our Embassy there. It was not called USIA as the Soviets would not tolerate that. Pic had to essentially rejoin the State Department and go as a State Department officer. At any rate he opened up an operation in Moscow which was connected with USIA and soon after that began to arrange for the publication of Ameryka magazine and started some rudimentary exchanges programs with the Soviet Union.

I went to Vienna and spent the next four years in Vienna operating one of the more interesting things in my experience, a shop called the Special Projects Office in USIS Vienna.

Q: This was not an integral part of the regular USIS program.

CATHERMAN: It was not an integral part of the USIS program. My assignment there was to monitor the East European, what we called satellite, radio and press in those days, and also the media of the Soviet Union, and to get news items out of those media and give them to the Western press covering the Soviet empire from Vienna. In those days practically no journalists went into Eastern Europe, or if they did get in they couldn't do their job because of the Stalinist approach to the Western media. So we got information to them from the satellite and Soviet media. I also had access to Embassy reports and other information sources. I spent time briefing Western journalists, Americans and others about how we saw things developing in the satellite empire.

Q: Were you also furnishing any information to Munich radio and Radio Free Europe?

CATHERMAN: Yes. Although they had a far bigger monitoring effort than we did. We did supply a lot of information to them. We had a good working relationship with them and we got their reports back. Now they were much bigger and more complete. We were a quick moving operation. When we received a news report that looked good we got it out right away. Our advantage and our strength was that we could move fast. We were small. I think there were 15 of us in that shop.

Q: Were you the only American?

CATHERMAN: The only American until 1959 when Phil Arnold joined me. He became one of the PAOs in that area later on. Phil and I were colleagues for two years until 1961 when I was assigned to the Soviet Union. In 1959, I went to the Soviet Union as a member of the staff of our national exhibition there. This was the first major USIA and US Government effort to open the Soviet Union. We spent the summer there and played host to hundreds of thousands of Soviets. The Soviets also had their exhibition in the United States, in New York. That was the start of American public diplomacy in the Soviet Union. Some had been done before by Pic Littell and also Tom Tuch, Tom was my immediate predecessor in Moscow, but that was the big one. The New York Philharmonic with Leonard Bernstein came during that period. We had other large performing arts groups. We really got going in the cultural and information side of things in 1959.

Q: Had Lee Brady come to Moscow by that time?

CATHERMAN: Lee Brady was there. He was Tom Tuch's boss. The reason I mentioned Tom first was that I had a personal friendship with Tom and I always followed, or almost always followed, Tom in assignments. For instance, I replaced Tom in Moscow, later on I replaced him in Berlin, then I replaced him as Deputy Director of the Voice of America in the early '80s. And then, finally, I replaced Tom as country PAO in Germany. Lee was there and was Tom's boss. He was certainly one of the big elements in that program, although Lee himself was not a Soviet specialist. He was seconded into the Soviet program from other interests. He was a marvelous French linguist and had had years in France and returned again some time after leaving the Soviet Union. I was dedicated to Soviet Affairs. Pic Littell who had been there prior to Lee's arrival as the only USIS person was dedicated to Soviet Affairs. Lee came in after that and then left, he never returned to Soviet Affairs. He did some great things otherwise.

Q: When you went for the summer for the first American exhibit, which I gather was the one where the so-called kitchen debate took place,...

CATHERMAN: That's right.

Q: Did you then leave the Soviet Union for awhile and then go back?

CATHERMAN: Yes, I went back to my job in Vienna. I still had two years to go there. I came back to Moscow in 1960 to replace both Tom Tuch and Lee Brady while they went on home leave. I spent the entire summer of 1960 there. In the meantime my operation in Vienna was beginning to change its nature. The iron curtain was beginning to open a little bit and the USIS personnel who were by that time assigned to the embassies in the satellites and the Soviet Union were able to take selected information about the American cultural experience and get it into the hands of people in the Soviet Union who were willing to take the risk of getting this kind of information. I changed that operation, which had been a cold war effort in Vienna, around and made it more of a purveyor of cultural news about the United States for peoples in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We began to put out cultural bulletins. We began to build small exhibits. We had panel displays for show windows in front of the embassies in those countries and so on. That developed later on into a major effort. So I was happy to see that happen.

Then two days after the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting in Vienna May of 1961, Dottie and I drove from Vienna to Moscow.

Q: Oh, you were able to drive?

CATHERMAN: We were able to drive. We were one of the first ones to do it and it took three days, but we made it. I remember that period very well because I was sleeping on my desk down at the press office during the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting--for two days--and Dottie was packing. A typical foreign service experience. She had the packers and I had all that going on. That was a very exciting meeting--the young President, John F. Kennedy and the sort of grizzled, party stalwart Nikita Khrushchev. I was assigned to Pierre Salinger, who was Kennedy's press speaker and I spent most of the time in the kitchen of the ambassador's residence or in the waiting room of the Soviet Embassy when the meetings took place there. Pierre would come out and hand me something about what was going on inside and I would take that and read it to the press. Make sure AP and UPI got it and also that it was sent down to the press center where hundreds of journalists were covering that event. So I played my little role in that. I also got some pictures of myself taken by the CIA which they later presented to me. Ernie Wiener sent them to me. He was there with me also. Ernie and I are in several of those pictures together. Ernie and I sort of had a beat of keeping track of Pierre Salinger and making sure that the information he wanted relayed from the site of the talks to the press in fact was delivered. So that was my job there.

Then I went to Moscow for three years. Those were the years of the opening. The national exhibit in 1959 had set the scene. We concluded exchanges and cultural agreements after that. By the time I got to the Soviet Union in May of 1961 we already had a traveling exhibit in the Soviet Union and I took that over for the summer, that was an exhibit on plastics, we had 30 Russian-speaking American guides and I took that exhibit over for its showing in Moscow and Tbilisi. Dottie and I were on our way to Tbilisi on a hot August day of 1961. We had stopped off for two days in Sochi which is a Black Sea resort in the Soviet Union. We tried to get a little swimming in and actually spent almost all day trying to find food; it was tough standing in line trying to get something to eat there. We came back to the hotel on that hot August day. I turned on the radio and found that the Berlin Wall was being constructed. I found this out from the Soviets and it scared the devil out of me. I did not have my own radio along. I had to rely on the hotel radio and it had a spring loaded mechanism that kept the dial focused on Radio Moscow. But with the use of brute strength I could wheel the dial down to VOA and BBC and essentially get Western reports. I was a child of the cold war. I had been in Germany soon after the beginning of the real cold war. I ran a cold war operation in Vienna. In the Soviet Union I was alone with my wife, 1500 miles away from the nearest Americans and I was scared. I thought the red balloon would go up. I was sure we were going to war and I wondered what I would do there if in fact we did go to war. Well, what happened is that we got on a plane the next day and went on to Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia and set up this exhibit down there.

Well, I take pride in being in the Soviet Union in that opening era and I take pride in being the director of that first traveling exhibit. We had a very eventful time in Tbilisi. Those six weeks we

were down there in the fall of 1961, that was the period when Khrushchev was trying to scare Kennedy and was blowing up 20 megaton hydrogen bombs in Novaya Zemlya to the north. One of the innumerable Berlin crises was in full swing and there we were down there hosting tens of thousands of Georgians and Soviet citizens on the floor of this exhibit everyday with all the attendant stress and hubbub and security and all of that that went on with those things.

Q: I want to ask a couple of questions. You got to the Soviet Union approximately a year after Gary Powers was shot down.

CATHERMAN: I was in the Soviet Union during that trial.

Q: But not when he was shot down.

CATHERMAN: I was there during the trial.

Q: I had been to the Soviet Union with the National War College group in 1960 when Tommy Thompson was still ambassador. Of course everything seemed to be going very well then. Just a few weeks after we returned to the United States, Powers was shot down and the curtain dropped even further.

CATHERMAN: Right.

Q: So I wondered what the status of the situation was when you got there in 1961. Had it loosened up again considerably after that?

CATHERMAN: Well, it loosened up for one thing because Kennedy came to power and Khrushchev, I think, felt that he could do something with Kennedy. They had their meeting in May in Vienna and it looked as though we could do some things with the Soviets for that initial period. As a matter of fact we did. We had those exchanges which I addressed. We got an academic exchanges program going. We had American students in Leningrad and Moscow and one or two outside of those principal cities. We were beginning to have exchanges of delegations. We had many major performing arts groups on both sides. So we had that starting and it was, of course, endangered in 1962 by the Cuban missile crisis. I was in Moscow during that period and it was very touchy. However, we did not miss a beat in our exchanges programs. Life became a little rough for embassy personnel because of surveillance, although from my point of view, I was able to move around as a representative of the cultural side of the house as freely as I ever did. And I did move around a lot.

Q: You were able to travel extensively within the Soviet Union?

CATHERMAN: Yes, I was able to travel extensively within the Soviet Union. I was subjected to the same regulations about closed areas, etc., and I had to get permission through the Foreign Office and all that, but I did do that and I traveled a lot. I was out in Siberia in mid 1962 with Ruth Adams, the editor of Ameryka magazine. We took, for me, a memorable trip through Siberia and down through Central Asia and into the Caucasus just prior to the eruption of the Cuban missile crisis. I think that those of us who were engaged in the cultural exchanges

programs had an easier time of it in those days than did the people who were in the military and political affairs.

Q: I suppose you traveled by train as you went into the hinterland primarily didn't you?

CATHERMAN: Generally I would take a plane for the long distances. We just didn't have time to travel other ways.

Maybe I can give you a feel for the atmosphere in the embassy at that time. There were two people engaged in USIS work. We had a press operation; we had an academic exchanges program which we negotiated; we had a performing arts exchanges program, we negotiated all the contracts with the Soviets on that and also accompanied the performing arts groups. We had to take care of the American academics and students who came. They were always having their problems and we had to go and negotiate with the Soviets about that. So it was a constant 18 hour day right straight through that period. So whenever either one of us took off--and we had to travel of course, we could not just sit in an office in the embassy and handle things--we had to make the trips as compact as possible with very little time for train trips. Although I did take some train trips.

Q: Was Rocky Staples there at that time?

CATHERMAN: Rocky Staples was my boss for the first two years I was there. Yes.

Q: He told me that he traveled quite a bit in the Soviet Union by train and he felt that he was able to speak more freely to the Soviet people in the train compartments than he could most anywhere else in the Soviet Union.

CATHERMAN: Well, that is right. You can do that in planes too. Actually they were good vehicles for conversations. I never had any problems speaking with Russians, or with Soviets. Occasionally I would note how worried they were. They would look over their shoulders furtively to see who was behind them and all that. That was standard treatment in those days. Rocky was a very hard worker. I don't remember that he took any long trips.

Q: He said he took one trip, the one out to Lake Baikal and beyond on the train and he had a better experience in conversation with the Soviets that time than any other time.

CATHERMAN: I don't remember that but certainly, if he said it he did it. He was a very good boss. A very hard worker. A very tough negotiator. A positive influence on Soviet-American relations.

No I had some great experiences in those days. For instance, I accompanied Benny Goodman on his first trip to the Soviet Union in 1962. I was with the New York City Ballet for a few weeks when Balanchine brought his group back in 1962. In 1965, by that time I had left the Soviet Union, but I came back with the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell and spent six weeks touring. Those were marvelous opportunities to meet cultivated Soviets and to get out of the hot house atmosphere of the embassy.

Well, at any rate, in April 1964 I was called back to the United States to take over the Voice of America broadcasts to the Soviet Union. The Soviets stopped jamming VOA in Russian and seven other languages that spring, so the decision was made to bring me back to take over that broadcasting element in the Voice of America. I spent three years running that program. I took the unit over from a former Soviet general. I was the first American in that unit. Alexander Barmine...

Q: The legendary Barmine.

CATHERMAN: The legendary Barmine who had been the youngest general in the Red Army during the civil war in the early '20s, went on to enter Soviet diplomacy. In 1937 he was in Thessaloniki as consul general for the Soviets. He heard that his patron, Marshal Budyenni, had been arrested for treason and knew it would not be long before he would also be arrested. He went upstairs, took some money out of a safe and a gun, went down, got on the train for Paris and left his Soviet experience behind. He eventually came to the United States and was first director of VOA Russian which opened up in 1948. He was director from 1948 until 1964 when I took it over.

The first thing I did was to hire a dozen Russian-speaking young Americans most of whom came from families of Russian heritage; not all of them, some of them were native Americans from other ethnic origins who had learned good enough Russian to do that sort of broadcasting. We tried to change the nature of our broadcasting to take advantage of fact that we were getting in now with a good clear signal. That was a fine experience for me.

Q: Did you feel that utilization of American-born people of Russian or Eastern European ancestry gave you a different accent on the radio and did you feel that was more effective in the Soviet Union than broadcasts by emigres who might be downgraded by virtue of defecting from their home country?

CATHERMAN: Well I think so, that was a big issue. The emigres of which you speak, of course, were language purists and when we brought these Americans in, they didn't always speak the kind of Russian that the old guard would have liked. However, the cooperation was good. I think that the tone of our broadcast measurably improved. For one thing we did not have to cope with the thought that we were not getting through. We were able to develop a much lighter sort of radio style approach. We didn't have to worry about enunciating all of our words very clearly in case someone could hear through the static. We didn't have to repeat our programs four or five times a day. So the approach was very different. With these young Russian-speaking Americans came a new approach to broadcasting. They were not the sort of fully disciplined readers of script that we had had previously. They came in with their approach to life, some of them were teenagers and they found that they could speak openly in front of the microphone, they didn't need to read. So we changed the whole nature of our broadcasts.

Q: So you had a lot of ad-libbing then, I guess.

CATHERMAN: We had a lot of ad-libbing and we began to get audience mail. It was a nice period that didn't last forever. After I left the Voice, of course, jamming recommenced and stayed on until two years ago.

Q: I was going to ask you did it stay on after Khrushchev's fall or did it...

CATHERMAN: Jamming recommenced after his fall.

Q: I realized it was then, but I wondered if it started rather soon after his fall or continued on open reception for a time.

CATHERMAN: I think there was a time there of a year and a half or so, but I have really forgotten that because by that time I was off doing other things.

Q: So, you felt you really not only turned the broadcasting techniques around but that you perhaps got a much broader audience in the Soviet Union. What kind of letters did you get when you got audience response and how did they get out of the Soviet Union?

CATHERMAN: I can't tell you that, but they did. Most of the responses were to our music programs. That's always the case.

Q: Yes, Willis Conover and...

CATHERMAN: Willis was on the English broadcast, he always got lots of response. But we also had our own Russian-language jazz and popular programs. Marie Celiberti, for instance, was one of the great broadcasters in those days. She teamed up with Willis Conover and did a Russian-language version of Willis' broadcast. Most of the fan mail came in response to those music broadcasts. That was obviously an example of Soviets feeling they could get mail out if they stayed in the cultural field because the cultural field was not considered dangerous. Also I assume the censors kept back political content stuff but let the other go through. Anyway we had a good listenership.

I had the great pleasure of going back with the Cleveland Orchestra while I was running the VOA broadcasts. While sitting in the apartment of the Baltimore Sun's correspondent at midnight one night in Moscow I heard the announcer sign off his program saying that their boss Terry was in Moscow that night and they all wanted to wish me good night and sweet dreams Terry. That was a very pleasant experience.

So I was in on the opening of the Soviet Union. I was in on two openings. I was in on the opening of the German society after World War II and I was in on the opening of the Soviet society after Stalin. Those are the two things I feel I contributed in this whole period that I spent with USIA.

VLADIMIR I. TOUMANOFF
Soviet Studies
Harvard University (1956-1957)

Vladimir Toumanoff was born in Constantinople in 1923 to Russian parents. He attended Harvard University and joined the Foreign Service in 1950. He served in several posts including Germany, Iceland, Moscow, and Canada. He was interviewed by William D. Morgan in 1999.

TOUMANOFF: Nothing terribly dramatic happened at Harvard, although Zbig Brzezinski was one of our instructors, as were Marshall Schulman, Adam Ulam and Edward Keenan. All giants in the field.

Q: I think probably at that time it was the best program of the Soviet area studies in the United States.

TOUMANOFF: It was all run out of the Russian Research Center, which had an international group of some 30 scholars in addition to the dozen or so of Harvard faculty. Many, many years later, after I retired from the Foreign Service, I became Associate Director of that Center. But that's a different story.

Q: Courses particularly? Would you like to give us a summary of your experience there?

TOUMANOFF: Well, I had a considerable advantage over the other Officers. I was already fluent in Russian, and familiar with the resources of the University in the Russian/Soviet field. It was an intensive program, especially so for those who also had to study the language. We covered everything; history, foreign and domestic politics, the economy, literature, geography, cultures... Let's see, there were five of us, and all but one carved out notable Government careers in the Soviet/East European field: William Culbert, William Koplowitz, Francis Meehan, and Paul Smith. There must be a record of the class somewhere in the archives.

Q: It just underscores our memory does become a little weaker.

TOUMANOFF: It does. From there, which was in June 1957, I was assigned to Frankfurt, Germany, in peripheral reporting.

Q: Before you do it, do you want to give just a word or two of your impression of the year in Harvard? Was it a good course? Were they helpful?

TOUMANOFF: It was an excellent course. With my language I could go directly to original sources, and Harvard had large holdings. For the others that was more difficult.

Q: They hadn't learned Russian yet?

TOUMANOFF: They had some Russian, but reading Russian was difficult and slow for them at first. It also took some time for them to become familiar with the original language sources

available at Harvard. But the faculty, including those from other universities, were generous in their time, attention and help. It was a fascinating and hugely useful preparatory year in terms of skills and acquisition of knowledge.

Q: And applied to your subsequent work on the Soviet Union? There was a practical side as well.

TOUMANOFF: Oh, very much so. We brought a variety of backgrounds to the program. Some in economics, others in political science, or sociology. I, for example, had not paid much attention to economics in general or to that of the Soviet Union. A number of years had also gone by since I'd been directly involved in keeping track of what was happening in the USSR. In Iceland there wasn't that much to know, outside of Soviet-Icelandic relations, which were not the center of America's or Russia's concerns. I think we all treasured it as a very, very useful, very productive year. I need not tell you how the Foreign Service draws intensely on everything you know, the challenge is so broad. That year at Harvard added greatly, not just to specific applicable knowledge for work on the Soviet Union, but enriched our career capabilities and our lives as a whole.

THEODORE L. ELIOT, JR.
Administrative/Political Officer
Moscow (1956-1958)

Mr. Eliot was born and grew up in the Boston area and graduated from Harvard. He served in numerous posts including Colombo, Moscow and Tehran. In 1973 he became ambassador to Afghanistan and served there for 4 ½ years. He was interviewed by Robert Martens in 1992.

Q: We will devote most of the time to your later career, but with the collapse of the Soviet Union there may be interest in your observations, as well as those of others, in your Soviet period. That was in the mid-'50. After Russian training at FSI, and Harvard's Russian Institute, you served in Moscow from 1956 to '58, first as the administrative officer, and later as a political officer. What were your major impressions, particularly in light of the subsequent collapse of communism?

ELIOT: Well, of course, those were drab years for an American in the Soviet Union. It's a drab country to begin with, but these were particularly drab years with the KGB listening in on you and watching you all the time. My wife and I were fortunate. We were among the first people, I think, in the embassy--maybe the first couple--to get our driver's licenses, and we imported a Volkswagen Bug from Germany, and we had quite a lot of fun with the KGB in that car actually. And we were able to travel a little bit, including with our interviewer to what was then called Stalingrad on one occasion. I think we may have been the first Americans to travel around Stalingrad in a car...

Q: ...on down to the Kalmuk...

ELIOT: ...and on down to the Kalmuk territory, and we saw why the German tanks had bogged down in the mud because that's what happened to us. Then in the fall of '57 we were among the first Americans to visit Riga since World War II, at the time Sputnik went up. And what was interesting in Riga in the fall of '57 was the Latvians would take you aside and say, "Gee, will you help us get rid of these Russians?", which they finally achieved.

Two vignettes I might add, I think some of us coming out of the academic world in those days, who were steeped in Brzezinski's and Carl Friedrich's studies of totalitarianism, were beginning to raise the question as to whether a totalitarian regime could survive if it did not continue to impose terror. Of course, Khrushchev in that period seemed to be easing up a little bit, and that I think raised a question in some of our minds--this may be hindsight, but I'm quite certain I remember some of us raising the question as to whether this regime could survive without terror.

Then there was the question as to whether one could do business with Khrushchev, and my memory also is that most of us, reasonably fresh out of Russian studies at Columbia, Harvard, and elsewhere, really were so down on that regime that we didn't see the possibilities for detente the way our Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson saw them. And he was right, and we were wrong. One of the things I will always remember is my admiration for his skill as a diplomat, which, of course later in his career became evident at the time of the Cuban missile crisis where he played an absolutely key role.

Q: Yes, that's certainly true. Of course he had also been very prominent in the settlement of the Trieste crisis and working out the Austrian State Treaty in May of 1955, which were the first breakthroughs in the Cold War.

ELIOT: Travel was certainly tough in those days, but it was really the only opportunity one had to have talks with Soviet citizens. In Moscow you were constantly shielded from them, and the KGB was inserting itself. But on these trips one had a chance to talk with Soviet citizens and certainly got the impression that their low standard of living bothered them a great deal, and they would ask lots of questions about, for example, how much did our shoes cost? how many days work to buy a pair of shoes? and that sort of thing indicating a craving for consumer goods which was not being satisfied by the regime. I don't remember, in that period--there may have been some but I don't remember in that period--the depth of cynicism about the regime that became evident 15-20 years later.

Q: I felt at the time, I might say, and I wrote a 25 page final report on that which never got out of the embassy.

ELIOT: Well you were more prescient than I.

Q: After you came back from Moscow, you worked briefly, as I recall, on the Soviet desk, but then soon thereafter you began working for Douglas Dillon--this was in the late Eisenhower administration--when Dillon was, I believe, Under Secretary of the Department.

ELIOT: At first he was Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, and then moved up to the number two position.

WILLIAM N. TURPIN
Consular/Economic Officer
Moscow (1956-1958)

William Turpin was born and raised in Georgia. He attended Dartmouth College, Mercer University, and Oxford University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1949 and received his first post as a Kreis officer in 1950. He went on to serve in Munich, Belgrade, Moscow, and The Hague. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: You served in Moscow from when to when?

TURPIN: August of 56 to August of 58.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

TURPIN: Chip Bohlen the first year and Tommy Thompson (Llewellyn E. Thompson) the second.

Q: Two solid professionals.

TURPIN: Oh, the last ones we had, I think.

Q: What was the state, in 56, of relations with the United States.

TURPIN: Well, remember this was just after the 20th party congress and Khrushchev's secret speech and all that. I didn't have anything much to do with the government's relations. We were carefully, unlike Yugoslavia where you could go where you wanted and talk to who you pleased, it was very, very difficult to do that on any continuing basis in the Soviet Union. I had this terribly frustrated feeling the whole time I was there that here, within a half mile of here, were people that know the answers to all the questions that I would like to ask, like how do you run this planning system.

Q: You were an economic officer?

TURPIN: Yes. Consular first year and then economic officer, but I was doing both most of the time.

Q: When did you arrive there? What time of the year?

TURPIN: August 56.

Q: Well, then you were there during two major things in October, the Hungarian revolution and the Suez crisis.

TURPIN: Yes. And Sputnik.

Q: And Sputnik. Well, let's start with the Hungarian revolution, because this was when the Soviets put their troops and crushed the Hungarians. What was happening in Moscow at the time, from your point of view?

TURPIN: I don't think much of anything. The British had withdrawn all of their military people to do Suez. We had a Hungarian assistant, or an assistant attaché of Hungarian origin. And we sat around a good bit talking about what we ought to do. And I remember going out after church one Sunday and thinking out what we should do. Got back and got into the bull session, which we of course know was being taped. We thought that was a good thing.

And I said, "well I figured out what I think we ought to do. I think we should send Bohlen to the Kremlin, tell them 'we ain't going to reach for big one unless you do. If you do, we'll wipe you out. Meanwhile, get those pungsos of yours out of Hungary or we're moving in.'" And the air attaché, who was one of the most brilliant officers I ever knew, of any sort, Tom Wolfe, he says, "just one problem with that." I said, "what's that Tom?" He says, "well I've just come back from a trip to Germany and I can assure you that our troops are in no condition to go anywhere." I said, "well, that sort of puts [an end] to that one, doesn't it."

But I don't know what the people on the street in Moscow were thinking.

Q: Was there a cut off of contacts, or... ?

TURPIN: You didn't have any contacts to cut off. [At least they didn't] amount to anything. I mean, I still doubled the consular section of the foreign office. And that was that and nobody ever mentioned it. It was no place where you mixed with people.

Q: What sort of work were you doing in the consular section?

TURPIN: Trying to get Americans and Russian relatives of Americans out, which we mostly didn't. We were expatriating a fair number of them. And some of it was rather interesting to see these old files which they shipped out to us with expatriations paper signed by Bohlen, Thompson, Thayer and whatnot when they were in Estonia or Latvia or wherever it was they were in the 30s. And I had a slight hair pulling with Virginia, or whatever her name was, in SOB – she was doing all that stuff – because they kept [saying] "don't you want to reconsider expatriating so and so?" And I said, "well, they were expatriated in 1923 for excessive residence abroad and I hardly see that another thirty years of the same, you know, cuts any ice. And they ain't going to get out on an American passport anyway. The Soviets will never recognize that they have American citizenship. And indeed they will say loudly 'this person is not an American citizen as the Embassy'" – we were sending notes all the time asking about this, that and the other – and they would always say that "this is not an American citizen but a Soviet citizen. And

one time they sent one back saying ‘this is not an American citizen but a stateless person.’” And I went to Thompson and said, “look, I think you can bitch about this to the foreign office. They have a perfect right to say that somebody is a Soviet citizen. They may be wrong, but they’ve got a legitimate basis for saying so. But they got no basis for saying that somebody can’t be an American citizen and they say he hasn’t got any status at all.” And he wouldn’t do it, probably rightly. Wouldn’t have gotten us anywhere.

Q: We’ve all been in those arguments. Were you dealing with people who were trying to get back who left the United States in the 30s, got enthralled with communism and went there and then said “oh God, let’s get out of here, and then they got trapped.”

TURPIN: Well, I think most of them could have gotten out in the 30s if they wanted to. But after the war, they couldn’t. There were a couple of people whose names I’ve forgotten – Ike was one of them – who’d been in our consulate in Vladivostok and they had him in a concentration camp. Because they were letting a lot of people out of concentration camps in these days.

Q: Yes. Khrushchev had a program for that. Yes.

TURPIN: Yes. And they were showing up at the embassy. Talking about people who went there and wanted to go back, there was a couple by the name of Imshanitski – this was after I was out of the consular business – they threw a rock over the wall of the catholic church and said they were in trouble. So Ed Killum, who took my place as consul, got me out and we went down and met with them, including one occasion on Christmas, which was very helpful. Imshanitski had been thoroughly hauled on board by the Soviets during and just after the war. They promised him the earth. His wife said “don’t be a fool.” If she didn’t run his nose in it particularly. He had diabetes and couldn’t get medicine. He had a terrible time. They wouldn’t let him go stay in Moscow. It was a real mess. And Ed and I decided that if the Soviets really wanted better relations they would keep Imshanitski there. If they wanted to really make us mad they would turn him loose, which they eventually did. And we had to issue them, no, I guess we “visa’d” their Soviet passports. That’s what we usually did if anybody got out. We’d visa the Soviet passports, even if they were American citizens. And after they got to Copenhagen, they’d be get handed an American passport.

But we had very few of that. There were hundreds, must have been hundreds of people applying, saying they wanted to get Aunt Suzie out, they hadn’t seen her since 1948. And there was a form called a “wizoff” that you had to have. An invitation from somebody in America, signed by the Secretary of State of the state and then endorsed by the Secretary of State of the United States. And they’d send it off to us and the Soviets would say “no.” So you did have the feeling this was kind of a futile operation. We did get some of them out. It’s true. But not any large number.

Q: Were you looking at the economy?

TURPIN: Trying to.

Q: There, I assume you really weren’t able to get out and do much.

TURPIN: Not much. I was allowed contact with this economic section of the academy of sciences. Some bird that I met – I don't even remember how I met up with him – but he was supposed to be in the academy of sciences working on Latin America. And he asked me if I could get any material about American imperialism in Latin America. And I said, "I don't know, but I'll try." And I wrote the state department and INR duly sent out a bunch of Spanish language stuff which I duly handed over to this guy. And in 68, when they wanted me on the Balkan economic desk, this gumshoe interrogated me at great length about "didn't you know this guy was a KGB agent." I said "nope. I assumed he was approved. I didn't know if he was an agent or not." "Well, didn't you hand him some materials." I said, "I sure did." He says, "what were they about?" I said, "I haven't the faintest idea. They were in Spanish, which I don't read. But they were sent to me by INR, so I assume they were innocuous." Anyway, that was a very unpleasant set of interviews. But just gumshoes being gumshoes.

But they did set me up occasionally appointments at the academy of sciences. And I was working very hard on what was called "the price question," which was a big thing in Soviet publications. They were trying to figure out how to set prices, which they didn't know. And in fact there isn't any good answer to it that I know. But I did talk to the author of at least one book who told me that 1956 was the first time a Soviet statistical publication came out, it was a very thin volume indeed – he said, they'd been to, I guess to Khrushchev because Stalin was dead by that time, and said "look, we cannot just keep on grinding out this stuff without some numbers." And they eventually agreed and published this thing and from then on, they published a fairly substantial statistical manual. Not too many of the numbers meant too much, but at least they were publishing.

And I had this long conversation with several of them about the price situation and it finally came down to this: "Look, we didn't start from nowhere. There was a price structure in place in 1928 and we have simply modified it from time to time. Otherwise we just set prices to, we think, get things done the way we want them." But of course, prices didn't mean anything anyway. It was all done by a military system under Lenin, by a guy whose name I've forgotten, but to whom Lenin is supposed to have said, "you have studied these things with the Germans" – meaning operations and general staff – "now look into them for us."

And they did have prices and they were all a mess. I don't think anybody thinks they had the most remote idea what actually happened with production and what not. They were trying to set physical targets for everything. Which was fine in the case of coal, which worked in BTUs. Or in electricity, you worked in kilowatt hours. The story was – I never have known if it was true or not – that first they started setting targets for a nail factory in terms of weight. And the factory started producing railroad spikes. Then they put it on piece work. And they started producing carpet tacks. Then they said quality. And they started making hand hammered brass nails for decorating doors. It was also said there was only one style of shoe, men's shoe I guess they meant, for the entire Soviet Union. And we would see people lined up. They'd line up and then find out what was at the head of the line when they got there. And take it off.

Q: Our impression was that the Soviet Union was a mess, I mean economically...

TURPIN: Well it was not a mess from the point of the view of getting done what Stalin and his

successors wanted, which was strengthening the defense power of the country, building up heavy industry and raising the moral and economic level of the populace. And that number three was way, way down. One thing I never saw or heard discussed very much was what the Soviet population really wanted, which was housing. It was a bloody awful mess. They were building stuff. They had a whole bunch of apartment buildings under construction on the way out to the airport. And people coming in would say, "ah, look what's going on." They didn't stay long enough to find out that those cranes were still right where they'd been a year before.

And we had visitors, the Carnegie Foundation started sending economists among other things, right at the time I got there. And they were willingly hoodwinked, as far I could make out. There was somebody that stood in my office when I had just got there and said, "well, of course, you've never been around. You don't know anything. And we see all this going on." I said, "take a look out behind this embassy and you will see people lining up to stand pipe." "Oh," he said, "well that's just propaganda." You know, they weren't about to believe anything.

Had a couple of sociologists that appeared and I took them upstairs to talk to the internal reporting people and they were full about how "I'd met somebody on the train from where to where and they were telling me this that and the other and I'm sure this is something you've never heard of." Well my associates were too polite to say anything. I said, "yes, well that was [so and so] the day before yesterday. And by the way, what language did you do this in?" "Well, chap I was talking to happened to speak English." I'd say "happened?" They'd say, "you don't mean to say that you think that we have been hoodwinked?" "I certainly do." And that did not establish my popularity.

But I did get a call one day after I talked to these academy of sciences people. There were a couple of American economists whose names I have forgotten who were visiting and for whom I had left messages at their hotel saying I would like very much to meet with them. They didn't return. So the guy called and said, "look, we've got these two Americans coming in. Would you come sit in on the meeting?" And when they got there, they found this – because Americans don't want anything to do with the Embassy if possible. Well, okay, there is an awful lot of baloney been written about the Soviet Union, especially the economy, and particularly by the CIA, which, when I got back I discovered that where it was technical stuff like particularly ferrous metallurgy, which I knew something about, and non-ferrous metals and that kind of thing, they had people who really knew their stuff or were fired shortly thereafter. They cleaned house over there in the late 50s or early 60s. But their people of a general subject, absolutely hopeless. They of course went off to be professors of Soviet economics at the University of Virginia. They were playing games.

But when I was there, Dick Morstein from RAND found I think it was volume 4 of an official price list, which gave careful specifications for everything that that covered. And RAND had written the manufacturers of tractors and radios and all of that kind of thing and said, "what would you charge for a tractor meeting the following specifications?" And mostly they wrote back and said "we ain't made one of these things since 1925." They were obviously - even I could figure that out - heavily overweight and underpowered. And the boys were taking those statistics and adding them up, worried about the rapid expansion of Soviet ferrous metallurgy, for example. And the steel delegation, a couple of members of which I went out to Magnitogorsk and

we were talking to the director and the chief engineer. They wanted to know how you get such high coefficients of blast furnace use. Well what they did was to prepare the charge much more carefully than we ever did. We can't afford it. They had people out there with shovels mixing this stuff up. With the open hearths, they were preparing, they just made all low carbon steel. The American vice president for research at U.S. Steel who was with me and knew a lot about – spoke Russian, some – and knew a lot about steel in general, he said, “no, we can't use that stuff. Everything we do is specialty steel.” Broadly to interpret that. But they don't get the big, long production runs that the Soviets did. Because we were trying to do something else. And judging by that price list, I'd say that a truck or a tractor weighed at least three or four times as much as the American equivalent would. So that the fact that they were producing a hundred million tons of raw steel a year didn't mean all that much.

Q: Was the feeling at the embassy at that time, this 56 to 58 period, that the Soviets were adventurous as far as trying to do something in Western Europe? Attack Western Europe or...

TURPIN: No. If anybody ever believed that, they never said it to my hearing. No. I don't think anybody then or later thought the Soviets were going to mass divisions across the Elbe or whatever it was. Maybe, but, no, I don't think people were worried about that.

They were worried – my military friends then and later – were worried about the ability of our, however many it was divisions that we had in Germany, to do anything about it if they did. The Fulga Gap and all that. But no, I don't think anybody was expecting an attack any time.

Q: When you left there in 58, where did you go?

ALEXANDER AKALOVSKY
Interpreter
Washington, DC (1956-1960)

Mr. Akalovsky was born in Yugoslavia (Croatia) and educated at Yugoslav, Heidelberg and Georgetown Universities. Entering the United States in 1949, he worked as language Instructor at the US Army Language School before joining the Department of State in 1956 as translator/interpreter. In 1960 he was posted to Geneva, Switzerland, where he served until 1964 as Political Chief with ACDA, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. He subsequently served as Political Officer at the US Embassy in Moscow from 1965 to 1960. Mr. Akalovsky was interviewed in 2000 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: It's obvious from your career that you did. When you first joined there, was there a Russian division?

AKALOVSKY: There was a Russian unit, yes. Well, I take it back, there were two branches. One was the translating branch and one interpreter branch. I was at first in the translating branch, but my title was interpreter.

Q: This is still the after results of the McCarthy period. I mean was this hitting hard?

AKALOVSKY: None whatsoever. I know it had an effect on some other people, but not me.

Q: So you came in in '56. What were some of the things you were doing at that time?

AKALOVSKY: First of all translation of diplomatic notes, or travel requests from the Soviet embassy, but then I was sent to Mexico City for a conference in '56. Then in '57 I was assigned to the U.S. delegation to the five nation _____ subcommittee of the United Nations, which met in London. The head of the delegation was Harold Stassen, the presidential contender.

Q: Had been the youngest governor of Minnesota, was quite a political still at the time.

AKALOVSKY: I can tell you a long story about him.

Q: Well, let's hear a little about him, because he was a figure. What was your impression of him?

AKALOVSKY: I went to London for six months and I was assigned another duty, not just to interpret for Stassen when we had the bilateral meetings with the Soviets. On the Soviet at that time was Zorin. Remember Zorin?

Q: Oh yes.

AKALOVSKY: So he asked me, ordered me, to write reports on the Soviet press and also reports on means, the reporting officer duty. So I was not only interpreting, but doing substantive work as well. That conference lasted almost six months and then the Soviets walked out in September 1957. Now to come back to Stassen, we celebrated his 50th birthday while we were in London. He was very much from _____ and he thought that Lodge had that job before.

Q: Henry Cabot Lodge.

AKALOVSKY: Right, and then Stassen regarded this as a stepping stone because he was the President's advisor on disarmament, this separate office on Jefferson Street in one of those town houses of the State Department. And then how I got into the arms control business, after that I went to _____ talks and so forth, always as a member of the delegation and not as interpreter, although I did some interpreting on the side. In 1960 the Agency for Arms Control was formed, the predecessor to ACDA (Arms Control and Disarmament Agency). I don't think most people are even aware of that.

Q: No.

AKALOVSKY: It was called the U.S. Disarmament Administration. It was established in August 1960 in response to the campaign proposal by Humphrey, and then Kennedy, to establish ACDA. The Eisenhower administration established this U.S. Disarmament Administration

within the State Department. How that separates it [laughter] ... I mean history repeats itself. I was assigned there as an FSR, Foreign Service Reserve officer.

Q: Going back to the staff sometime... how serious are we taking disarmament proposals? Were we feeling in a way marking time that someday something might happen?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, well nobody had great expectations except Stassen maybe. Because, obviously, the situation was not right for them and basically arms control was quite different from what it became later. It was focused on Europe and basically disengagement disputes within the armed forces. There was a Norstad plan-

Q: General Lauris Norstad.

AKALOVSKY: And then Stassen presented the plan to the Soviets, unfortunately, without authorization from Washington. Eisenhower was up in arms in NATO, and then Dulles, and he sent three watchdogs to London. Stassen was recalled. We thought he would never come back when he did. But after the whole thing was over when the Soviets walked out in '57, Stassen was given reprieve. I still remember a *Third Bloc* cartoon of Stassen shivering behind his desk and icicles on his arms. That was the end of his career in government.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet delegation when you were there? Zorin and those.

AKALOVSKY: Well, highly capable. They always had continuity.

Q: Did you have the feeling that these were people who were told keep talking for a while but don't do anything.

AKALOVSKY: The Soviets you mean?

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: They couldn't do anything because our position was quite different. Their basic purpose at that time was propagand war.

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: On the one hand, they were in favor of banning the nuclear bomb. In Britain, especially in Britain at that time, there was strong movement. So they were trying to exploit that and of course there was some of that here too but less of it. Obviously, it was basically a PR war.

Q: Was there any feeling that you could reduce the tension on the borders by thinning out the forces and all?

AKALOVSKY: That was the hope, but the feeling was so different it was impossible to achieve.

Q: Geography always plays its thing. The Soviets could always pull a number of divisions back

for two days away and we'd be sitting in the United States with our divisions.

AKALOVSKY: That was the crux of the problem.

Q: Geography at that time, things have changed a lot. Now at that time...

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: This is the way I prefer it. In oral history, more is better than less.

AKALOVSKY: Yes, you can weed out...

Q: So, we'll pick this up again, after Stassen had left and they'd shut down that effort of disarmament after the Soviets walked out. And that was when, about 1957?

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: We'll pick it up then in 1957.

AKALOVSKY: At the time of the establishment of the disarmament administration.

Q: Today is the 30th of June, 2000. Alex, 1957, where were you going?

AKALOVSKY: Well, I think I was talking about September of 1957. After that, we were engaged in negotiations with the Soviet Union about cultural exchanges with Ambassador Lacey, who was in charge of the delegation, and a couple of people from USIA, and then at that time there was an exchange staff in the State Department. Max _____ being one of the officers assigned to that staff. He was in the delegation. So we negotiated that I guess in September or October of 1957.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the negotiations. What were we after and what were the Soviets after?

AKALOVSKY: We were obviously after opening up the Soviet Union. And the Soviets were after information from our side and were not interested in information from their side.

Q: The Americans said that the Soviets only ought to go for information, but in the long run, on our part, the scientific things, even under the best of circumstances, I think it would be very hard to get exchange scholars to go to the Soviet Union to study scientific things. It was not the place to go.

AKALOVSKY: Of course they had a lot of people in the third world there, but not from the West.

Q: How did you find the negotiations went?

AKALOVSKY: Basically I would say it was a draw because on our side, while we were

obviously speaking to open up the Soviets as much as possible, we were leery opening up our side too much to them. So there had to be a trade-off. Basically, from that standpoint, I would say it was a draw.

Q: Well, that's what you want. That's really what negotiations should all be about.

AKALOVSKY: That's right.

Q: Was our delegation a pretty professional one? What was your impression of how...

AKALOVSKY: We were doing quite well. We had a very _____, I don't remember his first name, but I remember his middle initials were SB, and he used to tell me, remind the Soviets that my initials are SB which means son of a bitch [laughter].

Q: [laughter] You could say that. [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] And then we had another interesting character on our delegation, Shelton was his last name. Turner B. Shelton became famous, or infamous if you will, when he was ambassador to Nicaragua, years later. He was a big guy. During the earthquake, when he isolated himself, he didn't want to ...

Q: Yes, he had a movie connection, didn't he?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, sort of. When he was in the delegation in '57, he was in charge of the motion picture section in USIA. He stayed there for several years, and then became a Foreign Service officer; he told me that was his ambition. He went as chargé, at that time we didn't have an ambassador in Budapest of all places.

Q: Where?

AKALOVSKY: Budapest.

Q: Budapest, oh yes.

AKALOVSKY: I was in Moscow when Ambassador Shelton was leaving Budapest. We got cable after cable from Budapest about farewell parties for him. Citing different people saying how great he was. It was very amusing.

Q: From all accounts, I've heard he was a considerable self-promoter.

AKALOVSKY: Oh, yes.

Q: And other accounts said he was not adverse to making sure that important people, particularly Congressmen and all, had a good time wherever he went.

AKALOVSKY: Well, that's right. When he was in Managua, he was on the ball at first, but then

when the earthquake hit...

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: I'll tell you a little something about him a little bit later.

Q: Well, let's talk about the time you were dealing with him.

AKALOVSKY: Well, I had no problem with him. He was quite personable. And then in '58, Eric Johnson, you know who he was...

Q: Yes, he was...

AKALOVSKY: Head of the motion picture association. And Turner Shelton, the two of them plus, Eisenhower's brother, Milton, he was in the delegation too. The three of them, plus me, went to the Soviet Union to negotiate field exchanges under the umbrella of the cultural exchange. The cultural exchange was basically an umbrella agreement and the details in the negotiations between the various organizations, universities, and what not. So, when we arrived in Moscow, Eric Johnson was a special envoy of Roosevelt to the Soviet Union during the war.

Q: Oh, I had forgotten that.

AKALOVSKY: For some special mission. And he was greeted at the airport with pomp and so forth, we wined and dined. When we arrived, the only person who was at the airport was Hans Tuch. Do you know Hans Tuch?

Q: Oh, yes, Hans Tuch of the USIA.

AKALOVSKY: At that time he was a junior officer. No one from the Soviet Union hierarchy, and Eric Johnson looked at that, and he was dismayed that he was so snubbed by that. Then we arrived at the embassy. And Tommy Thompson was the ambassador there on his first tour as ambassador. He was out of the country, and Boris Klosson was DCM. We arrived at the embassy and Eric Johnson said, well I'll take over in the ambassador's office, and Boris said no sir, even I can't take his office. That was sort of the prelude to the trip.

Then we went down to Tashkent because there were movie studios in Moscow and in Tashkent. That was a very interesting experience because we arrived at Tashkent after a couple of days and then we were supposed to fly to _____, just for sightseeing. As we arrived at the airport early in the morning, 7-7:30 in the morning, we were accompanied by a woman, the minister of culture. So we sat down, had breakfast with cognac and they served brandy at breakfast. Then we were supposed to board the plane, and we saw people with bundles and baskets boarding the plane. Then the flight attendant came out and said, I'm sorry, the flight is full and we had been booked on the flight. And the minister of culture said, don't worry, don't worry, I'll take care of it. Just follow me. So we followed her and she counted noses, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, out, out, out, and the poor people meekly got out and we were given seats which was embarrassing to us.

Q: Of course.

AKALOVSKY: But coming back to Turner Shelton, we went actually to Stockholm and Helsinki, but that was strictly for the motion picture association business.

Q: What were you getting from Johnson on his take on the Soviet film industry at that time?

AKALOVSKY: Frankly, I don't know. He didn't comment at that time that the main issue was money.

Q: He wanted money for the movies...

AKALOVSKY: Right. The bargaining went something like this. He would say, when the movie costs, say \$150,000, and the Soviets would come back and say, how much do I need? [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: Literally. And then you say, well maybe \$135,000. Well maybe \$125, [laughter] bargaining.

Q: A rug merchant or something.

AKALOVSKY: Then we flew back to Moscow, and Cinemascope was a novelty at that time. One of the first movies in it was *The Ten Commandments*. Johnson, or maybe Turner Shelton, had no problem in showing this movie to the Soviets. Our embassy had no projector for showing the Cinemascope, but the German embassy did have one, so we had arranged for a showing in the German embassy in their hall there. After the end of the movie, the Soviets were polite, but the Minister of Culture, Madam Pultziva, remember her?

Q: Yes, she was the sole woman in the ministry of culture.

AKALOVSKY: In the cabinet. She was up high in the party hierarchy too. Again, I'll tell you something about her later. So the deputy to Pultziva, who had been the head of their delegation for the negotiations in Washington came up to me and said, you know the movie is okay, but why do they have to electrocute God? There was a burning bush and it was so poorly done that you could see the glowing wires, in those days [laughter].

Q: [laughter] They should have shown "How to Marry a Millionaire" with Marilyn Monroe and Betty Grable which came out at the same time. That would have had a much bigger impression in the Soviet Union.

AKALOVSKY: Did I tell you about, going back to '56 if I may, about my trip to the Soviet election observance?

Q: I don't think so. When was this?

AKALOVSKY: In '56, in the Spirit of Geneva, remember the Spirit of Geneva in '55?

Q: Oh yes.

AKALOVSKY: When Bulganin and the rest came to Geneva and then Eisenhower was there.

Q: Khrushchev and Bulganin. Twins.

AKALOVSKY: _____ was still not the highest. Anyway, under that Spirit, we had the first exchange visit by the Soviets to observe our elections and teach them how democracy works and there were three members of their delegation. One was Pudiavsec who was a party hack but also a commentator _____, then a man by the name of Rubenstein, a Russian, who was an elderly economics professor, and then Soloviov who was the head of the trade union associations who later fell into disfavor was _____. So they came in October of 1956, and we were supposed to travel all around the country, we went everywhere around the States. But we skipped _____. It coincided, of course, with the Hungarian uprising.

Q: October 1956 and the Suez.

AKALOVSKY: The Suez didn't affect us because it was earlier in the first place, and it didn't affect the trip, but everywhere we went at the airports there were people with placards, "Murders Go Home." That sort of thing. That, of course, didn't please me. But the people were very interested because they saw the country. The only thing they could not understand, or at least pretended not to understand, was that our parties are not ideological. Everywhere they went, they would ask what's the difference between the Democratic and Republican party in terms of philosophy. Well, especially in those days, it depended where you came from. If you were a Southern Democratic, you were more conservative than a Northern Republican.

Q: Absolutely.

AKALOVSKY: And so forth, so it was very difficult to give an answer.

Another thing that they couldn't understand, the Soviet visitors, was that everywhere we went we were served a traditional American dinner: steak and potatoes [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: And after a while, they said, don't Americans eat anything but steak and potatoes? [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: But we were invited to private homes, and they gave us...

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: Then we arrived in Los Angeles, and at that time – I don't know if it still exists – there was a Russian food for Russians establishment called Bublisky. Not Romanov.

Q: I was thinking Romanov. A fake Romanov.

AKALOVSKY: No, it was called Bublisky. Do you know what Bublic in Russian is?

Q: No.

AKALOVSKY: It's like a bagel, much thinner.

Q: Oh, yes.

AKALOVSKY: Much like geberich in Belgrade. Remember geberich in Belgrade?

Q: Yeah.

AKALOVSKY: There was a famous song during the revolution called _____ Bublisky, Bye Bye Bagel. Our folks in Los Angeles invited us to go there in the evening. It's sort of a bar, night club. So as we arrived, we were greeted by a beautiful young girl who spoke to us in pure Russian. Regal, very polite, she said welcome and so forth. And our guests were stunned. Where did you learn your Russian so well? Very simple, she said, I was born in Crimea [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: Oh, well how did you get here? I moved here with my parents. She was very brash. Well they sort of swallowed it. We went in and sat down and there was an orchestra playing, with balalaika and gypsy songs in Russian with a very good looking woman singing gypsy songs. They wanted to invite her to the table to chat with her, and so she came over to the table and they started talking Russian to her and she said what? They said we thought you speak Russian. No. Well how come you sang in Russian? I just learned the words [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: She was Irish. Then, as I said, it was a pseudo-Russian establishment because it was sort of kitschy stuff, most of it, the décor. Above the bar there was stained glass. It looked like icons or stained glass in the church. One of the Soviets looked at it, actually we were accompanied by a man from the embassy, Gordon Witchcroft, who died in 1977, a nice young fellow. Anyway, I forget who it was, he looked up and said look there are icons up there, aren't there? Should there be icons in a bar? I said does that bother you, and he said, well, you know... it would be unusual. Then we went to Chicago (I'm not relating all this in the proper sequence), and the Sears Tower building was brand new at that time. We went to look at it, and the visitors said it was just a large box, not stylish. Our skyscrapers in Moscow, the Stalin wedding cake styles...

Q: Yes, wedding cake style, a university wasn't it and some apartment buildings?

AKALOVSKY: There were several. The foreign ministers liked that, pseudo Gothic or whatever it is. Have you seen our new embassy in Moscow?

Q: No, I've never been to Moscow.

AKALOVSKY: It's horrible. Like a factory or prison. So they said we don't like this. And the young guy from the embassy Tony _____ said, after New York it's not too bad after all [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: We had a wonderful trip from Oakland to Denver on the California Zephyr train. I don't know if it still exists.

Q: I don't know. The kind with the dome.

AKALOVSKY: It was a 36-hour trip. Beautiful. We arrived in Oakland at the railroad station which was awful, just a shack. I don't know what it's like now. Before boarding, this guy from the embassy came to me and said, can you recommend a book for me to read during the long trip? So, on the newsstand, there were pocketbooks, and the first thing I saw was *1984*.

Q: By George Orwell.

AKALOVSKY: I said it's an interesting book but I don't think you will like it. And he said, "No, no, no. What's it about?" I said, "Well, it's about what would happen to our society if certain trends in the world proceeded in the way they were going today." I think they got the hint. I tried to be as diplomatic as possible. And he said, well I'll get it, and he read it on the train. He came to me later and said this is depressing. There's no hope in that book. I said that's the point [laughter].

Q: [laughter] I have to mention this Alex, in the main square, in the big book store there, I saw one time in the agricultural section of the book store, this was during the Ivan Ribar regime, "Animal Farm" was there, which was of course was again by George Orwell, and anti-Communist... [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] They didn't read it, didn't know what it was about.

Q: Well-informed Yugoslavs were buying it. They must have thought, oh, boy, we've got a great farming book here. [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] Again, if I may digress for just a moment, since you mentioned the Yugoslav book... when I was in Moscow, the DCM who was there, a fellow from Sarajevo, who said he was Croatian, although he was Jewish. You weren't there at that time, were you... '55, '56?

Q: Yes, I was there.

AKALOVSKY: I don't know if you remember but there was a big debate within the Yugoslav academia circle, what was the language, was it Serbo-Croatian or Croatian-Serbian? Remember?

Q: Oh...

AKALOVSKY: Between the two academies.

Q: Oh, yes.

AKALOVSKY: And that was reflected in the embassy in Moscow. It was the DCM saying it was Croatian-Serbian, and the Serbian ambassador and the rest of us saying it was Serbo-Croatian.

Q: Back to this '56 trip, Khrushchev was in and we had great hopes.

AKALOVSKY: No, he wasn't in yet.

Q: Oh, he wasn't in yet.

AKALOVSKY: But we had some hope because of the Spirit of Geneva, which didn't last very long because after that we had the Berlin crisis, and the Soviets sent up Sputnik. Then we went to the big rally in Madison Square Garden, Republican, for Eisenhower. The young Roosevelt girl, she was Roosevelt's grand niece. A Republican, I forget her name. Remember Whitney who was our ambassador in Great Britain.

Q: John Whitney, yes...

AKALOVSKY: She was his stepdaughter; he was married to one of the Roosevelts. They were throwing _____ and eating hot dogs.

Going back to '58, we were with Eric Johnson. I told you about the movie, the *Ten Commandments*. Then we went to Warsaw from there. We were supposed to visit every Eastern European country, except for Sofia and Belgrade. _____ and from the Soviet perspective so it wasn't covered by our umbrella, even Poland and Czechoslovakia were not, but they were willing to follow through. So when we arrived in Warsaw, Poland, Jake Beam was now our ambassador. We stayed a couple days and then Johnson wanted to fly to Prague, but there were no direct flights to Prague. We had to fly to Vienna, and then Prague. Well he insisted we have a direct flight. He said to Beam to call the Poles and tell them to organize a direct flight. Jake was a very quiet, taciturn person, he said, well if you pay the landing fees for direct flights and so forth, I'll try [laughter]. But Johnson decided not to do that so we flew to Vienna and then Warsaw. Our trips there were not very successful in terms of getting a deal. Then we went to Budapest in '58, which was only two years after Berlin. Budapest was bustling. Lively with nightclubs and so forth although you could still see a lot of damage still on the buildings from the

shelling. We went to the embassy, the chargé there saw us. We used to ride around Budapest in a powder blue convertible Cadillac. Cardinal Mindszenty was still in the embassy and Eric Johnson insisted that he wanted to see the Cardinal. And the chargé said, like Boris said about the ambassador's office in Moscow, no way. The only person in the embassy who can see the Cardinal is me. And again that infuriated Johnson. He had a tremendous ego.

Q: Oh, boy.

AKALOVSKY: But we could see the Cardinal was on the upper floor in the embassy, we could see the big stairway, the open space in the whole building, remember...

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: Like an apartment building. You could see him walking back and forth on the landing there. All we could see was his skirt, basically. Then we went to Bucharest first, and then went to Budapest. Then we were supposed to go to Bucharest again, I forget why. When we were in Budapest, I got a phone call from the embassy in Bucharest saying there was a cable for me. I remember the date – the 23rd of October, 1958. I said what is it about? Well, you have been assigned to the delegation to the nuclear test ban talks in Geneva. Oh, well we are flying to Bucharest and I'll pick up the cable then. So we went back to Bucharest and there was the cable and it said you are assigned to the delegation you are supposed to report to Geneva on the 31st of October, a week later, and due to the shortness of time, suggest you proceed directly after completion of your current mission. I looked at that and then he said, this is the punch line, expect the duration to be three weeks [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: I remember that in '57 when I went to London with Stassen, my initial orders also said three weeks, but I stayed six months in London. I remembered that and with winter coming on, I'd never been to Geneva before and didn't exactly know what to expect. The cable said, "However, if you deem it essential, you are authorized to return to Washington." So, I deemed it essential to return, if only to gather different clothes, and to see my family, and so on.

Q: You were married at that time.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. So that was the end of the cultural exchange episode. And then I went to the test ban.

Q: Overall, how did the Johnson tour work?

AKALOVSKY: They did close a couple of deals for movies. Nothing spectacular. One interesting thing about Turner Shelton. During the entire trip, he would eat nothing but fried eggs, because he was concerned that he might get some disease, and decided that fried eggs were the safest thing [laughter]. Again, you know how Georgians are, Uzbeks are the same way, very hospitable.

Q: Oh yes. And you better participate in what they serve for you.

AKALOVSKY: Wine and everything. He would refuse everything. Just give me fried eggs and the people were shocked of course.

Q: Oh, yes.

AKALOVSKY: He was not the greatest _____. He died some years ago.

Q: This was a test ban...

AKALOVSKY: Yes, you see what happened in 1958, there was pressure for at least stopping atmospheric tests, even earlier. There were big demonstrations, especially in England, less so in this country.

Q: The Soviets had set off some huge...

AKALOVSKY: That was in the '60s. This was _____ moratorium. In '57, the Soviets wanted a permanent ban on atmospheric testing, at least a sense of it. Deep down they didn't. They knew we wouldn't buy it, but they kept pushing for it. And then we came back with some partial proposals like suspension for a year, and then see how things go. The Soviets wouldn't buy that either. Coming back to '58, after some negotiations with the Soviets, we agreed to explore the possibility of a nuclear test ban – including all tests, including underground. We had a scientific meeting in August in New York, with seismologists and people like that. You know Ron Spiers?

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: Ron was part of the delegation on the political side and that lasted about a month. After that, we agreed to have these talks with scientists participated and the delegation. Harold Brown was one of our scientists. He was head of Livermore at the age of 28, at that time in '58. Then he was Secretary of the Air Force, then Secretary of Defense. He is now in California. I don't know what he's doing. A very different kind of character, a very acerbic sense of humor.

Q: When you went out there, what was the American side after?

AKALOVSKY: We were after on-site inspection. We would not buy any plan without on-site inspection, to be foolproof.

Q: In those days, what would on-site inspection mean?

AKALOVSKY: The on-site inspection meant that if you had a wiggle on the seismograph that looked suspicious to you, that indicated that it might be something other than an earthquake, then you were entitled to send a team to that site, to the location of the tremor and inspect to see what really happened.

Q: This would be for underground tests.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. For above ground testing, there was not need, really, because there would be fallout. Those talks lasted until '63.

Q: How long were you there? From when to when?

AKALOVSKY: I was there from October '58 to the end. What happened was there were negotiations between us, the Soviets and the UK, because they were testing on our sites, so they were participating in the negotiations as well. And then in 1962, the 18 nation disarmament committee was established. But when this was established, our negotiations were sort of a subcommittee of that committee, bilateral, but there was no progress and so it petered out. I left in '65, and by that time it had petered out. I left Geneva then. When the Soviets introduced their Troika concept, remember that?

Q: I don't remember what the Troika concept was.

AKALOVSKY: When Hammarskjöld died in the Congo, the question was who would succeed him as Secretary General of the United Nations. The Soviets insisted that it be a three-headed hydra, one from the West, one from the East, and one Alliance. The Alliance was a brand new movement, '68...

Q: Kind of a seven in the Soviet pocket, not quite, but close.

AKALOVSKY: It depended to whom you were talking. But the Soviets certainly wanted to make it, no question about it. They were always leaning in that direction. We refused to do that. It was hard to replace Hammarskjöld but the Soviets applied this concept to a lot of other things. Including, in 1957 when the London disarmament talks were going on, then in 1960 there were no talks except for the nuclear testing. Nothing on disarmament *per se*. By 1960, we'd reached agreement with the Soviets to have a ten nation committee, five NATO, five Warsaw Pact nations, and they met and I was on the delegation at that time. It lasted two months, in 1960. Of course the U-2 incident occurred. The meetings started sometime in March, went through April, then U-2 came, and it lasted another month or so. And the Soviets walked out again. The entire eastern side walked out.

Q: Was there a feeling at the time... Khrushchev came in during this fight, '58-ish or so, was there a feeling that Khrushchev was interested in a change?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, but he was going hot and cold.

Q: During these initial negotiations, because we are talking about all types of testing, aren't we?

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: Was there the realization of how dangerous the above ground tests were?

AKALOVSKY: And getting into kelp and kelp was used in all kinds of products including ice cream. Well there were arguments among scientists, and I can't judge who was right or wrong, but obviously there must be some ill effects. The U-2 incident, I was in Geneva and then when this happened... going back again. When Khrushchev came to the States, in '59, I went with Nixon to the Soviet Union, spent two weeks with him there and then we went to Poland.

Q: Shall we talk about the Nixon trip?

AKALOVSKY: Sure.

Q: This was really Nixon's first time there. How did he use you and his delegation? What was your impression of Nixon?

AKALOVSKY: He was very, very much relying on everybody. Tommy Thompson was of course our ambassador at that time. I was in Geneva in '59, and got a cable that I was to be interviewed by Nixon's vice president staff. I didn't know what about, and I flew back to Washington and I was called in by General Robert Cushman who became later the head of the Marine Corps. He was at that time Nixon's military aide. A very nice man. And Herb Klein who was at the time director of communications later on in the White House, but at that time he was press secretary. Also a very nice man. So I was called in and they wanted to give me a test in Russian, to see if I even spoke Russian to see how good an interpreter I would be. So it was set up like this, the tape, and so forth, and translated this thing, and it would be examined by experts. To make a long story short, I was selected, out of I don't know how many candidates, to go with Nixon. Prior to our trip, Nixon had a reception in his home, which was somewhere in Spring Valley. Julie and Patricia were tiny girls at that time, and it was a lovely affair, very informal. Nixon was a terrible introvert, one of his basic problems. But on this occasion, very, very nice. And then we went to Moscow. As we arrived, I was quartered in the Ukrainian hotel, which was about ten minutes from the embassy, very nice. It's a huge wedding cake type of hotel on the other side of the Moscow River. On the very first morning in Moscow, Nixon got up early, 6 a.m., and he and one of his security people went for a stroll. He wanted to see the city, and came to a market place and there were vendors, and that, I don't know exactly know what he wanted to buy, but the price was 50 kopeks or a ruble and he gave a ten ruble note to the man, then vendor, and he said keep the change. But the man said, oh, no, we don't accept tips or bribes. This was blown up the same day in the afternoon press, about Nixon's attempt to pay off Soviet citizens and buy their souls as it were. And of course, Nixon had no such intentions, and ten rubles in those days was next to nothing. A dollar or so. So he said there was some misunderstanding, that he was not bribing at all, didn't want anything in return. I was moved from the Ukrainian hotel to the Spaso House, and Nixon was telling me, you stay with me everywhere I go from now on. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: Which I did. I must say, I had a very good relationship with him.

Q: Most of the Foreign Service when they dealt with Nixon, found him to be someone who really

listened and absorbed and was able to use what he absorbed. Did you find this?

AKALOVSKY: Definitely. He sought advice and followed advice.

Q: He never apparently cared for the Foreign Service, but that was almost a social thing, but a lot of them had a lot of respect for him.

AKALOVSKY: One of the episodes that we had...we went to a factory in Sverdlovsk, Yeltsin's hometown, which at that time was a closed area, but they opened it up for Nixon. We also went to [Russian name], it was closed but they opened it up for Nixon, one of the famous academic cities there. When we were in Sverdlovsk, we went to a factory. There were a lot of factories there. There was a pretty young girl there, and Nixon of course said hello, and made small talk, and asked are you married, and she said no. He said, how come? She was offended, and took it the wrong way, and said nobody wanted her. He meant, how come a pretty girl like you, and the stupid men, and so forth, he didn't say all that. She became very offended and blushed and said it's none of your business. I explained it to him and said she really didn't understand it the right way, and I said why don't you embroider it a little? And he went and did that and said, such a pretty girl, and the stupid young men, and ... that sort of thing he found a use for me. Not of course, in official talks.

Q: Now in official talks, were you sitting next to Nixon, and they had somebody, and - How about the kitchen cabinet debate?

AKALOVSKY: The kitchen debate in the Cabinet...

Q: Yes, the kitchen debate...

AKALOVSKY: Of course that during trip when Nixon was there.

Q: Another trip.

AKALOVSKY: No, same trip, that was July of '59. That was a model kitchen that even in the States was outlandish, with all the gadgets, dishwasher moving close to the table after you pressed a button... we still don't have that thing, not that we needed it. Anyway, Khrushchev would not be impressed by that thing, and said, again we were trying to pull the wool over their eyes, a fable and this is not true. And Nixon said we are not trying to do anything like that we are just trying to show you what our life is like in the United States. But despite the other reports in that scene, I was not involved. I was there, but the crowd was so big I got pushed back. I could hear but I could not translate. So the Soviet guy did that, and he made some boo boos there, having some trouble translating some of the Russian proverbs and sayings.

There's a Russian saying that literally translated, well I shouldn't because it wouldn't make any sense... but it's, we'll show you Kuzma's mother. What it really means is, we'll teach you a lesson. And Khrushchev used that expression in that debate, saying well, eventually when we catch up to you in terms of reduction [of radiation] in pepto milk and blah blah blah, we'll teach you a lesson. [Speaks Russian] And the poor interpreter didn't want to translate that, and said

well this is a saying about Kuzma's mother, and nobody could make any sense out of it. The next day, there was a big story about the Kitchen Debate and how Khrushchev had told off Nixon, etc., but the poor American interpreter didn't know the words and didn't know how to translate.

The same evening, there was a reception, and duBay and Khrushchev's son-in-law, Aleksei I. Adzhubei at that time, married to Rada, a very nice woman. I saw duBay at the reception, and I went up to him and said, you know you were at the kitchen debate when we were in the kitchen, and he said yes, and I said you know who interpreted, and he said yes, so I said so why do you print in your paper that it was I and not your man who goofed? We have freedom of the press, too. That was his response. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] What was your impression during this visit... I mean when the Vice President visits, it's more for show than anything else...

AKALOVSKY: Yes, there were no agreements or anything.

Q: What was your impression of how Khrushchev was dealing with Nixon at that time?

AKALOVSKY: Well, Khrushchev was a very volatile person. Very volatile. He could switch from one mood to another in no time and switch back and forth. But when we arrived in July, or maybe while we were there, Congress had passed a captive nation resolution and Khrushchev was incensed. Here we are greeting you, Mr. Nixon, our honored guest, and so forth, and at the same time, you are, pardon the expression, you are shitting in our tea. And Nixon didn't take that lightly at all, this expression. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: And he answered in a similar vein. So, you know, he was pretty tough, Nixon. Very tough. But there were not agreements of anything, it was for Nixon to open the exhibit and tour the country.

Q: Did you find that Nixon was taking things in as he went around...

AKALOVSKY: Oh, yes.

Q: Part of this is domestic policy in the United States so you are trying to show that I dealt with the Soviets on an equal basis and I know the country a bit. I was wondering if there was another layer there of a man who was trying to understand the society and asking questions...

AKALOVSKY: Oh he was asking very pertinent questions. And his entourage was interesting too. He had Admiral Rickover, Milton Eisenhower, and a number of people who were quite knowledgeable and interested in the whole thing themselves. Rickover went to look at the famous ice breaker in Leningrad. Rickover was a fun guy. We were flying someplace and he was reading something like this literally... [demonstrates]

Q: You are saying he ran his finger very quickly down the page and went on to another page.

AKALOVSKY: I asked Rickover, “Speed-reading?” He said, no, I’m just looking for something more interesting. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] Did you find it difficult to be an interpreter at this high level?

AKALOVSKY: This was my first high level. Well Stassen was pretty high level too, but not as high as this. In terms of work, it was basically the same thing and I had to adjust it so I wasn’t too emotional in the high level things. As I said, the Nixons, both of them, Pat was with him too, are extremely nice, unpretentious, down to earth. The situation changed much later.

Q: Well, situations, particularly crowds are tricky anyway, and one always thinks of the... I’m not sure when it cropped up, but with Khrushchev saying, “We’ll bury you”, which means we’ll live longer than you will. But it sounds like we are going to kill you.

AKALOVSKY: Exactly.

Q: How did that come about? Or that wasn’t on your watch...

AKALOVSKY: No, that was way before my watch. No it’s the press, among other people. They pick up this and they do it all the way and it’s very difficult to change.

Q: Yes, look what we are talking about now. It happened over 50 years ago and we are still talking about that.

AKALOVSKY: Yes, I agree. That was mistranslated, misunderstood.

Q: Things were happening so rapidly, that when you get to proverbs do you have to have a self censor so that you don’t come up with something that might be misinterpreted?

AKALOVSKY: Oh, yes, sure. Not only proverbs, but in general. Some words have a different effect in different languages. I’ll give you one example, going back to Stassen. Zorin was there, he was head of Soviet resolution in London. In one of his statements he started complaining about the slow paced, turtle-like pace of the negotiations. And Stassen took it as a personal affront to him, that he was a turtle. How he got to that understanding, I don’t know. So he turns to me, I was the only one sitting behind him, with a red face and so forth and says, how should I answer that? I said, don’t, he didn’t mean you, he was just complaining about the slow pace of our negotiations, he didn’t do anything wrong. Which was a fact. Sometimes you have to intervene or explain something.

Then we went to Poland with Nixon after that. Jacob Beam was still ambassador. Talking about relations with the Foreign Service, Nixon liked Jake very much. When Nixon was president, he sent him as ambassador to Moscow.

Q: One of the great complaints about these trips of high dignitaries, President, Vice President and so forth, the support staff that goes along with the principle person, is that they are

arrogant, they push people aside, and they stir up more ill feelings than the principals can create good will. Did you find this with the Nixon trip?

AKALOVSKY: No, Nixon had a very small entourage, very small, so there was no problem there. But that brings to my mind another thing, which I skipped in '59 before Nixon's visit. There were quite a few incidents. Aleksei Kosygin came, who was then number two in Moscow, for the opening of the Soviet exhibit in the Coliseum in New York. I don't know if you recall, he came the first time on a TU-104, which is a very tall plane, and they didn't have the right steps, the ramp to wheel up to the plane, so they had to put a ladder on top of the ramp so they could get off at JFK. The reason I remember that is, talking about the support staff, we went to the opening of the exhibit in the Coliseum, and it was with Kosygin and some city officials and so forth, and several women on the Soviet delegation, all high ranking. Ministers of culture. We were boarding an elevator, there were a lot of people pushing and shoving, and the security people literally threw out a couple of Soviet women.

Q: Soviet secret service people.

AKALOVSKY: No, no, secret service. That's how they behaved, not thinking what they were doing. They didn't ask who are you and so forth, just push you out. That created a lot of bad feeling for the visitors. So you are right, the entourage...not only security people, Foreign Service or staff aides sometimes behaved very arrogantly.

Q: Oh, yes. I would have thought that it was always difficult to have a Soviet high functionary go to New York because, well no matter what nationality, you've got a dissident group that is going to take violent exception to whoever you are. [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] Yes, in the '60s there was the famous shoe incident, you know, with Khrushchev banging his shoe...

Q: Yes. At the UN.

AKALOVSKY: At the UN.

Q: Did you run across, in this trip with Nixon, Gromyko at all?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, well I met Gromyko before that.

Q: What was your first impression of him?

AKALOVSKY: Well, contrary to all the reports you see that he was dour or he had no sense of humor.... not true. He had a pretty good sense of humor. He could smile and he could laugh and he was very human. There were a lot of misconceptions that probably came out, not only about Soviets in general themselves public figures. Like when I mentioned Khrushchev, in '61 I went to... well, let's finish this first and I'll come back to it.

Q: Well, after the Nixon trip, you went back to Geneva?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, well maybe I didn't because I was still with the delegation, but I may have stayed here because Khrushchev was coming.

Q: Oh, yes, you were on the Khrushchev trip.

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: Let's talk about that. That's a very famous trip.

AKALOVSKY: The large one, with the official escort. We went to Los Angeles, to Iowa, Knott's Farm, to New York, San Francisco. Khrushchev had been there before, with Nixon, and knew the area, but cause when we were talking about disarmament. Dulles....

Q: What was your impression of Dulles?

AKALOVSKY: Well, I didn't know Dulles too well, but in those days, '56, '57, Khrushchev kept sending Eisenhower missives, primarily about disarmament matters you know, ban the bomb. Long, long letters, which we had to translate of course. Before we went to that process, Dulles used to call me into his office, which was in the old building where the acting director kept his office later. And he wanted me to give him a preliminary translation before he went to the White House, or before it was translated. And he would sit there like you are and I would sit here, and [he'd say] read this and translate this into English, and he would write or read, talk on the phone, or something else, and I would stop, and he'd say, no, no, continue, continue, I'm listening. Well, there was one letter where Dulles was accused of trying to stir up a third world war. Stevenson was against the H-bomb. And Dulles was the bad guy, he was against banning the H-bomb. As I came to this passage and read it to him, he stopped and said, what? What? Would you repeat it again? [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: And then another interesting episode with Dulles. He was sitting at a desk like this, and I was reading one of the missives from Khrushchev. At one point, Jake Beam who was then head of Office Eastern Affairs, came walking in on his tiptoes and said, Mr. Secretary, we just got reports that Soviet troops have surrounded Warsaw. That was during the October '56 Polish crisis, when Garrick and Movoka would be released from prison, and there was some unrest in Poland. And Dulles said, oh, oh, and he got up and viewed the map behind him on the wall and said, Alex, let's look where Warsaw is. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] On the Khrushchev trip to Washington, how did that work?

AKALOVSKY: It was, again, our people wanted to be as hospitable and nice as possible. I'm talking about five people who didn't have any official function, as the hosts were always from private organizations, like in San Francisco, the Economic Club, so he went to that. The Center for Capitalism, things like that. Then in Los Angeles we were met by a representative of the mayor who turned out to be the son of a Russian Jewish family.

Q: Was this Yorty?

AKALOVSKY: The mayor?

Q: Yes. Sam Yorty.

AKALOVSKY: I guess the mayor was Sam Yorty at that time.

Anyway we got in the car, a big limousine, a young man... well Khrushchev and he started talking to the man, who proudly announced that his parents came from Rostov in Russia. And Khrushchev said what were you doing there? And he answered he was in a factory. Khrushchev said, oh, I might have occupied that factory and pushed your parents out of there. It wasn't a very friendly exchange on Khrushchev's part you know.

Q: No.

AKALOVSKY: Then we were hosted by the Hollywood community, the movie stars there, with open arms, spirit of detente, and so forth. And then we went to a movie studio where they were making the movie, Can Can...

Q: Can Can, yes, Cole Porter's...

AKALOVSKY: We saw the scene where the dancing started. We were seated actually where there were actually props of the New Orleans house, balcony, and so forth, and we got seats there to watch the whole thing. And then we went down and Khrushchev started slapping the girls, dancers, on their butts and so forth. He had a great time. But the next day he made a big speech accusing American hosts of exposing him to this filth, you know -

Q: I remember that.

AKALOVSKY: Indecent exposure, etc.

Q: It sounds like the Soviets and Khrushchev were trying too hard to play both ends.

AKALOVSKY: Oh, yes, sure. First of all, the problem was on a personal level he obviously was enjoying the show. I was there watching him enjoy the show.

Q: Yes. Well, did you observe, I've seen where Khrushchev had his own translator.

AKALOVSKY: He actually had two. When he first arrived, it was Teranovski. Teranovski, is the son of a former ambassador to the United States, had friends here. A very nice man. Then they had Sukadar, who became famous with Brezhnev and Khrushchev earlier, primarily as an interpreter. He was very, very good. Teranovski was already being groomed to become Khrushchev's sort of personal aide, because after the first few days, he sort of took over the interpreting function. In knowledge, at that level at least, and he did very well. But both of them

had problems with proverbs or sayings or expressions. When Khrushchev was talking about the future of communism and capitalism, he used the Russian expression that communism will never collapse, capitalism will collapse, this will only happen when the shrimp whistles. And Sukadar got lost. How could he translate it? He started saying it literally and nobody got the meaning of it. You know what it means...

Q: Yes, basically when pigs can fly...

AKALOVSKY: Yes, when hell freezes over.

Q: Yes. I would think for someone to translate this sophisticated, to translate for Khrushchev would be very difficult because he really came from a Ukrainian miner's background.

AKALOVSKY: Well, you are wrong, if I may say so. Not Ukrainian. He was born just across the border from the Ukraine. And he told me himself, later, that he worked in the Ukraine, but he was not Ukrainian.

Q: Yes, well he came from essentially peasant worker background where you learn your expressions...

AKALOVSKY: A lot of folksy expressions.

Q: Yes...

AKALOVSKY: A lot of them were more than folksy.

Q: Yes, and a sophisticated Moscow boy would learn English as a boy would not pick up folksy expressions.

AKALOVSKY: Well a lot of them are very common. This particular one is very common [speaks Russian]. Actually the translation of when the shrimp whistles ... when the pike sings, but nobody listened to the first part. But Teranovski had problems just before leaving, before Khrushchev's departure from Washington, there was a national press conference. And they were talking about the Soviets having sent this satellite to the moon. And the question from the press was, when are you going to launch a man to the moon? Teranovski was translating then, because of the big event, so they put him ... in reserve, I guess. And the way he put it in Russian, he used a verb which in Russian can mean two things. One to launch, and the other to neglect or to sort of throw out of sight. So Khrushchev chose to interpret the question the second way, and said, we, we never neglect our people, we take good care of them from cradle to grave and so on and so on. And of course the audience, the press people were confused, what is he talking about? Poor Teranovski didn't have the presence or what not to intervene and say that there's a misunderstanding, that isn't it at all. So the question was never resolved as far as the press was concerned as to why Khrushchev answered that way.

Q: How did you find the time on the Garst farm in Iowa? This almost seemed to be the high point of the trip, was it or did it?

AKALOVSKY: Well there was a big to do about it in the press, and there was also the situation where somebody misrepresented themselves as the son of Garst... There was admission control, and ... who managed to get in who claimed he was Garst's son, and there was a big stink about it. Of course, Khrushchev kept saying they could do the same thing because they had this big program called [Russian word]...

Q: Virgin land.

AKALOVSKY: In Kazakhstan, in that area, in central Asia. They could grow corn from grass, hybrid corn which never prospered apparently. The whole corn program was a fiasco. For one thing, in Russia they don't eat corn. It's fodder.

Q: It's fodder... well that's true in all of Europe.

AKALOVSKY: That's right. Well, in the Balkans and in Yugoslavia they eat corn. And in Italy there's polenta, a corn meal. Otherwise they don't eat corn. So that was not a big success.

Q: At the end of this thing, what was your feeling and other Americans who were involved in the trip...had this helped at all or in trying to show our best face sort of gotten the backs up of the Soviet leadership?

AKALOVSKY: Well our main concern at that time was that the Soviets come out of Berlin. And Eisenhower had Khrushchev to Camp David at the end of this trip. Eisenhower hardly saw Khrushchev before and then we went touring and then came back for a business session basically, at Camp David. At that meeting, Khrushchev backed away from a policy meeting. At least he gave the impression of backing away.

Q: The card that the Soviets kept waving around there and threatening to play was that there would be a peace treaty with the East Germans.

AKALOVSKY: Exactly.

Q: -and once they did it, they would back away and we'd have to deal with the East Germans. And we were saying hell no, and that meant Berlin.

AKALOVSKY: Well Berlin was in a state of _____ -

Q: After, was there a feeling that relations were a little bit better?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, hope, I'm not sure there was a feeling, but there was hope. Then came the U-2. Eisenhower was invited to come to the Soviet Union. It was supposed to be in June and then Khrushchev cancelled the invitation after the U-2 incident.

Q: And Eisenhower was in Paris.

AKALOVSKY: I was there too with him then.

Q: What were you doing?

AKALOVSKY: The Bordeaux Summit.

Q: Had anything started at that summit?

AKALOVSKY: Started? It was just the opposite. The summit had been scheduled before the U-2 incident, primarily at Harold Macmillan's insistence.

Q: Prime Minister of Great Britain.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. He very much wanted the summit because he was desperately trying to get the test ban done, and he thought the summit could resolve this issue. Of course the U-2 incident occurred when we came to Paris, and de Gaulle was sitting there in front of the big fireplace in a regal posture like this, you know, presiding over the whole thing. Here was de Gaulle for example, Khrushchev was sitting on his left, Nixon on his right, and Eisenhower facing on the other side of the table. Khrushchev was flanked by his defense minister and Gromyko. On our side, we had Herter and that was it. Only five people were allowed to be part of the delegation. Dick Walters, then Colonel. He was seated behind Eisenhower, and I was sitting behind Herter. And Chip Bohlen got in the room as note taker, and he was seated at a small table in the back. And the same kind of arrangement for the British, and the Soviets. De Gaulle spoke first, and then Khrushchev gave a fiery speech lambasting the United States for intruding upon their territory and stuff like that. And then Eisenhower's turn came. Eisenhower's face got redder and redder as Khrushchev gave his speech. Eisenhower understood French, spoke it very well, and according to protocol he was first interpreted in the language of the host country. So French came first and Dick Walters did that. But Eisenhower read the first paragraph of the text and stopped. Dick and I both had the text in front of us so we could pay attention. Dick is a delightful fellow, you should talk to him, he has thousands of delightful stories... he wrote a book of these.

Q: Secret Missions.

AKALOVSKY: That was primarily about Iran. Anyway, I guess his mind must have wandered because when Eisenhower stopped, [Dick] turned to me and said, Alex where did he stop? So I pointed to the end of the first paragraph, and he got up and went into the French translation of the first two paragraphs. In other words, he translated a paragraph that Eisenhower hadn't spoken yet. And Eisenhower sort of good-naturedly said, Dick I don't think I've said that yet. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: And then I got up and translated only the first paragraph.

Q: Khrushchev came in at that point and sort of...

AKALOVSKY: The summit was never finished anyhow, because he walked out, he never came

back. So we had one morning session. He made a speech with de Gaulle saying, well he complained about planes flying over his Soviet territory, it wasn't about your Sputnik flying over my territory. He never lost his calm, de Gaulle. Neither did Eisenhower. Then Khrushchev left. So the three stayed behind and deliberated what to do. Macmillan was almost in tears. Literally. He wanted to stay at the summit. Again, it was at his insistence it was decided to reconvene in the afternoon and see what happened, to see if he would come as scheduled before an afternoon session. So the three came, and we had the French police every once in a while inquire about Khrushchev's whereabouts, what he was doing. What he was doing was traveling all around Paris, sight-seeing, making remarks to the crowd and so forth. And every time his motorcade would turn in the direction of the Elysee Palace Macmillan would say, he's coming, he's coming. But he never came.

Q: What was your feeling that people were saying, I mean the U-2 was not a good idea at that time. It flew over the Soviet Union on May Day, and Eisenhower denied it even happened.

AKALOVSKY: It wasn't May Day, it was the end of May, May 31st.

Q: Oh, May 31st. Was the feeling that this was... something like this could have been taken care of by saying, it was unfortunate... on the Soviet side...

AKALOVSKY: Oh no... They wanted to blow it up, obviously, for their purposes. This incident brings up another different point about translation. In his speech, I don't know if you ever read the book, *The U-2 Affair* by David Wise...

Q: I think I have.

AKALOVSKY: Well, he mentioned that in his book. In his speech, he said that the Soviet government cannot tolerate activity like that, over flights, and things like that. It was a matter of, to us the Russian word, *politizica*. And Chip Bohlen interpreted this phrase with great significance, because he thought this meant internal politics, politics, not policy, was the driving force of the war. I didn't believe it that way because I couldn't conceive Khrushchev or any other Soviet leader admitting-

Q: Yes, well, whatever the motivation...

AKALOVSKY: I thought it was simply a matter of our policy, not to tolerate... so Chip and I disagreed on that, and this is mentioned in David Wise's book. But of course, if Chip was right, it was very significant.

Q: Right.

AKALOVSKY: But I couldn't conceive Khrushchev really admitting that there was some internal politicking over this issue.

Q: I don't know if whether over time Khrushchev felt he was unsure...I don't think there was any internal pressure at that time. He was pretty much in control.

AKALOVSKY: That's right.

Q: Maybe this is a good time to stop. We've been going for two hours now. Let's just put at the end, we've just finished the end of the Bordeaux Summit, was it May of 1960?

AKALOVSKY: It was back and forth.

Q: Did you go back to Geneva at this time? Did this end your... or did you get involved in other translation activities at the upper level of the American government?

AKALOVSKY: Well, in '60 I went back to Geneva, yes. In '59 we had the last negotiations on Germany.

Q: Okay, next time, let's pick up in '59 the last negotiations on Germany, and going back to the Geneva negotiations after the aborted Paris summit, okay?

AKALOVSKY: Okay.

HARRY G. BARNES, JR.
Soviet Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1956-1957)

Publications Procurement Officer/Cultural Exchange Officer
Moscow (1957-1959)

Soviet Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1959-1962)

Ambassador Barnes was born in Minnesota and raised in Minnesota and New York. He was educated at Amherst College and Columbia University. After service in the US Army in World War II, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted in 1950 to Bombay, India. His other foreign posts include Prague, Moscow, Kathmandu and Bucharest. He served as United States Ambassador to Romania (1974-1977; India (1981-1985) and Chile (1985-1996) in addition to having several senior level assignments at the State Department in Washington. Ambassador Barnes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Well, then you were in language school from '55 to '56.

BARNES: From summer to summer.

Q: And then to Moscow?

BARNES: I was delayed getting to Moscow because of housing shortages. Instead of going fairly quickly, we didn't get to Moscow until the early part of '57 and I had some time on the Soviet desk.

Q: Then you were in Moscow from '57 until?

BARNES: February, the end of January of '57 until February of '59.

Q: Then you were in Moscow from '57 until?

BARNES: February, the end of January of '57 until February of '59.

Q: Who was our ambassador then?

BARNES: Chip Bohlen when I just got there but only for a couple of months. He left later that spring and Tommy Thompson. [Editor's Note: Ambassador Bohlen served in Moscow from April 1953 to April 1957. His successor Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson served from July 1957 to July 1962.]

Q: What was your job?

BARNES: I was the publications procurement officer.

Q: Oh, yes. Could you explain what that?

BARNES: Sure. Essentially I was a book buyer on behalf of U.S. Government entities ranging from the (Central Intelligence) Agency to the Library of Congress, since it was impossible to get Russian books of all sorts essentially outside the Soviet Union, I supposed some could be found in Western Europe. All I had to do was to in effect sort of memorize the requirements of the various agencies, plus I periodically got shopping lists. Look for this, look for that and be in the interesting position of becoming a preferred customer in Moscow bookstores because I would help them fulfill their plan. It was a great job because I had to learn my way around Moscow. I had to learn my way to various provincial cities as well because there was interest in publications in Leningrad or Kiev, but also because things that might be sold out in Moscow for one reason or another you might be able to pick up in other places, so much of my time was spent traveling.

Faced the usual travel problems, of course. When earlier I was comparing Czechoslovakia with Moscow, I had in mind was that in Moscow you had to file forty eight hours ahead of time, you didn't know until the last minute if whether you were going to be able to go. You couldn't drive outside twenty five kilometers of Moscow without permission and if it was a question of plane or train, you'd only get tickets through the state agencies. So you were stuck a good part of the time. So you planned and maybe you went and maybe you didn't. On the whole, I got out a fair amount.

About the second half of my career there, I got involved in cultural exchanges as a de facto like an assistant cultural officer. There was one USIA officer there who took on those responsibilities as a result of those called the Lacy-Zarubin agreement in late '57 – '58 setting the framework for exchanges between the U.S. and the USSR; the Khrushchev thaw period. The opportunities opened up quite rapidly and so it was useful to have a second person, so I worked on student exchanges, I worked on a composers' exchange, an artist exchange. I had a chance to meet Russians in a way I didn't other than my book experience and I also traveled with some of these delegations so that added to my experience.

Q: Let's go back to the book thing first. I would think, I mean obviously you were trying to get published information for information services, I mean you can call them intelligence, but it's farther than that. The Soviets knew what we were doing, did you have any problems?

BARNES: No. I can't be sure, that when I asked for something and was told it was not in stock, or not available, it might have been available, if I had been Russian. On the other hand, my general impression as I say, was I was looked upon with favor in trying to get things or things would be held for me rather than the other way around.

Q: Did you go in and say, "If such and such comes in, could you call me?"

BARNES: Yes. Sometimes they would keep things for me because they knew sort of the pattern. I was interested for example in economic development across the board and there were specialized bookstores which tended to do more in certain areas than in others and so they would know something of my pattern and would say, "We've held this for you. Is this something you would be interested in?" As well as making a note and saying, "I'll let you have it if it comes in."

Q: Were you interested in provincial newspapers too, or were those probably gotten by the translation service.

BARNES: Provincial newspapers we did get some of that and it sort of served as a forwarding agency.

Q: Were there many English or French books, German books, translated into Russian?

BARNES: There were some books primarily in technical fields and some literature, but since I wasn't interested in non-Russian books, I really didn't pay that much attention.

Q: I was told by one of my Yugoslav staff at the embassy, this was just a few years later, "Go to the big bookstore in Belgrade and look under agriculture" and there sure enough was a book called, in English called Animal Farm by George Orwell. (laughter)

Did you find a different attitude when you would go to Kiev or Tashkent or wherever you were going into these stores for buying? Or was it pretty much the same?

BARNES: It varied somewhat; some hesitancy in some places, particularly places where Americans didn't show up that often, hesitancy, puzzlement, and so on but on the whole, fairly

friendly. Again in Moscow I had what was in effect a business relationship with a number of bookstores and was a known quantity. In the provinces I would be there less often, in some places I ended up going only once during my tour, some places a couple of times. It was not quite comparable. I think there would always have to be a certain amount of reserve in the back of people's minds just in case. I never concealed the fact that I was from the American Embassy.

Q: I was wondering whether when you went to stay at overnight hotels and all that, were you sort of put at a special table or things of that nature?

BARNES: No, but again it was probably prudent on the part of Soviet citizens not to associate with foreigners. For our part we of course, had been trained to be a little wary. Only once I took a chance and took somebody up on, somebody who had been connected with a bookstore. He invited me out to dinner and it was one of these places where the lines sort of went through the middle of the town in terms of what was acceptable for foreigners to visit and what wasn't. I asked this particular individual was it OK for me to step across that line a hundred meters or something like that. He said yes with enough assurances so I didn't end up worrying.

Another time when I was with a colleague of mine from the embassy, an economic officer, he had a camera and we got stopped because he was accused of filming something that supposedly wasn't filmable. He obviously didn't think so; I have forgotten if it was a mosque in Central Asia, or a market or what not. They eventually let us go, but nothing much more serious than that. With one exception which I will tell you later.

Q: On the cultural exchange side, one of the things that, there seemed to be an imbalance between Americans going over to the Soviet Union, mainly for culture, language and that type of thing whereas the Soviets seemed to send older people going over for hard sciences. Were you finding this?

BARNES: This was pretty much toward the beginning of the exchanges and they tended to be if not precisely reciprocal, pretty close to reciprocal. They had to be reached, the planning had to be done on the mutual basis, at least the principle of such and such a group would be exchanged for such and such a group.

What you are talking about came somewhat later, when it was somewhat easier to move back and forth and that's an accurate characterization of the composition, but as I mentioned before among the first delegations, there were activities in the areas of education – fairly broadly defined, music, art. We had the Philadelphia Orchestra come. So initially, there was more culture.

Q: Were you able to using this I mean just on your own with your wife and all to penetrate into the sort of intellectual, cultural scene of Moscow?

BARNES: Very hard and one of the advantages of these new, at the time, cultural exchange was that that got us into some of the activities that the delegation were involved in. On our own, for example, I don't think we probably could have gotten Soviet citizens to be allowed to accept invitations to our apartment but we organized something for a delegation and then they would

come. They probably all come at the same time and all leave at the same time. There were certain artificialities that way. But we got a sense of at least some aspects of the intellectual cultural life through these delegation visits. We could follow up on some of that afterwards.

Q: How was Tommy Thompson as an ambassador?

BARNES: I have to think of accurate enough words; at one level, very relaxed. Clearly, very much at home in terms of the nature of the...

I just had one thing that goes back to Prague for a moment. I mentioned earlier my interest in languages and also the problems of getting language training from the Foreign Service at least up through Prague and so aside from asking my consular section staff to talk in Czech with me whenever possible, I also did a certain amount of studying on my own and at one point Jack Iams, the first secretary told me that I was spending too much time on language and not enough time on sort of the substance of things. Even though I was a consular officer I had to be spending more time learning more about the political economic context of the country. He was both a good friend as well as a mentor, so I took him seriously on it.

Q: While we are at it and going back to that, all of a sudden I realize we'd missed something rather big and that was the Hungarian Revolution. It was October of '56.

BARNES: I was in Washington at that point. This was that rather long interim between finishing at Oberammergau and going on to post.

One other Czech element; again it was related to language. My wife is a novelist, I should say a would-be novelist and was working currently on a novel, part of which was set in Czechoslovakia and this turned out to be useful when I had been able to revive some knowledge of Czech because I act as a part time interpreter for her when we go to Czechoslovakia.

Q: Back when you were doing the cultural exchanges in the USSR, how did this work? Who came up with lists?

BARNES: It was essentially intergovernmental. There was an office in the State Department in the Bureau of European Affairs (EUR) which was called the Office of Soviet and Eastern European Exchanges Staff (EUR/SES), headed initially by William Lacey and subsequently by Frank G. Siscoe for a number of years. The Russians had as their counterpart the State Committee for, I think, it was called Cultural Exchanges, maybe there is another adjective in there. If it was a more specialized question the actual arrangements were made from, in case the Soviets for example might be carried out by the Ministry of Higher Education for student exchanges, the Union of Composers for the composer exchanges, the Union of Writers for the writers and that sort of thing, but under the general supervision of the State Committee for Exchanges. Each side would make proposals in a fairly formal fashion to the other although the two embassies played something of an intermediary role, both in terms of ideas for the respective headquarters and occasionally would suggest ideas to each other.

The Embassy's involvement, in this case in Moscow, was essentially to serve as liaison with the

organizing group to vet the program, to share ideas with the Office of Exchanges and the states and through them to the delegation that was coming and then in effect to serve as an escort officer for the delegation when the delegation got there, which ranged all the way from being sometimes a part time interpreter to being a trouble shooter and trying to iron out problem when they happened or to anticipate problems.

Q: Did you have any difficulty with groups coming?

BARNES: No difficulty with the Americans as such, that I remember. Some people obviously much more interesting and more flexible and others somewhat less so but on the whole, most of them saw themselves as a sort of pioneer and were interested in trying to make as much of the opportunity as they could. Where we could be helpful essentially, was giving them a sense of what they were getting into and as I say, if there were problems to try to help solve them. The problems were more in terms of Russian hosts who wouldn't always, usually for, from their standpoint I suppose, security reasons said we couldn't do this, we couldn't do that. So deviations from the agreed program were not always easy to work out.

Q: Now this was a time when Khrushchev had come over to visit Eisenhower and you know, things were looking pretty good, weren't they? Was there sort of an optimistic feel?

BARNES: Yes, there was a sense that, what had been described in the mid-'50s, say '55, '56, as the thaw, in fact there was a work by a Soviet author named Ehrenburg with that title. There was a feeling that things were getting better and could get still better, not very much better, but still the tendency was more hopeful and the exchanges that I was talking about were essentially an expression of that and were a visible sign.

If you had something like the U.S. sending the Marines into Lebanon, this prompted, in '58 the government to organize vast demonstrations outside the American Embassy.

Q: What did you do? I mean, were these sort of rent-a-mob type demonstrations?

BARNES: Yes, certainly in that sort of situation it was, I suppose something closer to home. I wasn't there for the U-2 incident in 1960. I can imagine the U-2 would prompt demonstrations.

Q: Did you get to just plain travel or was it pretty much connected with business?

BARNES: Pretty much connected with business, although occasionally depending on the delegation, my wife would come along as well to the Caucasus say, or to someplace. I did one trip to the Caucasus which was partly business, partly pleasure with a couple from the British Embassy. We arranged to rent some horses and to go by horseback across the hump of the Caucasus, the mountains from what is now not far from Chechnya over to the part of Georgia which is on the Black Sea. And then the embassy had a dacha outside Moscow and we would take turns going to. That was sort of a interim R&R type thing.

One thing I think that afflicted and infected all of us was the strain of living in an atmosphere where you were to some extent the enemy and continued to be portrayed as such. There was a

Soviet humor magazine called Krokodil which specialized in anti-American cartoons. In my own case I know what signaled to me that I was feeling the pressure was I started throwing things which I don't ordinarily do and so took advantage of an opportunity a couple of months later to go out to Western Europe for about ten days just to get a change and at least what was known in the diplomatic corps, at least the western diplomatic corps as a breath of fresh air before you came back into it.

Q: Speaking of which, we've had this observation from, for decades, almost fifty years of looking at the Soviet Union and it was considered to be the great menace and all that but it in 1989 or 1991-92 sort of collapsed. Was there any feel that this was a place that wasn't working? I mean looking at the nationality problem, looking at the economics particularly, or was there a feeling this would go on forever?

BARNES: Nationality...you know, the Soviet had a motto as saying "national in form socialist in content," probably because in wandering around bookstores and so on, I also sometimes went into bookstores that specialized in books in the let's say the republic's language. I would sometimes buy Ukrainian books; I would sometimes buy Uzbek books and so on so I got a little bit of feel through that of what it was like to be a non-Russian. There was more than I would have expected, I think of some of the pride and also a defensiveness that is, trying to protect yourself as somebody who is different from the Russians. So in that sense, I wouldn't have thought of it in later day context.

In terms of society functioning, it was clear that provisions of food were at best limited, particularly during the winter. It was clear that housing was a real problem. It was clear that whether because of bureaucracy, inefficiency, or technical incompetence, various things didn't work well. But I think it would be more than I could do to make the jump from there to the collapse of later years.

Q: I mean we all, in one way or another observing this and yet it sort of happened.

BARNES: But if you were there in the '80s you would have had a clearer sense of impending change. That's what I don't know. I went back only once after we left, no twice after we left Moscow; one fairly close to the time we left and one while I was in Bucharest in the mid-'70s so I didn't have a sense of the Soviet Union in the '80s.

Q: Did you feel that you were joining a band of brothers at that time by being in the Soviet thing?

BARNES: Yes, we were all called area specialists or area language officers. We all in a way were students of the society and we were all in some way pushing the realm of the possible particularly the exchanges program. In fact, one of my colleagues was forced to leave at one point when the Soviets contended he was sort of overdoing contacts with university students.

Q: Who was that?

BARNES: John Baker

Q: Yes, I interviewed John.

BARNES: On one of the trips I took to Kiev I met the director of the Kiev Opera and Ballet. Although I didn't know at the time I met him - until somewhat later when we saw each other in Moscow, which was a little bit unusual to have somebody from the provinces look you up - but, he happened to be Khrushchev's son-in-law and he was obviously interested in me as a possible contact to the United States. He wasn't exactly indiscreet but on the other hand he didn't try to hide that much of the fact that we knew each other and I reported all this to Tommy Thompson from time to time. We were due to leave Moscow in January of '57. I was supposed to go back and work on the Soviet desk at the Department but had asked, and Tommy had agreed, to stay on until spring in part because of one of our children being in school there and in part because I just found what I was doing in a different cultural side to be interesting.

One fine day, a youth newspaper, Komsomolskaya Pravda, published an article about, I don't know if this works in Serbian or not, (Russian phrase), "The Packer of Tchaikovsky Street." The article began by saying, "If you walk along Tchaikovsky Street along about number 19/21 you may hear some strange noises coming from the basement of that building and what's going on there? That's where "Harrigay Baruness" (Russian rendition of "Harry Barnes") is working and he buys all these books and he packs them up in crates and sends them off, who knows what sort of interesting purposes" and so on. Satire, basically but by fingering me raised some questions and this led to my consulting with Tommy who was consulting with me and he concluded that this was probably a way of warning me, that also may have been a warning to Khrushchev's son-in-law in some form. Khrushchev was very much in power at that point.

So Tommy's advice was don't stick around, you don't know what will happen next and in fact, not long before that, the Deninsiya [Russian word possibly means 'plainclothesman'] had seen this guy who had given me some information to pass on about, at one level fairly harmless, but at another level not just about some of the problems the country was facing, general economic problems, it was critical. That was not a good thing to do. We were with a delegation of artist, I think at that point, and was scheduled to go into on to the Caucasus from Kiev and I told my wife, we were on the plane, I figured nobody ever would overhear us on the plane about this conversation, and both she and I began to worry a bit about who might know about the conversation from their own listening devices. Was I likely to be the target of anything as we continued to travel? So there was a period of some nervousness until we got back to Moscow and I was able to talk to Tommy. That was the anecdote I wanted to add for the end of the Moscow.

I thought of something I want to mention about Moscow. I came into the Foreign Service having been told that if I didn't take my appointment at the time it was offered I wouldn't get another one, another chance for a couple of years, if then. If this was a scare tactic, I don't know., but I left Columbia University's Russian Institute with only one year of a two year program completed. What happened in Moscow a couple of months before I left, I ran into the head of the Russian Institute who was then visiting Moscow. He said to me, "Why don't you finish your Russian Institute program and get your M.A.?" When I got back to the States, in that period in the early '59 or so, I began to explore what I could do to accomplish that. It turned out I didn't make use of the information until a couple of years later but I was told that they had a statute of

limitations for completing the degree program once started but that had been adopted after I had left Columbia so therefore it didn't apply to me. Eventually, I completed the M.A. at Columbia by commuting from Washington to New York. By this time it was 1968.

Q: Today is May 3, 2004. Harry, you were on the Soviet desk from when to when?

BARNES: From spring of 1959 until the summer of 1962. I went to the National War College 1962 to '63.

Q: So we are talking about '59 to '62. And this was a period of not the greatest relations with the Soviet Union. Again we are talking about the Cold War. Compared with your Moscow assignment, what was the perspective from Washington? Did you find a different perspective on relations?

BARNES: Let me answer that a little indirectly and give you a little bit of context.

I assume at some point during our previous conversation talking about my assignment in Moscow I had talked about the fact that I had been involved along with another colleague of mine in what was essentially an incipient cultural section of the embassy in Moscow because there had been an agreement in 1958 that was called the Lacy-Zarubin agreement, that provided for some of the first exchanges with the then USSR.

My job on the Soviet desk was essentially that of liaison with the then again quite new European Bureau office which deal with East West exchanges. It was called SES, Soviet and Eastern European Exchanges Staff and I was almost another staff member for that office but working out of the Soviet desk. I also had the responsibility of being the individual who knew the State Department who had to pass on the requests from the Soviet Mission in Washington or the Soviet U.N. delegation for travel outside where they were located. This was a reciprocal arrangement because of the restrictions that had been placed on our people in Moscow. That wasn't very odorous but most of my time then, as I said was spent on the exchanges and there I would say going back to your question, there was an interest, I would say, a willingness to try to see how far we could get in terms of promoting exchanges with the idea of providing Americans an opportunity to spend some time in the Soviet Union and to have some Soviets come to the United States. The calculated risk I suppose one might say that was taken at that time was that on balance exchanges were in our interest as an open society, less so in the Soviet interest, but that because we felt we might gain more, we were prepared to push and to look into what could be accomplished.

In the process, in 1962 I was asked to go with a U.S. cultural group as an escort officer so in a bit it was like what I had done when I was in Moscow. This happened to be a group of university musicians from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and it was called the University of Michigan Band and they did a variety of things; classical, popular, Americana type things and I spent the better part of five weeks, five-six weeks touring with them in effect as a, almost like the manager of the orchestra. Not that I was a musician myself but the director was very much, a

man named William Revelli, but I was the one who had some background in the Soviet Union, having been there fairly recently, I had some idea of how to deal with the Soviet bureaucracy which of course, was somewhat concerned about having these young American students sort of loose in the Soviet Union so we had people escorting us, keeping track of us as it were. My job in part, as I say, was to share with the students, with the director and his staff my sense of the country, warning about some of the possible pitfalls and then if complications arose, to try to sort out what the complications were. The complications were fortunately never very serious, except the Soviet guides did express concerns that we didn't keep enough track always of our own people. They expressed this concern ostensibly because they wanted to protect us to make sure we didn't fall in with bad company and so on. On the whole, the students got a lot out of it and I think they contributed a lot to the people they met as giving a sense of what young America was like which was rather different from ordinary, what ordinarily they got in the Soviet media.

Q: This was quite early on in the exchange, wasn't it?

BARNES: Yes, because the agreement was a '58 agreement and it began to be implemented in '59 and so I am talking about the third year or so of the agreement.

Q: Who was the head of the Office of Soviet Affairs during your assignment?

BARNES: Several people during the time I was there. I think when I first arrived, it was John Guthrie who had been in the Embassy in Moscow before going back to that job and then before I left it was Bob Owen. We were divided into two sections; bilateral affairs and multilateral affairs. I was in the bilateral part.

The other person to bear in mind because he was the one in charge of the cultural exchange program, the SES, was Frank Siscoe.

Q: You were monitoring who the Soviets were sending over?

BARNES: Well, that was more the job of the SES staff to work out the modalities for an exchange. For example, programs for Soviet students coming to American universities counterpart to the Americans who had begun to go to the Soviet Union in '58. There were negotiations about itinerary, where they could go or where they couldn't go. The Soviets at that point had large areas of their own country closed to foreigners, very often particularly Americans, and so if we wanted to have say, something like this cultural group I was describing go to a place that was closed, the Soviets would probably refuse, although they might say, "All right, then you let one of our groups go someplace in the United States which you have closed, because our closings are essentially retaliatory or reciprocal". Not that there was anything necessarily that important militarily but it was part of the tit for tat type game that we played at that time.

Q: When you were on the Desk, we had the election of 1960, this was when Nixon and Kennedy ran against each other. As Soviet experts did you kind of wonder how are they going to deal with things. How did you feel about it?

BARNES: I can't be very precise on that, except there was speculation you might anticipate anyway what would be the consequences of one or another. President Nixon, of course, had had his own experience in Moscow as vice president. I wasn't there at the time. Kennedy, as I recall, had no particular experience with Eastern Europe. If my memory is right, was it 1960 that the U-2 was shot down?

Q: Yes, it was when Eisenhower was president and I want to say the spring of '60.

BARNES: That of course, cast something of a shadow on the relationship, not that it was all that great, but it was sometimes called a thaw as you could surmise by the cultural exchanges agreement and there had been a book published in the Soviet Union, I have forgotten if it was clandestine or not, called The Thaw by Ilya Ehrenburg which reflected the changes that had begun to take place after Stalin's death. I guess I can't go much further than to say there was speculation of those who were working on Soviet affairs as to what difference would come about as a result of the election.

Q: I know when I talked to people who were in Berlin at the time the Kennedy administration came in they expressed some nervousness because the Kennedy Administration was talking about well, is Berlin that important and all that sort of thing. As you know, a new administration comes in and the new people have a tendency to speculate and shoot off their mouths before they are up against...

BARNES: If they do something different because it wasn't done by the previous administration.

The only other thing I remember from that period, the first years of the Kennedy administration, was the Cuban Crisis. By that time I was at the War College, but I remember listening to the radio, going to and from the college, and hearing the announcements and beginning to wonder whether and when it would be a real conflict, an armed conflict with the Soviet Union.

Q: This was I think in October of '62. With the exchange program, how did you see things developing? Did you feel it was making sense?

BARNES: I would have to say I was probably prejudiced, having worked with some of the first exchange groups and having seen the visible impact, be they artists or composers or students. I thought this was a very good area for the U.S. to focus on and try to expand. My sense of Soviet exchanges, Soviet citizens coming to the U.S., was much more indirect, even though I was working on the exchanges part time when I was on the Soviet desk. I didn't have the opportunity usually to spend much time with the Soviet visitors, so I would have to qualify my judgment perhaps a little bit that way. Both because I thought that they were in themselves beneficial for the United States and also because I thought it was worthwhile trying to take advantage of whatever slight evidence there might be or slight movement there might be in the Soviet Union to open up. I remain very much a partisan.

Q: Did you pick up any feel about Khrushchev at this point? Was he considered to be a moderating force or...?

BARNES: Khrushchev certainly, if only because of his decision to let initially party officials, but then this went beyond that, but some people in the Soviet Union have a sense of incomplete of what the Stalin era was like. It was definitely in my mind almost a revolutionary force in that context, not a revolutionary but he understood enough that something had to be known or had to be known by, made known by him in terms of his being able to do some of the other things he wanted. Secondly, there was a pragmatism about him which was to try to see how things can work. He had a slogan at one point of catching up with and surpassing the United States in the production of wheat, butter and milk, which they never got to, but that pushed them in the direction of well, how do you do some things that are quite tangible, that are of some interest to the population as a whole and not just to the party elite.

There was a, what should I say, actor I guess is the word I would use, there was a sense of being an actor about him. You may remember his banging his desk at the U.N. with his shoe and then you had to wonder then occasionally whether his sense of drama, or what he thought was required, would get in the way of his judgment. That was one of the things I worried somewhat about in that period of the Cuban Missile Crisis, if he had enough sense to pay attention to his pragmatic side or whether he was going to pay more attention to the dramatic side.

EDWARD L. KILLHAM
Consular/Political Officer
Moscow (1956-1959)

Analyst, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1968-1970)

Soviet Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1970-1971)

Edward L. Killham was born in Illinois in 1926. He received a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University in 1949, a master's degree from Columbia University in 1950, and a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University in 1957. He joined the U.S. Army during World War II, served from 1944-1946 in Europe. Mr. Killham's Foreign Service career included positions in the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Belgium, Austria, and Spain. He was interviewed by Robert Martens on December 18, 1992.

KILLHAM: Anyway, I was accepted for Russian language training in 1955. After I working briefly in EE for Walter Stoessel and 10 months of language training, I went off to Harvard. Luckily, I was the only one in my group of six who had a significant amount of experience as a consular office so I was sent immediately to Moscow. I arrived in 1957 where I met you.

Q: Yes, I had arrived a year earlier.

KILLHAM: And we shared your residence, Spaso House, for a couple of weeks.

Q: Yes, that is right.

KILLHAM: I moved out of there to a flat, very unusually not into one of the Embassy quarters, but a small flat on Khoklovskiy pereulok, which I shared with Dave Mark and John Baker for several months, until Lucy and John's wife arrived. I then moved into a flat in the Embassy Chancery, where our apartment was right upstairs from my office. I was the consular officer there for a full year.

Q: You were a consular officer the first year?

KILLHAM: Yes, that is right.

Q: Then you got into the political section?

KILLHAM: Yes, internal political. We used to tell Washington that our apartment was only a stone's throw from the street and it was, literally. We got lots of rocks thrown through our windows on several occasions. It was a very stimulating period for political officers although from many points of view the consular experience was even more interesting. It was just the beginning of "The Thaw" and things were loosening up a bit. We issued practically the first immigrant visas in Moscow since the war, I believe. The work didn't do my Russian any good because the people who came in were very old Lithuanian ladies who were going off to their relatives in the United States. They didn't speak any Russian. But it was interesting even so.

Even more exciting was the fact that this was the summer of the Moscow Youth Festival. As consular officer I was very heavily involved in that. At the end of the festival, the Chinese government invited a large group of American participants in Moscow to go to China at its expense. A number of them were not able to see why this was annoying their own government considerably, or perhaps didn't care, and they took advantage of the offer. I had to meet them at the railroad station on their return, chide them somewhat, and inspect their passports. I got a lot of coverage over this. It was the first time I made the front page of the New York Times, with a large picture. But the episode went fairly well. No crockery was irretrievably broken.

It was a very stimulating period because Khrushchev was really getting into the swing of things. He liked to come to the American Embassy, as you know, to American receptions. I met him there, along with a lot of other Soviet luminaries.

Q: Incidentally, the years previously that I was there, there was practically no contact with the top people. Once I had shaken hands with Khrushchev at the British Embassy, but relations with us were still bad. When you arrived it was just the time that the exchange program first came in and they opened up to tourists. So there was a certain turning point then.

KILLHAM: It was a turning point in other ways too, because when I was on the train to Moscow, coming in from Helsinki, Khrushchev got rid of the anti-party group.

Q: Oh yes.

KILLHAM: He purged his critics pretty well, which allowed him to move more freely than before. That was part of the loosening up.

Q: Yes. One of the things that I think is particularly interesting, and I have brought this up with some of your colleagues as well, is the degree to which one could get at real Russian people in this period. Most of this contact came from travel. People were much more ready to speak out in the provinces. In Moscow they tended to know that Big Brother was watching them all the time. Elsewhere they were possibly somewhat more naive and spoke to us. I know you had some interesting trips. I recall one was to the Baltic States. I think you were the first one in there because the Baltic States had been a closed area since World War II up until whenever that was -- 1957 or '58. You and someone else, I remember, went out and had quite an interesting trip. Maybe you could talk about that a bit.

KILLHAM: Yes. As a matter of fact we weren't the first, we were shortly after the first. Dave Mark visited Riga, Latvia a few weeks before us and got to know the Intourist guide there, Johnny Westmanis, who was very agreeable and very Latvian and quite outspoken about Latvia's unhappy history. When Dick Harmstone and I got to Riga he was our guide also. Westmanis was later evidently pressured into denouncing Dave Mark as a spy, which was part of the Soviet case against Dave and he was expelled. The account was written up in innumerable Soviet volumes describing the evil ways of Western spies in the Soviet Union.

But Dick and I had a number of remarkable contacts. You are right that it was easier to talk to people outside Moscow. It was even easier, at least at that stage, if you were not trying to speak to Russians. We had much greater success in the minority areas, such as the Baltics.

The first night we were there Dick and I wandered downtown, where they had what was reputed to be the only the night club in the USSR, which was on the top floor of the department store. We wandered around the department store a little bit. Dick, fortunately, was quite tall so he was noticeable. We struck up a conversation with a couple of other tall young men who turned out to be the nucleus of the Latvian basketball team. We got very close, indeed, with them. We had some friendly conversation and they asked us to get together the following night, which we did. They took us on a train to the famous white sands beach outside of Riga -- this was in January. We went walking with them -- about four or five of them and two of us -- along the snow-covered beach, closely pursued by a group of obvious KGB tails. We were discussing all sorts of sensitive things -- politics, international affairs, the evils of the Soviet system, etc. Our friends knew the immediate area very well and knew the train schedule well also so, at one crucial moment, they said, "We all run now." So we all ran like hell and caught the train just as it was leaving the station in the direction of Riga, leaving the KGB watchers behind us. It probably annoyed our KGB tails enormously.

They took us then to a restaurant, also on the coast, and we ate some of the local specialties and again talked, with more than a few toasts along the way. At one stage, in a very touching episode, one of them who was studying English -- he couldn't speak it but he could read it -- pulled out a book containing the American Declaration of Independence and proceeded to read it to us in English. It was really a remarkable scene. Then they bundled us off back to Riga.

We didn't see them again, but the following night we struck up a conversation with a young Latvian musician -- only half Latvian, I believe his father was Russian -- who had another chap with him. We invited them to come to the night club with us and our guide, Johnny Westmanis, which made both of them rather nervous. But the young musician, an aspiring composer, invited us back to meet his folks. That was the first time I had gotten inside a Soviet apartment. They were quite well fixed. We talked with the parents and had a very pleasant evening. We got some feeling for some of the tensions but also for some of the elements that were bringing the Latvians and the local Russians together.

Another occasion where I had some experience dealing with non-Russians was also a lot more vibrant than you usually get. Vlad Toumanoff and I went down to Georgia as sort of a reward for going through Stalino and the industrial towns around it, a collection of the worst polluted areas I have ever seen.

We were on our way to Tbilisi but the plane had to make an emergency landing in Kutaisi, a pretty scrofulous town, where something I ate disagreed with me mightily. Eventually, however, we made our way to Tbilisi, a very charming city, and met up with group of young Georgians. They sitting around drinking wine and eating some kind of long-stemmed grass, both of which seemed to be local specialties. We spent quite a bit of time with them and had a lively and very friendly conversation. But when we encountered a couple of them the next day they, of course, walked right by us with eyes straight ahead. After what was no doubt a routine interview with the local KGB, they wouldn't even look at us and obviously wouldn't talk to us. This was a fairly typical experience when traveling around the countryside.

In Tbilisi, we also encountered a fellow about our age, middle '30s, who was a Georgian Jew who had only one leg. I forget now how he lost his leg, I think it was an industrial accident. But he was profoundly anti-Soviet and anti-Russian. We had a number of conversations with him and at one stage, after perhaps more vodka than any of us should have had, he suggested that we go back to the hotel at which we were staying and continue our discussion. We felt that would be very dangerous for him, but he said, "Don't worry about it. The dezhurnaya (floor monitor) on your floor is my mistress." So he came back with us to the hotel and we sat at one of those alcove tables they seemed to have in all Soviet hotels, and which was about 30 feet from the reputed mistress. She couldn't hear, I believed, but was a little concerned because he was asking for all sorts of dangerous things. He wanted us to airdrop weapons so that he and his friends could lead the rebellion against the Russians, for example. We said that was not really what we were there for. I began to get nervous and started to drum with my fingers on the table, thinking this would help break up the sound, if somebody was taping the conversation. Vlad Toumanoff soon picked it up and then the Georgian did too and so we were all drumming. Finally, it got so loud that we had to shout at each other in order to be heard. It was rather a hilarious scene. I hope he didn't suffer too much from his contact with us.

Those were the two most interesting trips I made, although Lucy and I managed to travel together to Leningrad and Central Asia later on.

Q: Any other observations on that tour in Moscow?

KILLHAM: Well, it was my first foreign language tour. It was a little difficult from that point of view, and of course Russian is a difficult language. But I think I learned a tremendous amount from it. I was ready to go back, but not very soon. I would have liked to go back in five or six years.

KILLHAM: I went back to Soviet Affairs. Spike Dubs, who was director of SOV, recruited me to come in and handle the bilateral office. It was pretty active at the time. We had a lot of problems. For example, there were a couple of American Air Force officers who had wandered off course when they took off from their bases in Turkey and wound up in the Soviet Union. We had to extricate them with the least possible embarrassment.

Q: Any particular observations of that situation?

KILLHAM: Just that it seemed to be clear from the first day that it was obviously a gaff on the part of our military colleagues. The Soviets were naturally intent on extracting as much embarrassment for us as they could out of it. But they didn't really intend to take serious action. This was just fun and games -- they were going to make us pay for it in propaganda terms.

Q: Before you go on I might say for the listener that the Office of Soviet Affairs had two major branches -- Multilateral Affairs (Soviet relations with the rest of the world) and Bilateral Affairs, of which you were the head. What other things were you dealing with?

KILLHAM: We were busy setting up the Consulate in Leningrad as well as working on the initial planning for the new Embassy in Moscow. As far as the Embassy in Moscow was concerned, we were convinced that under no circumstances could the Soviets be allowed to play any role, whatever, in its construction. We were going to insist that it be done entirely by either American or neutral construction workers. Unfortunately, that position eroded over time and we all know the cost of that.

We were also involved in the initial exchange about establishing our Consulate in Leningrad and the Soviet Consulate in San Francisco. The Soviets did get a prize spot in San Francisco overlooking the Presidio, which worried some people a good deal. However, it didn't worry the Navy enough to overcome their zeal to get their people into Leningrad. In the end, the U.S. Government decided to pay the price of having the Soviets overlooking the Presidio. That is how it turned out.

Q: To go back to the Embassy chancery, was this erosion of the insistence of an all American or at least an all non-Soviet work force due to the difficulty of negotiation or more to financial considerations?

KILLHAM: It may have had something to do with financial considerations. I think it was more a case of the general erosion in the American stance on such matters. Ambassador Dobrynin was very effective, as we all know, at working on his counterparts at the top levels of the US

government. Over time, he managed to persuade them that the Soviets could do much of the construction in Moscow and that there wouldn't be any great security problem. I was not involved with the matter at the time, but that is my impression.

Q: In general, I have always felt that the Soviet Desk was composed of officers who had served in the Soviet Union and tended to be very strong on defending reciprocity and assuring that the Soviets did not have great opportunities for security breaches. However, there would be great pressures from senior people who were impressed by the Dobrynins of this world.

We might go into a discussion of that ship case if you would like?

KILLHAM: Yes, that was easily the most dramatic thing that happened while I was in that particular office.

Early one afternoon I got a telephone call from the Coast Guard saying that they had somebody who had indicated a desire to defect. He was on a Soviet ship where a meeting was taking place between some American Fisheries officials and their Soviet counterparts. The meeting was taking place in U.S. waters and the Coast Guard cutter Vigilant was lying along side. The interpreter then working for the Fisheries office was Alexis Obolensky, who is now a senior interpreter for the State Department. The message from the Coast Guard cutter to Boston headquarters, which was relayed to Washington, said that there was an 80 percent chance that this individual on the Soviet ship was going to try to defect. He had communicated this intention in a cryptic note written in very broken English. This communication included some phrases that were hard to understand: "He was going to go up down onto the American ship." The Coast Guard felt that this could mean that he was going to jump into the water. Apparently, he had a very brief interchange with one of the Americans, observing that the water was not all that cold today. (There was some visiting back and forth going on between the two ships as part of the peace and friendship atmosphere.)

Coast Guard Captain Dahlgren, who was their head of intelligence, called up and talked to me. He said they had this message and a request for advice from Boston. "If this man did jump overboard, what degree and extent of force could be used in order to recover him before the Soviets did?"

I told him that this was a complicated legal question and it would probably take several hours to get a definitive reading on it, by which time he would either have jumped or not have jumped. I noted that the Coast Guard had had a lot of experience at fishing people out of the water and they ought to be able to beat the Russians to the man if he did jump in the water, and they could go ahead and do it. However, they shouldn't encourage him to jump. There was the possibility that this was a provocation. At that stage of the Cold War, we were always worried that the Soviets were going to stage a "provocatsia" involving a phony defector and make us look bad. So I mentioned that to him.

I concluded by saying that if he did jump or defect, to let us know and tell us the circumstances and we would give them a fuller answer on what to do then.

Several hours went by and the Coast Guard Captain called me back at 4:00 p.m.. He said that nothing further had been heard from the ship and that it was already getting dark -- this was November 22. The Coast Guard office closed at 4:00 but if anything happened the duty officer would get in touch with us.

So I briefed Ed Mainland, who was one of the officers in SOV at the time, about what had happened. Spike Dubs was still unavailable. He had been in meetings all day, I think. Around 6:00 we still hadn't heard anything so it seemed conclusive that nothing more would be happening on the matter. Ed Mainland and I left around 7:00, which was what we usually did.

A couple of hours later a duty officer for the State Department got a message from the Coast Guard. It said that the man on the ship, I don't think they even mentioned the nationality of the ship, in Boston had returned to his ship. The Department duty officer didn't understand it but he wrote it down and took it up to his superior who remembered that there had been a little flap earlier. He called Ed Mainland who asked what precisely the Coast Guard had said and got the message that "the man had returned" or "had been returned."

In any case it wasn't until a couple of hours later that Ed started to worry about this and called first the State Department duty officer and then the Coast Guard duty officer trying to find out what had happened. Again, he got essentially the same answer that the man had returned - it was over, the case was closed.

It wasn't until the next morning that the egg really hit the fan. The Fisheries people were on the phone, of course, and word started to leak out to the press about this terrible dereliction of duty and terrible injustice, which it certainly was, returning the man. As further word came in it got worse and worse. He had been beaten up by the Soviets who had taken him back.

Admiral Ellis, the Coast Guard Commander in Boston, had apparently been adamant. He wouldn't ask at any stage for advice from the State Department. Alexis Obolensky had been pleading with the Coast Guard people to get back to the State Department to find out, once he had defected, what should be done. The Coast Guard never told us that Kudirka had slipped aboard the Vigilant and hidden himself there.

Q: We were at the point of discussing Ed's period in the Office of Soviet Affairs...what year was that Ed?

KILLHAM: The end of 1970.

Q: ...around 1970. We were discussing the Kudirka case which was the case of a Soviet seaman who was trying to defect and got brought aboard a Coast Guard vessel and then was sent back to the Soviet vessel by force. It received a lot of attention in the press at the time and was also the subject of a movie, I believe.

KILLHAM: A television movie.

Q: In any case, let's go on where you left off. We were at the point of describing the Coast Guard Admiral not calling the Department of State.

KILLHAM: Well, he had his own views on this. I gather he came from the old Coast Guard school and felt that an absconding crewman was returned to the master's vessel with no questions asked. That seemed to be what was behind it. I testified at his court martial, along with a number of other people. He was allowed to retire. It became clear during the court martial that he had been quite definite about his position. He wouldn't tell the State Department that the guy had actually defected. One of the messages from his Boston headquarters to the Vigilant said that if he jumped into the water they should make every effort to let the Soviets recover him, which is directly contrary to what I had told them.

It was a cause célèbre. There was a major investigation of the whole thing, ending in the court martial. Ellis and his second in command were allowed to retire. The Captain of the Vigilant was issued a letter of reprimand, which I think was rather harsh because he just did what the Admiral insisted he do.

Q: Was Kudirka actually beaten up on the American vessel as shown in the movie?

KILLHAM: They beat him up somewhat. He was very reluctant to return and they beat him to move him along. The Americans had to stand by and watch this being done. So there was great indignation in the nation, including in the White House. Quite aside from the humanitarian aspects of it, Henry Kissinger in the NSC was concerned that it would signal the Soviets that we were blinking on issues. It seemed to suggest that when controversy came up we would bow to Soviet wishes. So the NSC was intent on demonstrating that this was not the case. This was to be seen as an isolated case and had been a mistake, etc.

There was quite a thorough investigation, which reminds me that there were some fairly ludicrous parts to it. We were working like dogs, of course, all of us in Soviet Affairs, trying to pull the facts together and present our case to the State Department and, then, the State Department case to the White House and its investigators.

Bill Macomber at the time was Deputy Under Secretary for Management. He convoked all of us who were concerned one Sunday afternoon. We were discussing strategy and going into the situation at great length. Tempers were quite high on occasion. At one point Macomber denounced me for trying to protect Ed Mainland, but making it more general and said, "I am sick and tired of these guys all protecting one another." It was rather an excruciating experience because the Redskins were playing at the time and Macomber had the TV on. He kept watching the game, erupting from time to time as he reacted to individual plays while we were trying to argue this case, which was pretty much life and death for me and a couple of the other guys. It was a bizarre scene.

Q: What happened to the Soviet seaman? I have a faint feeling that he finally got to the States years later.

KILLHAM: Yes. We found out that his name was Simas Kurdirka. Later, to our astonishment,

we discovered that his mother had been an American, who had gone with her parents to Lithuania at some stage. Since his mother had been an American citizen, and because he was illegitimate, there was no doubt about the fact that he was an American citizen. It took several years to work it out but eventually our government was able to get him out of the USSR. He has appeared occasionally on television in New York and when last I heard he was working as a janitor in New York.

Shortly afterwards, Dick Davies summoned the Soviet DCM, who may have been Chargé at the time, and insisted that this had been a terrible mistake and we wanted Kudirka back. I was present at the interview and, of course, he gave us a very snotty laugh, saying in effect, "Don't be ridiculous." This gentleman, Yuli Vorontsov, was very successful in the Soviet Foreign Service. He became a Deputy Foreign Minister and Ambassador to Paris and was the man who negotiated the end to their presence in Afghanistan. He is now their Ambassador to the United Nations. He is, let me tell you, one tough cookie. A Soviet diplomat of the old school!

Q: Is there anything else of significance in that period?

KILLHAM: I think the most significant thing from my point of view was the tremendous press interest. I had hundreds of Lithuanian-Americans parading around outside the State Department demanding my head and several rather prominent journalists were also calling for it. We managed to put that off for quite a while. But after three or four months when the furor still hadn't subsided and every little thing that happened critics would say, "See - that is another indication of the thinking in the State Department. These guys are all soft on communism and cozy with the Soviets, etc." I was offered a position in Copenhagen and thought I would be well advised to accept it, which I did.

WALLACE W. LITTELL
Distributor, *America Illustrated*
Moscow (1956-1958)

Counselor for Public Affairs
Moscow (1979-1983)

Wallace W. Littell was born in Meadville, Pennsylvania in 1922 and he was raised in Iowa. He graduated from the College of Iowa in 1947 and later received a master's degree in Russian history from the Russian Institute at Columbia University. In addition, he was a graduate fellow at Heidelberg University in Germany. Mr. Littell's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Germany. He was interviewed by Robert Martens on October 1, 1992.

Q: Then from Germany you came back to again attend the Russian Institute at Columbia University to work on your doctorate, I believe. That was, I think, in 1955- '56, the same period when I was sent to Columbia by the State Department to the Russian Institute and we first met.

LITTELL: That's right. I went from Hannover down to the embassy in Bonn in 1953 and for two years was editor of OST, Probleme (Problems of the East), which was a German-language digest of the Soviet and satellite press, and then came back on a study assignment to Columbia. I was pulled out of Columbia in April of '56, and sent to Moscow with the initial task of reestablishing the distribution of America Magazine (Amerika) which is a Russian-language, illustrated magazine in Life format.

Q: That magazine had existed in some form previously, I believe, in the war years and it had been canceled in the Stalin period.

LITTELL: That's right. It started out during the war, and was an exchange for a Soviet publication in the United States and was discontinued when the Soviets, at the height of the Stalinist period, were returning more copies as "unsold" than were allowed to be sold. This was 1953 and I went back in in '56 to reestablish distribution.

Q: How many copies were available on each side?

LITTELL: The initial distribution contract called for 50,000 copies to be distributed by SoyuzPechat the All-Union Soviet distribution agency, and 2,000 copies on a complimentary basis by the embassy. The agreement was negotiated initially with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SoyuzPechat and I dealt directly with SoyuzPechat after that with Boris Pavlovich Stepanov. I remember him as an honest rogue in the communist tradition. He had a good sense of humor and would take everything from you he could get and then some, but you could deal with him. He was later the first head of the State Committee on Radio and Television. The magazine was quite some time in coming out. It took us from June to September to negotiate the agreement and the first issue came out in October of 1956.

Q: My recollection, since I was in Moscow at the same time as a political officer in the embassy, is that the magazine was extremely popular. Any time you went on a trip and you carried America Magazine with you, everybody on the train would come around and want to borrow copies. On one occasion Ted Eliot and I were on a trip by vehicle down near Stalingrad and we had quite a number of copies -- several hundred, I suppose, in the back end of our station wagon -- and when we stopped alongside the road for some reason, a group of workers came by and as soon as they saw the America Magazine they started going to the rear of the car as fast as they could, and there was almost a small demonstration there. We were not able to control it. The popularity was so great they just went all over the place. In fact they probably had a considerable resale value, I would imagine.

LITTELL: Yes, there's no question about that. We had stories of an active black market in the magazine and were given dog-eared copies that were twice the original size because of the repeated turning of the pages. It was popular not only because it was a very good looking publication, but also because it was the only American publication, and actually the only western publication until the British worked out a similar agreement and distributed a quarterly magazine. Then the Germans also after they established diplomatic relations. The problem, of course, was that, although we had a distribution agreement, you could never police it completely.

We did establish that there were about 8 or 10 sales stands in Moscow that got it on a monthly basis, but they sold out in the first 10-15 minutes. In fact, eventually people were bribing the sales stand operators to hold a copy for them so that most of the copies were sold from under the counter. There were also copies sold in the ministries in closed kiosks that only the employees of the ministries could get to. Subscriptions were reserved entirely for the privileged few. The Soviet citizens would turn to us asking for subscriptions, and all we could do was refer them to SoyuzPechat, and of course, there were no subscriptions available there.

Q: The Soviet magazine, though, was not terribly popular, as I understand it.

LITTELL: The Soviet magazine was a little heavy on freight and ideology. They learned to be better on that, and it wasn't that bad. But, of course, it was in competition with the world market on American newsstand, whereas America Illustrated in the Soviet Union had no competition.

Q: I think the oldest joke in the Soviet Union was Pravda nyet Izvestia -- Izvestia nyet Pravda. Pravda was the major newspaper and Izvestia was the second paper in prestige and size in the Soviet Union and the one word -- Pravda means truth, Izvestia means news- - and the joke, of course, and it went back to the early 20s, was that there's no news in Pravda, and there's no truth in Izvestia. That symbolized the attitude, in my opinion at least in the Soviet Union, that people disbelieved their own propaganda to such a degree that anything from the outside was extremely welcome, and that's why people listened to western broadcasts to a great extent, why they were jammed so heavily. But perhaps we can go on into some of these other subjects shortly.

LITTELL: Yes, I think also one of the most important things is that the Soviet efforts to control distribution of a publication like this, and to attack it in the papers and so on, and run it down, were completely counterproductive because the Soviet people thought, well, if they're attacking it that much, and paying that much attention to it, it must be true. And consequently, I think, the Soviet public developed across the years a rather unrealistic picture of the United States as the promised land with no problems and everything gold and glitter.

Q: I ran into that on several occasions myself, but it's not my interview so I won't go into that.

LITTELL: Well, as I say, my first job was establishing the distribution of America Illustrated, but the area and policy offices back in Washington, were interested in broader areas of contact and public affairs than that...

Q: And there was no exchange program at that time.

LITTELL: There was no exchange program until 1958. However, we did have some exchanges which you'll recall, notably in performing arts. We had the Boston Symphony and Porgy and Bess was the first Broadway production of any type that came to the Soviet Union. And then we had opera singers like Jan Peerce, and Blanche Thebom, and they had a tremendous impact. I think Jan Peerce may have had the most personal impact because he had been a cantor in his synagogue, and he also spoke Yiddish. I remember very well, he was accompanied by Alexandrovna, who was the Intourist (KGB) control type, and she was completely frustrated

because people would come up to him in the restaurant at the Metropole, and other places, and speak to him in Yiddish, and he'd speak back to them. In some of his encores he sang songs in Yiddish, which was the first time something like that had happened in the Soviet Union.

Q: This was probably after the 20th Party Congress.

LITTELL: This was, yes.

Q: Which was in early 1956.

LITTELL: That's right. When I went in, in early '56, the news of the crimes of Stalin speech, and the 20th Party Congress, weren't really out yet, and I assumed that my going was a result of the 1955 Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers where the west had proposed exchanges and Molotov had rejected them as interference in internal affairs of the Soviet Union, and so on. But as the word came out of the 20th Party Congress, and as Khrushchev moved into power, I realized, and all of us realized, that this internal liberalization was something that resulted more from the 20th Party Congress.

Q: Of course, it was only a relative liberalization. I've seen a good deal in the press over the last few years in the United States that kind of recalls the post-20th Party Congress Khrushchev period as a sort of golden age of liberalism. But it really wasn't that. It was an extremely tightly controlled society, and only a very few areas opened up. There were no tourists whatsoever. Well, there might have been a few American communists, for example, or a few businessmen buying furs. But there was no real tourism in the Soviet Union even in those days.

LITTELL: No, that's very true. The Soviet Union we knew in those days was tightly controlled, and our access to the Soviet people was minimal, except we took those trips, and had some interesting talks with individuals on the trains. And then, of course too, the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution came along in '56 and that slowed things down considerably.

Q: Put a damper on right away, and then that was also followed by the so-called anti-party group affair the following summer, which put a damper on internally. So whatever liberalization was going on was kind of by fits and starts, and you would get a period where it would open up a bit, and would close down. So its been a very long, slow process to where we are today.

LITTELL: That's very true. I was in and out of the Soviet Union across the years, but then went back again from '79 to '83 as Counselor for Public Affairs and the contrast -- and this, of course, was before the current developments -- but the contrast in access to people was really tremendous. I had contacts with literally all of the Soviet cultural intelligentsia, and got to know them very well in the '79 to '83 period.

Q: Why don't we go on to some of the other areas that you were speaking of?

LITTELL: I think, realistically, that across the years the Voice of America, which continued during the Stalinist period, and despite jamming, was accessible to the people in the period we were there, and across the entire period; I think the Voice of America probably had the broadest

impact of any of our programs across the long scope of time. It was jammed in urban areas, as we know very well, but it did get through in the countryside and occasionally you could get it in Moscow in the vernacular languages. They broadcast in 16 Soviet languages plus English. The English was not jammed; there was spill-over jamming, but it was not jammed systematically and consistently. And this is where what is known as “the major Soviet news network” played in, “OBS, Odna babyshlha slkazala. One old grandmother told another;” i.e., word of mouth, played in, because people, when they got together among friends, would pass on what they’d heard on the Voice of America, or on other foreign radio. So I think it had a tremendous impact. And then the music programs among the youth; I’ve come to appreciate what they meant. All of the young Soviet leaders, except in the Komsomol, but maybe in the Komsomol too, as they moved on; and the creative intelligentsia, people like Vassily Aksyonov, the author, who is now in the United States of course, but also Andrey Voznesensky and Bulat Okudzhava, and the writers and poets and so on; jazz was really important to them. It was free expression. And popular music became important too. So I think the Music U.S.A. programs were important in that way.

Q: Some of the other stations were BBC, and of course Radio Free Europe which was much more jammed, much more political...

LITTELL: Yes, Radio Liberty...

Q: Radio Liberty, that’s right.

LITTELL: Radio Liberty it was called in the Soviet Union. Radio Free Europe broadcast in Eastern European languages. That’s very true, BBC was actively listened to, and had an excellent program. And Radio Liberty across the years, and RFE, have done tremendous research as well as their programming to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

I mentioned Aksyonov. I had an interesting conversation with him before he left the country and his citizenship was lifted. I asked him at one point what he thought had been the most important elements in the liberalization in the ‘50s and on into the ‘60s at the time when the relations were relaxing more and picking up, and he cited the first World Youth Festival in Moscow, which took place while we were there.

Q: It was actually the Sixth World Youth Festival.

LITTELL: The first one in Moscow.

Q: I attended it.

LITTELL: Yes, so did I. He said that was very important because it was meant to be a communist triumph, but actually what it did was introduce the Soviet youth to jazz and jeans, and to the outside world. And then he listed our American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959 as a second element that had a tremendous impact.

Q: That was the first such exhibition. It was a total breakthrough. That’s the one that Nixon attended and had the famous kitchen debate with Khrushchev.

LITTELL: Yes, the kitchen debate. Well, I was Director of policy and research for that exhibition so I spent a year on it, and was there during the exhibition, and actually tagged along with Nixon and Khrushchev on what was called the “kitchen debate”, which actually began in the art exhibit -- the Museum of Modern Art Exhibit- -and carried on through the exhibition and then bogged down in the kitchen of the model home because there were so many people crowding around that they couldn’t get out to proceed further.

Aksyonov was also very positive on Khrushchev’s exposé of the crimes of Stalin and so on, understandably because it resulted in the release of both of his parents from labor camps; his mother Eugenia Ginzburg, the author, and his father, who was a prominent party man down in Kharkov. He was close to Khrushchev’s son; I met Khrushchev’s son, Sergei at Aksyonov’s dacha on a number of occasions, because Aksyonov felt that Khrushchev had rescued his parents, along with a lot of other people who were in the camps.

Q: The meetings with Aksyonov was in your second tour, not the first.

LITTELL: That’s right. This was the ‘79 to ‘83 period; in the ‘56 to ‘58 period we just met permitted types and Foreign Office and Ministry of Culture people.

Q: Except on trips where you could talk to people more or less by accident.

LITTELL: Yes. We had that one trip which was particularly interesting down in the southwest frontier, of course.

I think on the other cultural items of that period, along with some of those that I’ve mentioned, the Van Cliburn success in the Tchaikovsky competition was sort of a breakthrough. It was the first time that an American had won the Tchaikovsky competition, or a westerner, as far as that’s concerned, and it had a big impact on the young people. And I think they sort of pulled it off with their wild applause every time he played and appeared. That was an interesting development while we were there.

To return to Aksyonov, and the American National Exhibition, as you mentioned, it was the first time we did something like that and it was a large and very varied, and in retrospect, impressive exhibit. It had a lot of items on display. There was not only the Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome, which was the first one seen in Europe to say nothing of the Soviet Union, but also in the dome Charlie Eames, the noted designer, did a multi-screen film which was on the United States -- or American life -- which was very impressive. IBM had their Ramac computers there; these were the first computers the Soviets had seen and they were programmed so people could ask them questions about the United States, and then in 400ths of a millisecond the printers would start printing out the answer to their question, and they could take it with them as a souvenir. “The Family of Man” exhibit, in the presence of Steichen, the photographer, and Carl Sandburg, the poet, his brother-in-law, was an interesting and important exhibit. Then the Museum of Modern Art did an excellent exhibit of modern art and sculpture, which was the first modern art and sculpture most Soviets had seen. There were fashion shows complete with music, and a beauty parlor, and all sorts of consumer goods, and cars, and the model American home, and

voting booths. The Soviets could go in and vote on which items in the exhibit they liked particularly. I think the guides probably had the greatest impact. We had 79 young Americans who were fluent in Russian. These were the first Americans most Soviets had encountered and were able to talk to, and ask them questions. They were an outstanding group; in fact, one of them was recently Assistant Secretary of State for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Curt Kamman. And many of them have been prominent in academic and government roles. The guides, I think, of the items in the exhibit, including the traveling thematic exhibits we've run since in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have been the single most important aspect. We've carried them on through the exhibits across the years. These exhibits have been to as many as six Soviet cities on a tour.

One of them that I particularly was impressed with, was the graphic arts exhibit. I was at the opening down in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, in 1964. It not only showed modern art, but also had a studio in which people were shown how to silk screen, which is a very good method of reproducing things, and any method of reproduction of information is important to the Soviet people.

Q: We've gotten over a little bit into -- and that's fine -- into the period after you left in 1958. The exhibit was in '59. The reason I mention this is that another major event occurred about this time already in '58, but the effects were really coming in more in '59, and after, and that was the signing and beginning of implementation of the first exchange agreement, and it was followed, of course, by a number of others which covered quite a number of areas. It covered cultural exchanges, information exchanges, scientific exchanges, student exchanges, exhibits, and some economic exchanges, and so on. You might want to mention a few words about your experiences with the implementation of this, the slow struggle to widen the contacts. My recollection, since I was also involved in the exchange program in those early years, was that the Soviets were to a great extent interested in the exchange program for scientific exchanges, and getting into fields that were useful to the development of their economy, and perhaps even on the military side, although we tried to limit that. Another point, I guess I've gotten into this partly because of something you said, was that in those early days it was very hard to get our people outside of Moscow and Leningrad. There was a tendency to limit the visits of Americans to the Soviet Union to just two or three cities, and the Soviets on the other hand were pretty much welcome throughout the United States, except that we began to limit them too in order to try to pry greater access loose. Do you want to comment on some of these things?

LITTELL: Well, this is sort of the paradox, I guess. We, who were pushing freedom and so on, were forced into their patterns, and forced to place things on a reciprocity basis. If they were going to control us, we had to control them, so that we could expand the number of cities we could get to, or the number of programs we could do. You probably recall, of course the exchange agreement was negotiated in Washington, but we backstopped it from Moscow, and were involved in that way, and then the first students came in in the fall of 1958, and four of our guides at the 1959 Exhibition actually were first year exchange students.

Q: I might throw in here that among that first group of Soviet students was Alexander Yakovlev who many, many years later became one of the key advisers in setting up Perestroika, and has played a very prominent role in the liberalization that occurred at great speed in the late 1980s

and early '90s. And another student of that period was a fellow named Oleg Kulugin, who was in the KGB, and later became a major general but broke with the KGB, and denounced it, and has played a pretty strong role as well in the liberalization of the Soviet society. So one can look back on some of the effects now after all these years that were really even more than we expected, I suppose.

LITTELL: That's very true. I had an encounter across the years too with one of the graduate exchange students, Lev Skvortsov, who studied at Columbia and then was the adviser and right-hand man to Demichev, the Minister of Culture whom I escorted on his tour of the United States, and then saw frequently again during my time in Moscow. I saw him last at the CSCE meeting in Hungary, in Budapest, in 1985. This was the big cultural CSCE conference. Now Skvortsov, I think, was never quite the liberal that Yakovlev, or maybe even Kalugin developed into. But he was very useful in our contacts with Demichev because he understood the United States, and you could put things across to Demichev through Skvortsov that way. I remember one of the funniest examples of that though was on a tour that Demichev made here in the United States. We went up to New York to the opening of a Soviet exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum, and as we came into the exhibit in Demichev's entourage, his security man went out ahead as he would in any crowded situation in the Soviet Union, pushing people bodily out of the way, which Americans don't take to too well, and he pushed a young woman who thought he was a masher or something, and started beating him over the head with her handbag. He shoved her up against the wall, and looked around with a look of astonishment on his face, and Skvortsov ran up and said, "Look comrade, we don't do this in the United States. These Americans don't understand." So this situation with him being taken for a masher or mugger was defused.

I think these programs under the agreement, the educational exchanges, were certainly among the most important, if not the most important. I was in Moscow, of course, and was renegotiating the cultural agreement when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, and we discontinued the negotiations. But the embassy, as well as the academic community, lobbied very actively when we were cutting off the other exchanges in retaliation for the invasion of Afghanistan, to keep the educational exchanges going, because it was such a problem of building up the infrastructure among the universities across the years, that if you cut it off, its not like performing arts where you could pick up again the next day. It would be years before you could build it up again, so the educational exchanges were preserved, whereas other exchanges were discontinued at that time, as you'll recall.

There were some other exchanges that I was involved with before and after the agreement, which we had high hopes for but which didn't prove to be as successful as anticipated, and these were in the area of films. The Hollywood film producers for a time came to the Moscow Film Festival but they learned fairly rapidly that there was no commercial benefit in it. The Soviets weren't willing to pay the prices for American films they could get anyplace else in the world. And also there was the problem of pirating of films; showing them without paying fees or copyrights, and so on. So that program diminished rather rapidly. The interest in films and the efforts we made under the agreement to exchange documentary films never really took off because the films the Soviets sent us were either propagandistic or rather boring, and we could never establish that they showed ours. So that didn't pan out too well either.

Books is another area. The American book publishers came to the Moscow Book Fair across the years, and we always had this resultant publicity about censorship, which was interesting. But once again the only books the Soviets bought, or allowed to be bought, were the scientific technological books, and the book publishers, who were quite commercially minded, learned they didn't have to come to the Book Fair to sell the scientific technological books. So that fell off.

Radio and television really never got started for the same reason as the films. The Soviet products tended to be either loaded with propaganda freight, or boring, and we could never establish that they were using ours the way they were supposed to.

Q: Some of the things you've touched on there reminds me of the difficulties in dealing with exchanges with the Soviet Union were compounded by the fact that you obviously had a commercial interest on the side of many American sponsors; not all, the universities, of course, were different. And the fact that on the Soviet side you had a very strong interest in emphasizing scientific and prestigious events. In some of this the Soviets had a great deal to offer. I'm thinking here particularly the performing arts where the great Soviet productions like the Bolshoi Ballet, and the Kirov Ballet, and others, the Moiseyev dancers, and so on, came to the United States. And, of course, the interest on the side of the American entrepreneur sponsoring this, often Sol Hurok was to get the Soviet production into as many cities as possible to make as big a profit from it as possible. And, of course, there was a great interest on the part of American cities throughout the country to receive these events, and they did get very warm receptions, and rightly so. The other side of the coin was that our productions going to the Soviet Union were being sort of sealed off, as I said before, to certain cities. So we had a great deal of difficulty in trying to some degree to limit the Soviet access to the United States, not for its own sake, but for the sake of trying to wedge out of them some wider visitations in the Soviet Union of the big American artistic companies.

LITTELL: Yes, the American performances were enthusiastically received by those who could get to them in the Soviet Union, but the tickets were paid for in rubles, which could not be exported from the Soviet Union, nor converted. So what it amounted to was the Soviets were making a lot of dollars in the United States, and we were paying out dollars to take American groups to the Soviet Union. So they were benefitting both ways, although I do think, despite the great success that the Soviet performing arts groups had in the United States, once again they were in competition with all of the world; whereas American groups in the Soviet Union were quite unique, and were especially popular for that reason.

Q: It's very hard for anyone that was not there in those years; if you're going back to the '50s, to realize to what degree that was a closed society, particularly in Moscow. You could not talk to anyone. Everyone was afraid to speak. The surveillance -- not just on the embassy people -- but on all Americans, or all foreigners, was very close and often oppressive. Of course, that became a different problem later on when great numbers of people began to go as tourism was allowed to take place, and as more exchange groups, both informal and formal, began to take place. The KGB just couldn't cover it all in the same way they once did, although they certainly continued to try. But it was a terribly closed situation. I remember going in and feeling I'm going into a totally different world -- this was in 1956, before anything opened up. It's hard to recall that

climate anymore.

LITTELL: Yes. Well, I remember too that when you would fly out from the Soviet Union on leave, or on consultation in Washington or wherever, when you crossed the border of the Soviet Union you could feel literally a physical weight lift from your shoulders.

Q: Yes, I remember the feeling too.

LITTELL: It was a psychological problem too because you didn't want to get a Soviet citizen with whom you were friendly in trouble. If you got too friendly with a Soviet, you had to leave it up to his or her judgment but you were always worried that, out of loyalty, they would get themselves in trouble. And they could get themselves in real trouble in those days. They could wind up in the camps for associating with Americans and being accused of passing on information to them.

Q: Even on trips where you did find much more of an opportunity to speak to people, and the awareness of the control system was not as great in the other regions. Perhaps it was in a few of the large cities like Leningrad and Kiev, but when you really got out in the boondocks so to speak, no. But even there I think we all tried to have one conversation only with people, and you never went back because they always had the excuse that they were called in by the KGB, and they would be called in as a result of the conversation, of saying, "Well this is something that just happened because I was thrown in with this individual;" and they could beg off. But if they were involved in subsequent conversations they really would be in deep trouble.

LITTELL: That's very true, and then another aspect for us traveling as Americans; we always traveled together for protection, but in the Intourist hotels those friendly Soviets who sat at your table were obviously KGB. They weren't valid Soviets, and you could have a conversation with them but you always had to be a little wary of that too. But you did encounter some "Nasto Yashchii," real genuine Soviet people, and those instances you remember, and treasure.

Q: Could we go further now into the differences between the two periods, the 1950s when you were there the first time, and then some 25 years later when you went back the second time? Maybe beginning on the theme of to what extent had the embassy grown, to what extent were there differences in the housing and facilities that people had in the embassy, and different conditions of life and perhaps beyond that you could get into some comments on the fairly large number of ambassadors that you worked for over those years. And then we might go further into some of the people you knew at a later period. We haven't got into that quite as extensively.

LITTELL: Well, as we've indicated in our discussions on difficulties of having contacts with the Soviet people, the difference between the '50s and the late '70s-early '80s, was almost like night and day. So far as the physical situation is concerned, when I came into Moscow in 1956 of course, I was establishing a new office, and a new home and so on. The embassy was much smaller, had much less in the way of facilities...

Q: I might interject here, since I was affected by this personally being a bachelor, there was no housing whatsoever outside the chancery building, with the one exception of the ambassador's

residence at Spaso House. And, in fact, I was called in earlier because a bachelor was PNGed -- declared persona non grata -- and I came in to take his place because I was a bachelor trained in Russian affairs, and otherwise no one lived outside the embassy except you. You're the one exception.

LITTELL: That's right. Well, when I came in in '56 I spent -- I forget how many weeks, but it was too many -- in a Soviet hotel, the Leningradskaya, which was not one of the better hotels even, and when my family came we were there in a single room, my wife and two small children and myself, and trying to feed the children in the dining room was an impossibility. The service was not fast to say the least, and with children it was really impossible. We finally got a hot plate and settled on that for our meals. But we moved then into a cold water flat on Khoklovskii Peraylok, actually not too far from the Kremlin, in the center of the city. It was in an area where they had a few foreigners. Our next door neighbor was Ralph Parker, the British defector who wrote all the Korean germ warfare propaganda, and every time I went to work he'd come over and try to get my wife to come have tea with him. I think he wanted some English-speaking company, so that was undoubtedly part of it too. And then there was an American black named Robinson who had come over years ago, who lived there too. Otherwise our neighbors were all Soviets, and naively, undoubtedly, when we moved there we thought we would be able to make friends with our Soviet neighbors. As a matter of fact, the children adopted our children and on a rainy day our house would be full of Soviet children. But the parents would never come in, they'd not even come to pick up the child. They'd send an older child to get them, and although we had friendly, nodding, relationships, we had no real contacts with them.

Eventually then the diplomatic housing areas were established and we moved into one of the first ones, the one out toward the Prospekt Mira...Permanent exhibition.

Q: Yes, I went into that later, 1958, I believe.

LITTELL: Yes, and we moved in, and as you recall the central section of the building were Americans and French, and then one wing was Indians and Third World, and the other wing was the East Germans, Albanians, and Chinese and so on. We were all in the same project, but we didn't have too much to do with each other. But the housing was obviously much better than our first place.

When I went back in 1979, of course, I was Counselor for Press and Culture, so I was in the north wing of the embassy in one of the bigger apartments, along with the Political Counselor and the DCM, and the Counselor for Agriculture. The embassy was much bigger. We had people in seven or eight diplomatic projects out around the city; there were two on Kutuzovskii Prospekt, three on Leninsky Prospekt, and it was a much, much larger embassy. I was a one-man staff in 1956, of course, starting up the Press and Cultural Section. When I was Counselor for Press and Culture, '79 to '83, I had 16 members in Moscow, two in Leningrad, and one in Kiev.

Q: So you had gone almost from 1 to 20 in size.

LITTELL: Yes, in size, and of course the program, the heart of which was the cultural exchanges program, was broader than that too because, as you know, we monitored the Voice of America

and gave guidance to it. We had the various informational operations, including America Magazine and a cultural bulletin. We had liaison with Soviet information organizations as well, and tried sometimes successfully to exchange something like films or TV programs with them. So it was a much bigger operation until Afghanistan came along at least, which was fairly early in my second stay.

I did have a number of ambassadors across the years. In the early period the two that you had, Chip Bohlen and Tommy Thompson, who were old Soviet experts from the original group of American- Soviet experts among the Foreign Service officers. There was no thought other than Harriman, I guess, of a political appointee ambassador in those days. But in the '79 to '83 period, when I first came, Mac Toon was ambassador, and of course he was an old timer in Soviet and Eastern European affairs.

Q: A career officer, yes.

LITTELL: A career officer; he had been my ambassador in Yugoslavia. He was a very knowledgeable, somewhat acerbic personality, but I got along with all the ambassadors. I guess Chip Bohlen in '56 was a little uneasy about having somebody from the United States Information Agency join his staff, even though I was transferred to the State Department for the assignment. He was primarily interested in political reporting, and political developments, and I think his feeling was that, at best, I wouldn't cause any trouble and, at worst, I might cause him considerable problems. As a matter of fact, when he left, he congratulated me on not screwing up, and not causing any problems. That was about the nicest thing he had to say, although I liked him very much, and liked his wife as well, and have seen the daughters off and on since.

Q: He was very cautious on other things too though, and with some reason, given the fact that he went there, I guess, just after the declaration of persona non grata of his friend, George Kennan. I remember that no one was allowed to drive in the embassy; I think there was one exception, because there had been an accident previously, and the Soviets had come down very hard and tried to set up a kind of political incident out of this. So the result was that because of the fear of Soviet retaliation, no one was allowed to drive. We had to go by chauffeured car, or walk, or take the subway.

LITTELL: Yes. You may remember, however, I was one of the first of the embassy officers to get a Soviet driver's license. I bought a Pobeda, which looked like every other Soviet taxicab, to get around in. The exam was very tough. You had to know a lot about how to repair an engine in the car, and all sorts of things, as well as a test on all the traffic rules and regulations in order to get it, and I felt fortunate to get the license and have the car. Incidentally, referring to my old friend Boris Pavlovich Stepanov, the head of SoyuzPechat, and his sense of humor, I took a long trip fairly early checking on the distribution of America Magazine in cities around the southern Soviet Union including Kharkov, Kiev, KostovnaDonu and Dnepropetrovsk, and I found out to my surprise that the SoyuzPechat in these cities all said they wanted more of the magazine. They said they couldn't get enough of them, and by then we were beginning to get returns of "unsold" copies up in Moscow. It was one of the rare examples of lack of coordination in that sort of thing that I found. When I came back and reported this to Stepanov and gave him the figures on what so- and-so had said, he turned to Parasov, his deputy, and said, "We've got to take that car away

from him, he's getting around too much!"

Q: What about some of the other ambassadors then?

LITTELL: Tommy Thompson, of course, when he came to Moscow, had come from Vienna where there was a good sized USIS operation, and he had had recent experience with it, and was much more relaxed about my situation. And I think he understood it much better than Bohlen did. So I had an easier time with him than I did with Bohlen, although I had no real problems with Bohlen.

Mac Toon, I had served with in Yugoslavia, and he was the ambassador in Moscow when I came in 1979. As we've said, he was an old timer, and an expert on the Soviet Union of his generation comparable to Bohlen and Thompson in their generation. So we got along extremely well. This was in the period before Afghanistan. He left then and there was a period with a Chargé D'Affaires, Mark Garrison, who was a very able, knowledgeable, Soviet specialist -- a young guy.

And then Ambassador Watson came in -- of the IBM Watsons -- as a political appointee. Now he had some background in the Soviet Union in that he had been a pilot -- in fact, the personal pilot for the American General who was the liaison with the Soviets at the time of the World War II airlift, which ran over Great Falls, Montana, Seward AFB in Alaska, Anchorage, on to the Soviet far east, and then to Moscow.

Q: During World War II, yes.

LITTELL: Right, delivering planes during World War II, and he came back with high hopes of building on this to improve relations with the Soviet Union, but of course, Afghanistan came along right away. He was a good ambassador, I would say, I'm sure in contrast to many political appointees. He did not think he knew everything about U.S.-Soviet affairs, so he relied heavily on his staff -- intelligently on his staff. He and Mrs. Watson were very good for staff morale in this time of the post-Afghanistan period when things tightened up and contacts were cut off to a considerable extent. They did a lot of things at Spaso for the staff, and I think they were excellent in that way.

After he left Jack Matlock, who has just concluded his tour as ambassador there, was Chargé D'Affaires for some months, and then Ambassador Art Hartman came in. Art Hartman was a European specialist, but not a Soviet specialist.

Q: Basically a western European specialist, and had been Assistant Secretary though.

LITTELL: That's right. But once again, he was an intelligent man who relied on his staff. He was a quick learner too. I must say, he and his wife were really excellent for staff morale in a difficult period, and I have a lot of respect and affection for the Hartmans.

On the contrasts, I think for me the greatest contrast was the personal contacts I had. Even in the post-Afghanistan period the creative intelligentsia, the theater directors like Lyubimov, writers

and poets like Aksyonov, before he left the Soviet Union, Bella Akhmadulina, Andrey Voznesensky, Yevtu Shenko, these people were all accessible, and I got to know them very well, particularly Bella Akhmadulina, and I spent a lot of time at her dacha with creative intelligentsia from all areas of the Soviet Union when they came into Moscow, but particularly those in Moscow. I spent a good bit of time at Voznesensky's dacha too and was very fond of him. One of the most interesting things was the contact that I had through Bella Akhmadulina with the Pasternaks and the time I spent in Pasternak's dacha, which his daughter-in-law, Bella, and others were trying to preserve as a museum and memorial to him.

Q: Boris Pasternak was deceased.

LITTELL: He was deceased. He was buried, of course, in the little cemetery looking right across to his dacha. At that point his friends, and followers, were trying to get the Pasternak dacha preserved as a museum to him. There was a lot of Pasternakian memorabilia there, including the piano that Richter, the night that Pasternak died, played all night in tribute to him.

Q: I knew Richter, when he came to the United States.

LITTELL: So I got to know them well, and actually played a small role, I think, in helping preserve the dacha. The Party wanted to turn it over to some of their top Party people, and I brought in all the western ambassadors that I could round up, and I knew a number of them; there were four or five of them who had served with us in the '50s...

Q: In junior roles then probably.

LITTELL: Giovanni Migliolo, who was the Italian ambassador, and there were a number of others, all came out and put in a good word for the preservation of the dacha. And I was very much involved in things going on at the Taganka in the period when Lyubimov was struggling most actively to try to get things produced there, and I sort of lived the disappointments, and the triumphs, along with him. So it was for me a very rewarding time in a period when our program was cut back substantially because of Afghanistan. I had more time to meet and talk with, and get to know, these people very well. And, of course, I still see Aksyonov in Washington, and see Bella and others when they come. It was a very rewarding period for me in that way.

Q: And they were able to continue even after Afghanistan to have these contacts without too much retribution. Did they ever voice any fears to you about maintaining contact?

LITTELL: Well, the KGB was omnipresent, and they'd even show up at the dachas occasionally too, I think, try to intimidate. But by that time the well-known -- internationally known -- people felt safe enough that they weren't going to be sent off to Siberia, and although Sakharov, of course, was banished, it was not Siberia. So they did, they came to our apartment and to Spaso House regularly.

Q: Very different from the early period.

LITTELL: It was entirely different. They would even come to my apartment in the embassy for a dinner, or a reception, with a written invitation, and they'd show it to the Soviet militia guards

down there at the entrance. I'd always have a staff member, or be down there myself, to escort them through, but they would come. And I was invited to their apartments, and dachas regularly.

Q: Did you ever get intimations of hope on the kind of major changes that took place later in the Gorbachev period? Back then did people see it at all, that there might be major change coming down the road in five-ten-fifteen years?

LITTELL: They all believed in change, but like those of us who served there, thought of it as long-term change. I think they, as well as we, thought the system wasn't viable either as a system for dealing with human beings, or as a viable economic or political system. But none of them in their wildest dreams, I think, thought it was going to come this rapidly, as none of us did. I can remember saying to people who asked me, having served elsewhere in Eastern Europe, could this change happen in the Soviet Union? And I remember saying, if they got a leader who would lead them to a counterpart to the Prague Spring as Dubcek did in Czechoslovakia, maybe it could happen. But the thing that astounded me, and I never would have predicted would happen, was that the Party would give up its leading role, and vote itself out of existence! That I never foresaw, and I'm sure none of them did. They had great hopes for the future, and the hopes were frequently dashed. They worked very hard to support each other and to help each other. I remember when Giorgi Vladimov was threatened with being sent back to the camps, having been there of course a good bit of time; there was a lot of behind the scenes support for him, not only at the dachas, but people approaching any contacts they had to try to help him out, including in the KGB. Eventually he was expelled to the west.

Q: How much were there sort of watertight compartments between groups? For example, you're dealing primarily with the creative intelligentsia who obviously did an awful lot to help each other out. Did you feel that there were sort of cross-channels to people in the economic field, in the political field, at all? Of course, the Party was much more dominant in those other areas, but was there a sense of some areas of liberalization, and some areas where one wanted to assist people in areas other than your sort of professional colleagues?

LITTELL: Yes. There were trusted friends, and when I mean trusted friends, it was a small circle. The Soviets understandably, when they are in a group, know everybody there, and they trust everybody there.

Q: Or they know who not to trust.

LITTELL: And they know very well who not to trust. And occasionally if a member of the group fell by the wayside, it was really a great blow to them. I remember the Metropole incident. This was a publication that a group of them put out -- Aksyonov was particularly active in it, but Bella Akhmadulina and Andrey Voznesensky contributed to it. This was an unauthorized publication put out by Soviet writers and poets and got a lot of attention, of course, in the Soviet Union as well as abroad. It was published in Germany and in the United States initially and has never been published in the Soviet Union. It's the thing that really got Aksyonov put under such pressure that he left and his citizenship was revoked. One of these people -- one of the contributors sort of backtracked -- and there was much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth about that, and examination of why, and why they could have trusted him, and so on, which was quite

interesting. They had friends in other areas of Soviet life stretching into the government -- trusted people in the government. Not trusted completely maybe, but substantially, and these people would turn up at the dachas and hear some very sensitive conversations.

Q: Would some of these be at the Party Central Committee, or Politburo level?

LITTELL: Well, Lyubimov, and others, had contacts in the Central Committee. As a matter of fact Andropov was a protector of Lyubimov. They had these contacts, but these people never turned up at the dachas. The people who turned up out at the dachas on the weekends for these long discussions of how they were going to do this or that, or say this or that, or say to the world, were lower level people. But some in the government and in other areas of life, including sports and all areas of culture, of course...

Q: Including the cultural bureaucracy...the people in the Ministry of Culture, or radio- television committee, that sort of thing, Pravda, Izvestia.

LITTELL: Now, Voznesensky's wife, Zoya Boguslauskaya, was a Party member, and also was influential in the Writer's Union. She was not really accepted into the most sensitive situations, but everybody knew she was looking out for Andrey's best interests, and for the best interests of his friends who were people in the inner circles of the cultural intelligentsia, so you had that sort of thing.

Q: There was probably some effort to protect her by not bringing her into some of the more sensitive things that she would be in a position to reveal when she talked to others, or be put under any kind of indirect pressure.

LITTELL: I'm sure that was part of it although the strongest part, I think, was that she was a Party member and therefore she was not considered to be completely trustworthy.

Q: Are there any other comments on the difference between the periods?

LITTELL: Well, of course, as far as the program was concerned, the exchanges program was the heart of my program operation with the big staff in the '79 to '83 period. And when the bulk of the exchanges were discontinued because of Afghanistan, there was considerable talk about decreasing the staff. And as a matter of fact, the officer in Kiev and one of the officers in Leningrad were cut and a couple slots on my staff in Moscow, but we were able to do enough contact work and reporting, and things like the more extensive monitoring of VOA and that type of thing, so that we were able to preserve the staff. I think there was a feeling too, if you cut out the exchanges staff it was going to take you a long time to build up the contacts in the universities again. It's a good training assignment for a young officer, and if you cut those training slots out, what are you going to do when relations are normalized again?

Q: Yes, as they indeed were.

LITTELL: So the staff for the most part, was preserved. As far as the exchanges program was concerned, I had sort of a personal interest in trying to get some true cultural exchanges into the

Soviet Union. We did succeed briefly in getting students into the Bolshoi Ballet. We had a young woman -- with whom I'm still in touch -- who studied at the Bolshoi. She was from Ballets West. We had two at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, a singer and a string instrument student; and we had a student at Gatis in literature, particularly drama. This is the theater school. So we did have some success there. I think that it was a very good training ground for American students, even though some of them came to feel that they'd have been better off staying at their home university for that year than going abroad so far as completing their doctorates was concerned, and in getting on in their academic career. I think the ones who really thought about it deeply, and who had the experience, felt it was a very valuable experience. And as you've indicated, the Soviet students certainly benefitted by it.

Q: At least some did.

LITTELL: Right.

Q: Let me ask, perhaps in concluding this Russian part, unless you have anything more to say, that looking back philosophically, you've been a witness to enormous change over a period of four decades basically, to what degree do you think the exchange program contributed to the course of developments -- the liberalization of Soviet society, the opening up, and any comments you might have on that process?

LITTELL: There's no question in my mind but what our exchanges across the years, and our information operations, played a role in this. However, I realistically think it was things like the secret speech and the...

Q: ...internal developments.

LITTELL: The internal developments which then were supplemented by the things we did. It enabled people to participate in the exchanges, or to come and see an American exhibit, or perhaps if they were fortunate, get to an American concert, or have contact with a guide at an exhibit, and talk to him or her. This type of thing, I think, was important and it opened their eyes very much to, not only what was going on in the United States and the western world, but also to how strongly their internal situation contrasted, and how unfavorably it contrasted with the situation in the United States and the west, which built more internal pressures for change. I think too, a point that I've made before, the Soviet effort to control these programs once they had admitted them, was completely counterproductive, because once they had admitted them to the Soviet Union, even though you couldn't get a ticket maybe, or couldn't get to something, or couldn't subscribe to a publication, it was legal. Therefore you used every avenue possible to get access to it, and they weren't afraid to come to American things the way they were in the '50s, in our day there together. And also it was counterproductive, because if the Soviets tried to control it as much as they did, and limit it to tried and true Party members or trustworthy people, then it must be a true picture, there must be something to it. The Soviet people came out with a more positive picture of the United States and the west than would have been the case otherwise.

Q: I agree with all of those points. I always felt that even back in the '50s there was a general realization that the Soviet Union was on the wrong track on the part of the people. There was

almost total disbelief, and I saw that in incident after incident. It was very visible in the joke system in which you could never hear a sex joke in the Soviet Union because they weren't sexy enough. The jokes were all highly political, and kind of struck at the heart of the system but you could release those deeply felt, but covered up feelings, through jokes that you could not do otherwise.

Another aspect of that period, I think, was that there was a great sense of hopelessness, and a feeling of being out of it. The system would always be there. The controllers were omnipresent, and everlasting. One of the things I think that the program of exchanges and information, and all this, helped to do -- and I have to repeat, helped -- was that it contributed to a gradual increase in courage in which people felt that there was some kind of outside contact, and therefore you were not as isolated. That the society was gradually being pried open by degrees, little by little, and I don't mean pried open from outside, and it was being pried open in multiple ways, mostly internal, but with this outside factor coming into play as well. I think one of the great contributions of this program over the years was, not just what it did in respect to the thoughts of individuals, because that was always there to some degree, it became more overt later on, but was in the allowance by the system of doing more, of having contacts abroad. And every little step along this way prepared the ground for more steps. Everybody would say, well if he can do such and such, why can't I do it? Even a Party official who has not changed much, can make a trip, why can't I have travel abroad? Or if we're allowed to go see this kind of event, why can't we see another kind of event, and so on and so on, all gradually building up drop by drop. In fact one always had to be careful not to push too hard. If it went too fast, then you would cause the Party to crack down, but it was always a matter of gradualism, of seeing what the traffic would bear, but not too much beyond it. I don't mean this was us, the outside world doing this, but it was within the system, and primarily within the system that this was going on, but all this kind of contributed together to the flow of events that has since taken place.

LITTELL: Another point we've discussed on occasion that I ran into in my Soviet and Eastern European assignments, and you did too, was an inability on our part, and on the part of our ambassadors and others, and maybe the State Department too on occasion, to believe what we were hearing. I can recall on occasion an ambassador in a staff meeting saying, "We don't really know what these people are thinking. We really don't know at all what these people are thinking." I took that as sort of a defeatist kind of thinking because when you get out and do talk to people, and get around the country, you found it hard to believe sometimes that these people had any faith whatsoever in their society, and in all this garbage that was being shoved at them. As it turns out that was largely true. I used to argue this; I can recall in staff meetings arguing it, although I must say I have been surprised at how fast the thing collapsed once the artificial controls that held it together were removed.

Q: I must say I saw the same thing in Indonesia though where the totalitarian system which seemed to be omnipresent there too, and there was a tremendous sense of fear and terror. Maybe even greater than in the Soviet Union. When it suddenly collapsed, it collapsed so fast -- it did take two or three months for people to adjust, but within six months people had sort of thrown off these intellectual fetters that they had on them before, and were talking like sensible human beings openly again.

LITTELL: Of course they weren't saddled with it as long as the Soviets. But in the Soviet Union, if you could ever indoctrinate an individual in such a system, they certainly had the time to do it. Even Eastern Europe didn't have that much time, but they weren't successful anywhere in the long run.

Q: It didn't succeed. I think I saw that in the '50s, and I think you did, and others, although I remember that people that were higher up in the embassy and therefore traveled less, tended to be more mesmerized by the system.

LITTELL: The people they saw were the top Soviets, and what they saw was the show the Party put on, and we peons got out and traveled around and talked occasionally to a Nasto Yashchii Chelovek, a real valid Soviet citizen who told us what he or she was thinking.

Q: I remember coming back from trips and you'd have all these experiences where you saw the degree of disbelief, and I would sit down -- and I had to read the Soviet press every day and report on it and most of the reporting was based on the press because that was the only source for real political information -- and you would do that, and about two or three weeks later you would be saying this is two different worlds, and I'm not sure I really experienced those things that happened out there. Then you'd become so filled with this propaganda view, and then you'd go out on a trip again, and after you went out there you couldn't believe that the system was working the way it was in Moscow. Then you would start talking to people, and seeing how the diversity under the surface was really much greater than it appeared from just looking at the system, or the propaganda.

LITTELL: The Moscow scene was a trap too in that you were not only reading the press, and focusing really too much on little signs in the press, and little things that slipped out, and talking about that in staff meetings, and rarely talking about what people saw and encountered on trips. But also the diplomatic cocktail party gossip was all about what was read between the lines in the press or rumors, often planted, about what was going on.

ROBERT J. MARTENS
Political Officer
Moscow (1956-1958)

Robert J. Martens was born in Missouri in 1925. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California and served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1946. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Italy, the Soviet Union, Indonesia, Burma, Romania, and Sweden. Mr. Martens was interviewed in September 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: After Salzburg you went to Russian training?

MARTENS: That's correct. I got pulled out early from my Austrian assignment, and although I'd had a couple years of Russian language training at the university level, one doesn't really

speaking Russian very well on the basis of academic courses although my vocabulary and my knowledge of the language theoretically was quite extensive. I decided not to try to avoid going through the full course, so I took, with four other people, the full FSI language course.

Q: This was at Oberammergau?

MARTENS: No, this was at the Foreign Service Institute, which at that time was a frame building in the area that is now the State Department, it was on C Street. Ted Eliot was in that course with me, and some others who didn't remain in the Service for a full career. The other four besides me had not had any Russian language background so I was able to keep well up with them although two of them were such brilliant linguists that they eventually kept up with me. The three of us that did the best eventually went to Moscow in 1956. In the meantime, after six months of full time language training, we went to universities, in my case to Columbia's Russian Institute. The others went to Harvard's Russian Research Center.

After an academic year at Columbia, during which I met my wife to be, incidentally, I went off to what was to have been a one year assignment at Oberammergau. I was the only one of the five to get that, but I was pulled out after only three months. The Oberammergau program, "Detachment R," was an advanced language and area course in which the instructors were all recent emigres. They either did not speak or were not allowed to speak English, so we had to take courses in economics, history, politics, and everything else, in the Russian language. That was considered a way to not only advance your knowledge of the Soviet Union, but to get your language capabilities up to a much higher level.

In any case, that program was interrupted after only three months because a bachelor officer in Moscow was being PNGed, and the housing restrictions were so great- -there was no housing outside the embassy building except for one bachelor being put in the old billiard room of Spaso House, the Ambassador's house. This position was not that of an aide to the Ambassador at that time, but that of a regular political officer. In essence, I went in as a bachelor to replace another bachelor, and was crammed into that small Spaso House space which was too small for a married couple or family. I remained in Spaso House for the next year and a half of a two year assignment until Ambassador Tommy Thompson, who came in after my first year under Chip Bohlen, decided he needed an aide. When he was successful in getting an aide assigned, the aide was housed in my old space. By then and for the first time in Embassy history, we got housing outside the embassy compound, and I was given an apartment in that new housing complex.

Q: What was the situation as you saw it at that time in the Soviet Union?

MARTENS: This was the height of the Cold War. This was a period when there was almost no contact between East and West. The Iron Curtain atmosphere of that period was something that is unimaginable nowadays, or would have been unimaginable in 1965 or even 1960. There were no tourists going to the Soviet Union. There were no outsiders of any kind. The only people there were the embassy, which was very small, and a few correspondents who were -- a great many of whom were married to Russians, and had been stuck there since the beginning of World War II. So you had this sense of going into the total unknown. I remember as we flew from an airport in East Germany into the Soviet Union, thinking, "God, what am I getting into?" We were buzzed

by Soviet fighter planes who made sweeps at us as we began to enter Soviet air space somewhere over Poland. So you were sort of awed by this as you came in, but after you were there a while, of course, you realized that all societies are alike in some ways -- human beings still eat, breathe air, sleep, live in houses, etc.

So the awesomeness began to recede. I had much the same feeling when I crossed the Rhine in Germany in World War II. That was at the time when Winston Churchill made his famous statement about "Allied troops now entering the dark sink of Iniquity." But later you began to see Germans in the villages we went through as human beings living ordinary lives. And so you concluded that things were perhaps not as different as you thought even though you also understood that all this ghastliness of Naziism had gone on at the same time. That's the way it was in the Soviet Union, a realization that this was a terrible society but one still inhabited by human beings that one could understand and hopefully relate to.

In the two years there that followed, however, the atmosphere in Moscow was difficult indeed. One had no contacts of any real depth with the Soviet population. People were scared to death. You also didn't want to have any second meetings with anybody because they very likely would be in serious trouble as a result. The sense that you got from reading the press -- and I had to read an enormous number of Soviet newspapers every day -- was one of total conformity. I began to travel, and you had to apply, I should say, two weeks in advance, if I remember correctly, to go anywhere outside the 25 mile, or 40 kilometer limit, around Moscow. You had to ask permission and wait for about two weeks to see whether you got permission or not. Frequently you would be denied, but at other times, perhaps with changes in the schedule, you would get an itinerary approved. I got so I was applying for travel all the time -- as soon as I got back from one trip, I would put in for another one. So I ended up with a tremendous amount of travel. I spent four months out of my last year outside of Moscow. And the reason I mention this is that, once you were outside of Moscow, while it was still a closed society, you found you were able to have much more contact with people, and rather often have the most enormously interesting conversations.

One experience that I frequently cite as an example, to illustrate the degree to which I thought the Soviet population was opposed to the system even then, was a trip I took out to Siberia on the TransSiberian Railroad. Two and a half days elapsed before we reached our first stop off point at a small city named Petropavlovsk in northern Kazakhstan. I got in a kind of debate with a fellow in my compartment; there were three Russians in the compartment with me, four persons to a compartment being common on Russian trains. The conversation started out in a rather non-ideological way, but it became ideological because this fellow had just graduated from Moscow University in "Political Economy", which meant Marxism-Leninism, and if what I was saying were true, he had to feel that his education was basically false and worthless. So he turned defensive and argued the party line. After a while people from all over the train began to stand around in the corridor and listen in on the conversation, and when I got off two and a half days later in Petropavlovsk in Kazakhstan the entire train -- most of the train -- huge numbers of people, escorted me, all of us crawling across three or four lines of parked boxcars during a half hour stop for them. The message was clear, they were demonstrating that they agreed with me rather than with this fellow's party line. This was not because of my eloquence, but rather because they saw an opportunity to demonstrate what they really thought without committing

themselves to speech.

Those kinds of things happened with great frequency. But on every trip, almost, that I went on, every now and then you'd have a fascinating insight into the depth of disbelief, and discontent in Soviet society. So much so that when I left -- my last year had been spent on Soviet internal developments, my first year had been spent on Soviet external matters -- my swan song was to write about a 25-30 page piece on the degree of popular discontent with the system. I did not get that out because a more senior officer -- a very good officer, by the way and a person I had tremendous respect and like for and who was not able to do much travel because of his job -- took an opposite approach. He had been reading the Soviet newspapers like I had all the time in Moscow, and just could not believe that there was that much discontent. So he wrote a despatch, as we called them in those days, that took an opposite position from mine, and he put excerpts of my piece which had not gone out, in an annex as a dissenting viewpoint. I must say that now that things have developed the way they have in the Soviet Union, I think back on what I had said then, and believe that events have proven that the discontent I had described was there all through the years. It's not just a recent phenomenon, but it's something that permeated the society all through those years.

Q: This was really the depth of the Cold War. Again, we try to operate these oral histories as a time machine. Did you see this at that time...in the first place, why was the Soviet government acting in this regard toward the United States, and also was there anything we were doing that maybe we shouldn't have done, or should have done something we didn't do?

MARTENS: No, that type of revisionist thinking is utterly wrong. The Soviet leadership in those days...

Q: This was...Khrushchev the whole time?

MARTENS: Khrushchev was there; his power was not complete. I arrived in September 1956, that was about six months after the 20th Party Congress, which initiated a kind of liberalizing period. That liberalizing period closed down by the time I arrived because of the Hungarian revolution that occurred in October, because of the Suez crisis which had started opening up in September and reached its culmination in October. I did the first report, incidentally, on the "Polish October" that brought Gomulka to power against Soviet opposition by analyzing a revealing article in Izvestia the day before. You could tell that something very extreme was happening in Poland. This is what led to the downfall of the hard-nosed previous regime, and the accession of Gomulka. This was followed almost immediately by the Hungarian revolution on which I did the reporting, by the way, from the Soviet side of that, mainly from the newspapers. So it was a very hard nosed regime. The disbelief in Marxism-Leninism, and the failure of the system had not developed to what it was years later. Khrushchev himself felt the system was on the ascendancy even before, he, several years later, made his famous statement when he got to the United States about "we'll bury you," and he meant their system would outlast ours, and that was inherent in everything he was saying. He was also talking about catching up and surpassing the United States in the production of meat, milk, and butter which became a great slogan of that time.

There's a tendency now to think of that period as one of great openness and liberalism. It was not at all. It was a period in which you could not have contact with anybody. We embassy officers were followed outside of Moscow by enormous hordes of KGB tails; I've been followed by as many as 20 tails at one time. Fear was endemic throughout the society. It was a period in which the threat to the United States and its democratic ideals was enormous throughout the world. So I disagree completely with the kind of revisionist view that the Cold War was all our fault somehow. It was not. It was necessary to stand up to the advance of communism in that period. I was very liberal in those days on U.S. domestic issues, incidentally. But my experience in the Soviet Union probably turned me in a more conservative direction. One saw first hand how rotten that system was, and how it had to be opposed.

Q: You mentioned you arrived in time for the Hungarian October '56 time. How did you, and the people in the embassy, feel about this? Did you feel that this might be the beginning of a war? What was the reaction?

MARTENS: What scared me even more was the Suez crisis. I remember being with Chip Bohlen in Spaso House when the Soviets appeared to deliver an ultimatum to the West that if the British and the French didn't back down, the implication was they were going to launch an attack on the West. This was based on Moscow Radio and, in retrospect, I think they probably made this apparent threat after they saw that the U.S. was already telling the British and French to get out. We had no real information at the time, we had to rely on the Soviet press, Soviet broadcasting, and so on. I remember Bohlen came back from some place saying he had just heard this, and we were scared to death, to tell you the truth. Because if there was a nuclear exchange, of course, we were in Moscow.

Q: In the wrong place.

MARTENS: So there were times when the fear was very great, and the whole Hungarian crisis was one of both elation -- in the early stages of it -- and then a great letdown when the Soviet divisions went in and took the whole thing down.

Q: Were there crowds demonstrating, or anything like that?

MARTENS: There were some. The biggest demonstration, oddly enough, was in 1958, sometime after this, at the time of the Lebanon crisis when Eisenhower sent U.S. forces into Lebanon. That was a kind of follow-up to the fall of Nuri Said in Iraq.

Q: This was July 14th when the pro-Western Iraqi regime fell...

MARTENS: ...and the demonstrations were in July. This is an interesting thing: again an insight into the nature of real feelings in the Soviet Union. We had 100,000 demonstrators outside the embassy, and I happened to be the officer who was assigned to the gate to receive petitions from people coming from various factories and offices that were protesting. "Hands-off Lebanon" was the main propaganda slogan. And instead of just taking petitions at the gate I brought them through the gate -- I refused to take the petition at the gate -- and brought them into a little room just inside the entrance, and I found myself being kissed on both cheeks, with people saying

“don’t believe this baloney” or words to that effect. There was one woman who was genuinely angry, but no one else was. I stood at the gate bantering with the crowd, joking. Then the authorities caused a hollow square to be formed after several hours had gone by. They brought in the assault forces which consisted of people dressed in workmen’s clothing carrying sacks that contained rocks, and I retreated into the large entry hall on the first floor of the chancery. Everybody else had gone to the upper floors of the embassy. As I stood behind a pillar, rocks came through the windows until they covered the entire floor, and up to my -- let’s say my ankles. Pellets from BB guns were also being shot through the windows. Slingshots were also being used to deliver pellets, and all sorts of signs designed to show great anger were hung on the building. And even though I’d seen how people had been friendly before, and you knew what was going on, you couldn’t help but be impressed by the show of anti-U.S. feeling.

Two days later a newsreel was advertised at a local theater, “Hands Off Lebanon,” and it was put on with the first American feature movie to be shown in years as an inducement for people to come, I suppose. There was a huge line and it later became clear that people were there to see the American feature movie. This line extended for several blocks, and I got there very early and was nearly at the front of the line -- not quite the front, but very close -- and I began to joke with people in the line, “I’m going to be in this ‘Hands Off Lebanon’ newsreel as the main villain.” Not that I was the main villain but I knew that there were newsreel cameras that had taken pictures at the Embassy gate, and I’d been there, so I thought it was at least possible that my image would come on the screen. Well, finally, an hour later we got into the theater. Naturally they showed the propaganda film first, so everybody would remain, and there was my image suddenly on the screen and a huge guffaw of laughter erupted from the audience. So clearly nobody was angry with me or the United States and it was another one of those insights you got, as I said, every now and then as to what people really thought. Anyhow, that was the biggest and by far the most awesome demonstration that we had there.

Q: When you took these trips, one, I assume that you were encouraged to do this by the embassy and there was money for this. Were there attempts...you were a bachelor, you must have had pretty young girls thrown at you and all that?.

MARTENS: Yes. An example was on that same trip that I mentioned earlier, the trip that began in Petropavlovsk and continued farther in Siberia. The Soviet authorities were very angry at me, I think, because of that conversation I had had on the train and the sort of demonstration that had taken place when I got off in Petropavlovsk. I was going from that town to the next town, which was Barnaul in the Altai Kray not far from the Tibetan border. On the train en route, I got into a conversation in the next compartment with a bunch of people who were playing a Russian card game which they were teaching me. Among that group was a young lady of 25 or 26 years of age, not a tremendous beauty but also not unattractive, I suppose. However, I had no thought of that, she was simply in the group playing cards. When we got off the train -- there were two people with me from our embassy who did not speak Russian, by the way, or spoke very little...there was a tremendous rainstorm, and only one taxi available. I happened by a stroke of luck to get the taxi for the three of us. But then I saw this young lady standing there in the downpour, and knowing there’d probably be only one hotel in town, and there was space in the cab, I told the cab driver to stop and asked her if she would like a lift. She thanked me and said yes, so we dropped her at the same hotel, and there was no sign at that time that there was going

to be any continuation of this acquaintanceship. But then she began to appear at our room maybe twice a day, with various excuses -- she wanted to borrow an American magazine, or return an American magazine, or whatever. She was very shy, incidentally. She could not have got through to our room without the sanction and even the connivance of the KGB because there were...there is a kind of guard system on every floor, in Russian hotels, and one could not get past the guard on your floor unless the KGB wanted somebody to get through to you. The only real restaurant in town -- there were in addition a few *stolovayas*, which are a kind of stand-up eating places -- the only real restaurant in town was in the hotel, and it was closed for repairs. So our meal was delivered from the hotel kitchen, which was still operating, up to our room. We had just finished our meal on the last night there, and this lady came to the room. I should say parenthetically, that this was a day when I had been walking all through the city, and this was a place where I'd been...which I'm not going to do, describe how I knew this, but suffice it to say, there were tails all over the place. So when the young lady came in, very haltingly to return the magazine, I said in a very loud voice -- knowing the room was bugged -- "Come on in and join us for a drink of vodka," which we'd been having at the end of the dinner. And she did, and then I said, also very loudly, "This is the damnedest country I've ever been in. I've been followed all day by the KGB, and now they're even sending women to my room trying to entrap me." And this poor lady began crying. She kept pointing to the walls, and then for the radio to be turned up. So we turned up the radio, and she whispered in my ear, "I had nothing at all to do with this." And she told how the KGB had come to her room after she'd arrived, and forced her to go through with this. So we quickly eased her out the door. That kind of thing happened.

In the next town we went to, Kurgan, there was a young quite good-looking woman seemingly always in the act of undressing with the door open in the room across the hall whenever we came in, or out. Nothing was ever said or done but there is little doubt that the KGB was laying a rather transparent trap if one were foolish enough to make an advance.

Finally, in the next town, Ufa, I was poisoned, and got violently ill -- more ill, I think, than any time in my life. I had to literally creep across the floor; I couldn't even get up on my elbows because of my weakness. I was then thrown out of town by the KGB the next day under accusations that I'd overstayed my authorized itinerary time for nefarious purposes. I won't go into more detail, to save time but suffice it to say that you could get into very difficult situations.

Q: You're taking these trips. What was the purpose? And how did you operate?

MARTENS: There were a number of things. One did some technical things, for example, we would go to the markets and price food in different parts of the Soviet Union. The fellow that went with me on the trip I just mentioned was the deputy Agriculture Attaché' and he looked at the grain, and how the crops were doing, and that sort of thing. One thing I did, I guess I can say after all these years, was when I had nothing better to do -- I didn't do this unless I wasn't able to talk to people -- but I would make notes on streets.

There were no maps of the kind that were freely available in the West in the Soviet Union; virtually everything was regarded by the Soviets as top secret in those days. So as I walked along any given route, I would mark down the names of the streets. At a later time, when I got back to the embassy, I could put my notes into some kind of sketch so one could get some idea of how

particular cities were laid out. I won't go into all that in any detail. So there were a variety of things one did. Sometimes you could also arrange meetings with people at various Soviet offices or other institutions. These were innocuous, but of some interest. You might go to a factory that was not regarded as of strategic importance -- a candy factory, let's say -- and talk to people, and conduct a little interview...

Q: These would be set up for you?

MARTENS: The local branch of the Ministry of Culture might set such a meeting up, for example. But the thing that was of most interest was trying, whenever one had a chance, to talk to people. On trains you were always able to talk to people to a greater extent because people tended to open up on Russian trains. Maybe this was because of the great distances. It was very much like travel by ship in the old days in the Foreign Service where everybody got to know each other on a ship when you felt somewhat removed from your ordinary life. Everybody got into pajamas on a Russian train; you wandered up and down the corridors in your pajamas and you'd strike up conversations with people. And a lot of times they were striking up those conversations with you as soon as they saw you were a foreigner. These conversations were not all highly political, but they were all of interest since they gave you some insight into the real Russia, you might say, not just a propaganda view that was all you ever got in Moscow. So a lot was just by chance in who you happened to run into.

Harry Barnes and I went out one time on another trip to Siberia. We were way out in the deepest reaches of eastern Siberia. A couple of insights: traveling from Irkutsk, we went by plane up to Yakutsk, 3,000, maybe only 2,000 miles of primeval forest and nothing in between but a dirt landing strip alongside of a log cabin village named Olekminsk of maybe 100 or so souls, on the banks of the Lena River. We stopped there for a day or two just for the hell of it, and we were living in a bunkhouse at this airport. One had to walk about a mile or two to the village I mentioned where there were no streets, only log cabins. In the bunk next to mine was a Yakut, a fellow who looked very much like an American Indian. As we got to talking, he described where he lived, which was about 1,000 miles north of Olekminsk at the edge of the tundra. He had a cabin up there in which he was trading stuff for the government with the itinerant Eskimo-like tribes that followed the reindeer. Once a year he would get a chance to take leave, and his leave was spent in this place where I now found myself in Olekminsk. He'd come down for one month to this place which I thought, and still think, was the end of the earth. But yet, for him, this was the place he had to go for his annual vacation. And this has become my description of what "relativity" means.

Anyway, we went on to Yakutsk, a fair sized town in the permafrost region of northeastern Siberia, and we were sitting in a kind of large beer hall. A man came up to our table, a Latvian who was rapidly becoming very drunk, and began telling me he had just been released, under Khrushchev's recent edict, from a slave labor camp. He was still unable to go outside his lumbering camp somewhat outside of Yakutsk, except that he could now come into Yakutsk once in a while. He could not go back to Latvia. But he described the life of his family from the time they were picked up by the MVD in 1940, and where they had all died one by one except for him, in camps along the various reaches of the TransSiberian until he ended up at sort of the end of the line out here. It was a tremendously interesting conversation and an insight into the

Gulag system. After a while he went to the bathroom and disappeared. I imagine the KGB had been watching us all through this and had grabbed him as soon as he was out of our sight. So you had interesting little insights into things if you got out into the boondocks.

Q: The young officers got out. Whereas the more senior officers got trapped almost. So you would get two very different perspectives. How did that play out at the embassy, at that time -- the dynamics?

MARTENS: I think everybody at the top levels understood what a lousy system it was. There was a sort of basic agreement, I think. The only thing where there might have been some disagreement, and that was implicit more than explicit, was in the understanding of the degree of discontent in the society, which I have alluded to. I don't think it manifested itself in other than this one thing that I mentioned, my final report that didn't come back to the Department. I don't feel any bitterness about it. I don't mean to criticize anyone but it did sort of expose to me that the differences in perception were greater than I imagined they were, and I didn't really realize it until I came back and my report never came through month after month. I kept wondering why.

There was also, I suppose -- this is more true, I think, of Tommy Thompson, than it was of Chip Bohlen -- a great concern that we not do anything that would offend the Soviet authorities. When I came back from the trip I described earlier where I had been poisoned along the way, I wrote a report describing the conversation I had had on the train. Thompson never said anything to me about it, but maybe two or three weeks later he did make some comments in a general staff meeting that I believe were related to my trip report. He did not mention me or allude to my trip but spoke in general terms about the limits that one should put on one's self; that it would be a mistake to push things too far in conversations with Soviet citizens.

It was not our job to get too deep in the debates, the relationship with the Soviet Union could be injured. It was a very sensitive situation. He was very right to say this, and in retrospect, I have thought myself that I probably carried this particular conversation further than I should have. So I may well have been wrong in this. There was no reprimand or anything else, and I continued to talk to people but probably keeping in mind a little bit more Thompson's concerns that one needed to be careful about how far...it was a very fine line that one had to walk, in other words. Obviously our senior management was more conscious of this than the more junior officers.

Q: And also were looking at a different picture. This is often a dynamic within an embassy.

MARTENS: Yes, and particularly true of that kind of a society. I spent a great deal of my career, as we may get into later on, in closed societies and this was one of four assignments in closed societies, and that sort of thing was always there, and I saw it from both sides. I saw it many years later from the other side.

Q: Did you find there were sort of divergent things within our CIA and military attachés, as you saw it from your vantage.

MARTENS: There wasn't much in the way of a CIA establishment. There was one fellow, I think, and he didn't do much of anything. The society was too closed for him to do very much,

and later he got PNGed for trying something. And he was not a terribly substantive officer anyway. There was a large military contingent. They were out doing their thing which was not so much...they were generally not interested in talking to people, they were interested in avoiding contact because they were primarily interested in sight observations. I did a little of it in Odessa, but that was not a sensitive thing. The attachés were more interested in looking at military installations, I suppose, equipment and that sort of thing, but I don't want to get into that.

Q: What about...you mentioned Thompson. How about Bohlen? He was there when you first arrived. His style of operation, and how you saw him within the embassy?

MARTENS: I have tremendous admiration for both men. Bohlen was a more outgoing person, easier to talk to. I liked him tremendously. I played poker with both of them, incidentally. I was the only embassy officer to do so on a regular basis and the rest were usually newsmen. It was not just because I was living in Spaso House with him, but because I was a poker player in those days. The Bohlens took me into the family to a much greater extent than Thompson did later. Every Sunday I had dinner with the Bohlens, that was regular. Other times during the week, if they didn't have anything on particularly, they might invite me up for a kind of family evening in their quarters. I remember one thing we did a couple of times was to look for mushrooms in forests -- an old Russian avocation, so to speak -- and the Bohlens liked doing that and I used to do that with them. Bohlen was a much more intuitive type of man than Thompson. Everyone knows of his knowledge of the Russian language, and his insights into the Soviet Union. Sometimes, I think, he could be very wrong because his judgments were to a great extent intuitive, rather than based on reason. I think he carried on the collective leadership thing longer than it probably merited. He believed that the leadership was going to stick together -- this is before the anti-Party group affair where Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich were ousted. I don't think he saw the possibility of that. Many of his insights, of course, were extremely useful. I had dealings with him later on too when I was in the Soviet-U.S. exchange program, where he was the chief negotiator, and I was one of three subordinate negotiators under him some years later. I think he was more casual by that time in the negotiating process than Thompson would have been. Thompson was a much more methodical man.

Thompson was a man who was rather remote. When I came back to Washington from my previous experience with him in Vienna, I ran into him in the elevator one day. Even though I had talked to him numerous times in briefings that I had given just prior to his Allied Council Meetings in Vienna, he looked at me and didn't recognize me when I said hello. Later when Thompson first arrived in Moscow, I was showing him around Spaso House -- Bohlen had already left. Of course, he had previously known Spaso House to some degree from the junior officer's assignment he'd had there during World War II but a lot of years had passed, and I was showing him through the building. He asked me where I had served before. He ultimately remembered me after I mentioned Vienna, but he was kind of aloof -- not coldly so, but his mind was elsewhere, you might say. He rarely talked to us junior officers in the embassy, unlike Bohlen who had meetings from time to time in which he got all the substantive officers together and we'd kind of brainstorm various things. It was open to all political and economic officers of whatever rank. Tommy Thompson didn't do that so much. It didn't mean that he was...everybody respected him tremendously. In many ways he was as major, or maybe more of a major player, in the post-war world than Bohlen. There was a book written on what was called

“The Wise Men,” which mentioned four figures: Bohlen was one of them, Kennan was another, McCloy and Harriman.

I remember a conversation I had about a year or so ago with Ted Eliot, who was in the embassy in Moscow with me at the time, and Ted was saying (he and I and Pic Littell were out to dinner talking about those days), and Ted said, “I think it was really a tremendous mistake not to have included Tommy Thompson in that book to make it five, because I think he was really more important than any of the others. He was really a key figure in the development of U.S.-Soviet relations over the years that followed.” And I think there is a lot to be said for that.

Q: One other thing. How did you find dealing with Soviet bureaucracy, particularly in Moscow, but elsewhere.

MARTENS: We had practically no relations during my Moscow tour. I was never in the Soviet Foreign Ministry. There were rare occasions where we had meetings with Soviet officials...if there were important visitors from the U.S. I remember a U.S. Joint Atomic Energy Committee delegation was over including Senator Gore and two or three Congressmen, and we had meetings at an *Intourist* office of all places, to discuss their desire to visit the Dubna nuclear facility. This was a rather unclassified facility, to which a lot of people went later, but up to that time Westerners had not been admitted and I was interpreting for Gore. I knew that the Soviet *Intourist* man spoke some English, but he wouldn't speak it in this situation. In my interpretation, I tried to tone down some of Gore's rather vitriolic comments. When Gore finally understood that I was toning him down, he chewed me out rather badly about not interpreting properly. But I knew that if we were ever going to get the access desired, that it couldn't be done on that basis. The group finally did get in and it was because the request was put in a more courteous way. Anyway, there were rare occasions when you had contact with Soviet officials but not very often. The only people that would go to the Foreign Ministry at all would be the Ambassador, the DCM, and what was called the Chief of Chancery -- that is the head of the combined political-economic section. At that time we had a combined political-economic section which had six officers, so it was very small. There were three on the external side and three on the internal side including only one economic officer initially.

WILLIAM WATTS
Soviet Internal Affairs, Office of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1956-1958)

Russian Language Training
Oberammergau, Germany (1960-1961)

Cultural Affairs Officer
Moscow (1961-1963)

William Watts was born in 1930 and raised in New York, New York. He received a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University and a master's degree from

Harvard University's Russian Regional Studies Program. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1951-1954. Mr. Watts' Foreign Service career included positions in Korea, the Soviet Union, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 7, 1995.

Q: Your first assignment was to INR?

WATTS: Yes, in what was called the Soviet internal branch. We worked exclusively on what was going on inside the Soviet Union. There was a monthly report that came out which included both what we did in internal and external, plus the whole East European area. It was I thought an extraordinarily good document. We had some very smart people in there. Some who were civil service and stayed for a long time and some of us Foreign Service who stayed only a couple of years or so. But it was a really powerful thing. We had daily reports and things we would be working on as a special report. We also prepared every morning, and that was strictly done by the people pretty much on the internal branch, but not exclusively, and I had to get in about 5:30 to prepare, the morning briefing report that was given to the head of INR for his morning meeting with the Secretary of State. So, we prepared the head of INR -- Oscar Armstrong and one other while I was there. That was a tough job. You would come staggering in half asleep and have to go through all of the overnight take. And then I went and did the same kind of thing later in the White House for the President, so it was sort of a funny...

Q: What was your impression of our knowledge of what was going on inside the Soviet Union?

WATTS: My feeling was that it was pretty good. I was not aware at that point, I was not cleared, well none of us had clearance for things like the Gamma Guppie Operation. None of us knew about that.

Q: What was Gamma Guppie?

WATTS: That was where we had the telephones of the Soviet leaders' cars wired. All that came out later on. That was just unbelievable intelligence. Well, it was not wired, it was monitoring through satellite. It was just astonishing stuff. I would say that the bulk of our information was reading the Soviet periodicals and papers and despatches from the embassy, which I thought were very good and perceptive.

Q: Who did this? One of the great sources of intelligence for the Peoples Republic of China was the China watchers in Hong Kong who read every local paper they could get a hold of. It is a good way to find out what is happening. Who actually sat down and read these papers? Were they read in Moscow or Washington?

WATTS: In the internal branch, first Ken Kerst and then Gordon Tiger were the heads of it. Then Boris Klosson and Tom Larson ran all of DRS, internal and external. Then we had Heyward Isham. Matlock was there for a while. Paul Smith, Ed Sokol, Fred Armstrong, myself. We had six or seven officers on internal and another four or five on external affairs. Each of us got different papers. I was assigned government and law. So I used to read *Izvestia* every day. And I would read a lot of law-linked journals, etc. Somebody else read literary stuff. We had

somebody reading the economic stuff. That is where Ed Hurwitz was. So, yes, we did a lot of that and it was also done in Moscow. We were both doing a huge amount of reading as was, of course, the Agency and Defense. So you were getting a lot read.

Let me give you an example of how this played out in reality. At the time of the purge of the “Anti-Party Group” in 1957, Ken Kerst, and this was the advantage of having people who stayed there a long, long time...there was a lead editorial in *Pravda* that made a reference to “no matter how high his post may be,” and Ken said, “Uh oh, that is a purge.” He wrote a memo that said this indicated a purge is about to occur and the logical person, given a lot of other stuff that was said, was Lavrenti Beria...he asked me to go back into stuff I had been reading in the legal stuff and there were hints of it. He was absolutely right. It was amazing. I think in fact he got some kind of a commendation for that. He predicted this about two or three days before the event. It was very interesting. So you had people with that kind of background.

Q: You left there when?

WATTS: In the middle of 1960.

Q: Where did you go?

WATTS: I went to Russian language training. I had been assigned to the embassy in Stockholm, but I think that Marshall Green intervened. I was assigned to the consular section in Stockholm but the assignment was suddenly switched and I went to Russian language training in Oberammergau for a year and then went on to Moscow.

Q: How did you find Oberammergau?

WATTS: It was a gorgeous place to live. We all had very nice housing. I was married by then and actually had one child and a second child born while there. The instruction from my standpoint...I already had a masters in Russian studies from Harvard and so there was virtually nothing in the substance of what was being taught that I hadn't already had. The language part of it was very helpful because the classes were all in Russian. You were supposed to speak Russian all the time, but nobody did. But all the classes were in Russian. We had along with history, geography, politics, etc. also language training at whatever level you were at. I think it was more useful for people who hadn't had the kind of previous academic training that I had. At that time at least it was almost impossible to be assigned to Moscow if you didn't go through Detachment R (Oberammergau Russian Language Training School). The whole Oberammergau outfit was a very sensitive thing. It was a US Army intelligence training base with particular...a lot of military guys were there getting a lot of specialized training before going to Moscow.

Q: You went to Moscow when?

WATTS: I was there from the middle of 1961 to the middle of 1963. I arrived in about July/August 1961 and left just before the fourth of July, 1963.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WATTS: When I arrived the ambassador was Tommy Thompson, who you know is one of the legendary figures in the Russian field. He was a very distant ambassador to work for. We used to comment that when he was replaced by Foy Kohler that under Thompson the door to the ambassador's office was always closed; with Kohler it was always open. It was sort of indicative of their styles of operating. Thompson tended to work through a very small number of people. The DCM was Boris Klosson, who I had known earlier in INR, in 1956-58. The Thompsons and Klossons were very close. Obviously, other embassy people were invited to receptions, etc., but Thompson did work heavily through Klosson. He was rather remote as an ambassador, but hugely knowledgeable.

Q: During this period, 1961-63, you were there during the time of Khrushchev when he was feeling his most rambunctious.

WATTS: Up through the missile crisis.

Q: How did you see the Soviet Union and what was the situation there when you arrived?

WATTS: First of all I was very fortunate. I was an FSO but assigned to work in the cultural affairs section which at that time was clearly the best job to have in the embassy. My first assignment was to run one of the exchange exhibits we have between the United States and the Soviet Union under the cultural exchange agreement of 1959. I ran, I guess, the third of these exhibits. It was on transportation. I arrived in the Soviet Union, after the Bay of Pigs episode, at the beginning of the thawing. This was when Dudintsev's "Not By Bread Alone" was published in *Novy Mir*, the literary magazine. We were able to entertain a lot, particularly because I was in the cultural affairs section. We had people like Yevtushenko, Rozhdestvensky, and others would come to dinner. That was a remarkable period up to the Berlin Wall when it just shut down very harshly.

Travel remained very restricted. As I said before, I was surprised how much worse off the Soviet Union was in terms of economic reality than I had anticipated on the basis of my studies. It really was a big third world country where nothing worked right. The telephones didn't work and bugging was so obvious that you could hardly get through all of the static and the clinks and clanks. It was ridiculous.

At the beginning it was a period of not much in the way of interchange. It improved a great deal as we went along. It was the *ottepl'* -- the thaw period.

I was, as I say, very lucky because running these exhibits I started out in Moscow but then moved down to Stalingrad. It was, in fact, named Stalingrad when we arrived, and in the middle, on November 7...it was the night of November 6 that they came through and tore Stalin's statue down and for three days we had a city with no name. Then it became Volgograd.

Q: Did anybody know this was going to happen?

WATTS: It is very interesting what happened. This is an extraordinary episode, something that is really amazing. I was up in Moscow before we went down to Stalingrad and had bought myself some crummy Soviet clothes at GUM. Particularly at night, because my Russian was 4+,4+, I could go out and pass. People tended to think I came from Leningrad. I always said I was from up north.

Suddenly on the evening of the 6th we were told in the hotel...the *dezhurnaya*, watch-lady came running and knocked on the doors and said, "Close your windows." So, thinking something was up, I immediately jumped into my Soviet clothes and whipped out the back door. The front door was literally locked, we couldn't get out. I went out in the street and looked up at the Hotel Stalingrad (*Gostinitsa Stalingrad*) which was next door and started to see the light bulbs going out on the S-T-A-L-I-N, but they left *Gostinitsa* and *grad*. Across the big square was the railroad station with its *Stalingradskii Vokzal*, and all of a sudden the "Stalin" disappeared.

The next thing that happened was that this military wrecking crew came in with a big crane. They put a big thing around the neck of the statue of Stalin and pulled the statue over. When it came down...I was standing back, there was a huge crowd by this time and the police were very edgy...it killed one of the soldiers. The guy next to me said "the jealous Georgian strikes from the grave." It was a perfect line.

The next day was absolutely fascinating. Word had not gotten fully around that this had happened. When the crowd started to march in from the street square, they suddenly saw no statue and they could see the light bulbs were out. The paper had come out with Stalin in the title cut out. For three or four days it was a city with no name. We had about 25 Russian language people who were hired for these exhibits. We took a pool at the hotel, to see who could guess the new name. A lot of the Russians joined in but then they were called in and told they couldn't participate in the pool because it was a capitalist plot or something. So we had to give them all their five rubles back. But one guy, Norris Garnet, a USIA guy with the exhibit, came up with *Volgograd*, that was so close to Volgograd that we declared him the winner.

Then we went from there to Kharkov. So I spent my first almost six months living out in the boonies.

Q: Could you talk a bit about what the exhibit consisted of and how it was received.

WATTS: In the exhibit we had a car, a new Ford; a computer console for making reservations; everything to do with transport. There were things to do with railroads and cars and bicycles and motorcycles and computerization of getting reservations, etc. The exhibit was a tremendous hit. People were lined up for blocks to come in. Mostly, not because they cared that much about the exhibit, frankly, I don't think many did, but they just wanted to come in and talk to a bunch of Americans who could speak Russian. We got into the most amazing discussions. It was really a very lethal injection...I think in Stalingrad particularly, we changed that city in a lot of ways. People saw Americans. Here is this young bunch, mostly in their twenties, fluent in Russian, smart as hell and I remember one guys saying, "You know, you are not devils. We all thought you were all devils and you are not." It really had a big impact in the city. I went back several

times later and people would stop me in the street who remembered me. This is a big city and yet they remembered you.

It really was an opening in terms of discussion and dialogue that was really quite striking. People were lined up to get in. They had enormous amount of police control. There was no question, there were just lots of goons in the exhibit all the time. We had one guy who was something of a zealot, I really had to try to calm him down. I said, "You can't cross a certain line. If you try to proselytize people, you are going to get thrown out of here or the exhibit will shut down." He was a real character, John DeLuca. You could see the police coming around and sometimes they would break up discussions and move people along. People then were cowed and did what they were told when the police moved in.

The other thing, of course, was that we were there twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, so it meant that when the exhibit was over you had all these people running all over town and doing all kinds of stuff. We did have a couple of people who got thrown out. One guy came in with about 150 copies of "Animal Farm" that he passed out at night, which of course they found out about. We had to get him out of town in a big hurry.

Q: I have to tell you that somebody when I was in Belgrade came to me and nudged me and said, "Go down to the bookstore and look in their cultural section." There in English was "Animal Farm." People were taking great interest in farming!

WATTS: That reminds me when one time William L. Shirer went to give a talk in Milwaukee about his monumental book, "*Berlin Diary*." He arrived and found this absolutely overflowing crowd of people and he couldn't figure out what was happening. He looked and saw the sign, "William L. Shirer, the author of "*Berlin Dairy*.""

But we had to get this guy out. We had a couple of cases of people who did get seduced by agents and pictures taken and had to get them out. But, by and large the exhibit went very well. As I say, I think it really left quite a big impact in the city.

To have that big group of bright young Americans whose Russian was damn good sort of all over the place... We could eat in the hotel, they had a dining room for us, but after two days nobody did. Everybody was going out and eating at the kiosks, etc. and getting to know people.

The other side about it was that when I would go up to Moscow, the political section people in the embassy would take me up to the safe room at the top of the embassy to debrief me because I was getting a special insight into what was happening in real life, in terms of the daily existence of Russians. A phenomenal experience -- very, very exciting.

Q: What was your impression of how the people were living?

WATTS: They lived a very meager existence, there was no question about it. Long lines everywhere for everything from potatoes to meat. The state farm markets were just pathetic. The one thing where there was no question it was better, was in the private plots which collective farmers had and were allowed to grow. The produce that they brought in from that was really

pretty good. The trouble was there wasn't enough of it, although it was what I think kept the place in a way going. The private plot was what added enough food into the economy to prevent what could have been real starvation in some areas. Those private plots were just taken care of like...you could see when you went to a *kolkhoz* market you could see the collective part and the private part and the growth ratio was like five to one.

I never felt one thing, although I read individual cases of people that were truly very disaffected. But by and large that was not what I ran into, most it was one of anger at shortages, etc. but you didn't feel that there was this seething, like a revolution around the corner that people were actively trying to do something.

I had episodes when I ran into that. One really extraordinary event when I was down in Yerevan in Armenia, a guy came up to me at a restaurant and sat down. The waiters would put an American flag on the table whenever you went to a restaurant to identify you as an American, which meant most people wouldn't come near you at that point. This guy did come and sit down and in perfect English said, "I want to talk to you. Just don't act surprised, but my parents were born in Lynn and Boston and met on one of the ships coming back here during the war." There were a lot of Liberty ships that brought a lot of Armenians back to Armenia. They came voluntarily. He said, "I am born here, but I want to get out." He saw that I smoked. This was all done in a very cool fashion. At first I was wondering if he was an agent and then he said, "I can tell you where all the agents are. You look over two tables to the left and there is a guy who always follows me, etc." He then said, "When you want the next cigarette ask me for a match and then keep asking me for matches all through the dinner." Then another guy joined us. What happened was that over the course of the evening, each of them had written their name and address inside the matchbox. So at the end of it I had eight Americans who had given me their matchboxes and saying they were going to be in Moscow in something like 15 days and would try to come to the embassy in an attempt to go home.

My wife and I just sat there as these guys gave us these things one by one. I had all these things and was then told to go to the men's room and write my telephone where I could be reached in Moscow. I did so and wrote down my home number. And then I said to them, "Look, when you come up and call, for God's sake just say this is John, or something, because the phone is tapped." About three weeks later these guys came up and whoever called me was all excited and he said, "We will be at the embassy at 10:00." I swore to myself and hung up.

I go down to the embassy and at about five to ten I come out and the guards are there, etc. At 10:00 this car comes up and the guys start to get out and these two guards turned around and walked into their little booth and looked away. Two cars came careening around the corner on two wheels and these guys were grabbed and gone in a matter of ten seconds. I turned around yelling at these two guards who said they hadn't seen anything. We put in a protest and were told we didn't know what we were talking about. Who were these people? Of course, I didn't want to give them their names. I don't know what happened to them. It was really sad.

Q: Was Khrushchev's virgin territories program underway? This was opening up the wheat fields which turned into one of the great disasters.

WATTS: Oh, an enormous disaster. I wrote my masters thesis on that and suggested that because I had gotten from some place the weather situation, the rainfall. I shouldn't say that I predicted it, but there were specialists who knew it wouldn't work because it would blow away.

Q: We kind of did it in Colorado and other places like that during World War I. We expanded it during the high rain time and then it blew away.

WATTS: That is what the great Okies situation was all about.

As far as what we were seeing was the rather drab, gloomy life that these people led. It was pretty damn bad.

Q: Efforts to capture Americans, particularly on sex or drinking, was that a big problem at the time you were there?

WATTS: Oh, yes. It was a constant thing, particularly when you traveled. We had one episode when a guy named Carroll Woods, who was head of the economic section, and who has since died, and I went on a terrific road trip together. We were told where installations were and if we could, at least count masts of ships. I was busily taking some pictures when the door broke open and a gal came in with her dress pulled down and right behind her were guys coming in to accuse us of raping her. Fortunately, we had been told what to do, which was to turn your back and don't look around. It was a kind of constant episode -- women with a sultry voice would call you in your hotel room asking to come up and have a drink.

Certainly the people in the embassy were so carefully instructed on this. If there were lapses it was very unusual. The exhibit was a different matter. These gorgeous gals would get these horny guys and the next thing they knew, bam! There were some ugly things like getting a girl to get a guy all aroused and with an erection and then a guy would come running in and grab him and pictures would be taken "proving" he was a homosexual. That sort of thing. Of course, we had to get these guys out when that stuff went on.

If there were cases in the embassy, I certainly was not aware of it. We were very carefully briefed.

Q: After you finished this time with the exhibits, what did you do?

WATTS: I moved into the cultural affairs section of the embassy. There were three of us. The other two guys were regular USIA people. I was seconded to that section, which delighted me because we had much the most fun. We were responsible for all of the exchange stuff, which meant that when any of the programs came -- the New York City Ballet came with Balanchine, the Robert Shaw Choral and Benny Goodman -- we went all over the Soviet Union with them.

We also had to go around to inspect potential sites for future exchange programs. So I did a huge amount of traveling. It was a marvelous job. I couldn't have asked for more fun.

We were also responsible, by the way, for the distribution of *Amerika* magazine, which mostly

we did by throwing it out of train windows. If you put it out in the kiosk, the authorities would just take them away.

Another thing we had to do was sort of a reverse thing. There were lots and lots of foreign exchange students, particularly from Africa who came to Lumumba University and wanted to get out and go to the United States. They were constantly coming into the embassy. I handled all of that.

Q: I was doing somewhat the same thing while in Yugoslavia when Sofia University emptied itself of African students. They got fed up and left. We were screening them. Did we have a brief to talk to these students and picking out the ones that might be good and saying, "Why don't you try, once you get out of the country, to....?"

WATTS: I had a standard program. Every student that came in I interviewed at some length. I would then write a despatch on every one giving the background of where they came from, how they came to the Soviet Union, what they were studying. It was always at Lumumba. What their record seemed to be like, if they had their record we would send it in. And, then we would suggest that when they went back, if they would like to apply there, fine. There was no way that we had access to enough material to make recommendations. The best I could do, I would have a closing paragraph saying that so-and-so appears to be very bright with excellent English, etc.

It was such a known fact that these guys were seeing me that the militia would tell them that it was the first door on the right, Watts is in there. A lot of them, particularly coming from Indonesia and Ghana, during the period of Sukarno and Nkrumah, got on the plane thinking they were going to the United States and when they got off found themselves in Moscow and were absolutely stunned. These were very angry young men, and they hated it. There is tremendous racism in Russia. These people were treated badly. If Russian girls went out with them, they would get beaten up -- considered to be whores. It was a very sad situation. These kids would come in cold and miserable in the winter. It was pathetic. I made a somewhat specious recommendation that I thought in the future, I did put this in a despatch at one point, consideration for all Fulbrights coming to the United States, particularly from Indonesia and Ghana, should be required to spend two months of preparation at Lumumba University to give them a sense of what life would be like there compared to what life was like when they got here.

Q: You were there when the Kennedy Administration came in.

WATTS: Yes, I arrived in the middle of the summer of 1961.

Q: Were you there during the Kennedy/Khrushchev in Vienna?

WATTS: Yes. That was in September, but I was out in the boonies then and out of touch with reality.

Q: It was a time when Khrushchev was very much in his "in your face, challenging" period.

WATTS: It was interesting because it became one of the periods of extraordinarily opening up,

one of the very exciting times up until the Wall. We were seeing a lot of people and suddenly it just clamped down.

Q: The Wall came when?

WATTS: I think it was in the middle of 1962, but I can't remember exactly.

Q: This is before the missile crisis.

WATTS: Yes.

Q: Where were you when the Wall went up?

WATTS: I was back in Moscow in the cultural affairs section. There was a famous speech that Suslov, who was the Party ideologue, gave at a Party meeting up in Lenin Hills which came out and essentially brought an end to the thaw. Suddenly people just weren't coming to receptions, etc. It was a real different period, no question. And that remained up to the missile crisis.

Q: Kennedy called up some Reserves after the Wall went up, it was a tense period in the United States. I was back here in Washington and I recall we were really thinking this may be it. How did it translate in Moscow?

WATTS: All I can say is that I have very, very vague memories about it other than it went up. Again, I was in the cultural affairs section and our job was very different than the rest of the embassy. I read some of what was going on, but I didn't live with it day in and day out in terms of my work.

Q: After the Wall when things clamped down, were there things that had to be canceled?

WATTS: Yes, a lot of things. Part of what I did on my day to day work was work with the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries run by a guy named Romanovski. And there was a State Committee for Scientific Exchange, the deputy was Penkovsky, who I dealt with quite a bit. What we were doing was making arrangements for exchange of delegations. I went one day to a meeting with the State Committee for Scientific Exchanges and asked the head of the group...we were coming to see the Bratsk Dam and they were coming to see the Grand Coulee Dam, or something. I said, "Oh, you are not Penkovsky, where is Penkovsky?" The guy said that he "was transferred to different work." Well, I just passed it off and we went ahead and had our meeting. I got back and reported to Dick Funkhouser, who was the economic counselor, and said, "Oh, by the way, Penkovsky wasn't there today, I met with a different guy." He looked at me and said, "What?" And then Hugh Montgomery came in who was the security officer who later I learned was the station chief, I didn't know that at the time. I told him that Penkovsky didn't show up, and I had been told that he had been transferred to different work. In retrospect, I didn't think anything of it at the time, Hugh Montgomery was out of that office like a rocket. I guess that was when Penkovsky was arrested. I never saw him again.

Q: Penkovsky was the highest placed person in the Soviet hierarchy...

WATTS: I think he was very senior and was providing us with extraordinary information. I saw not too long ago a British (?) film made on him and Greville Wynne, who I had met at a reception, and that whole operation. It was a sort of documentary on the Penkovsky files. If it was accurate, it was pretty damned amazing. He had real access and was getting into the inner files taking thousands of pictures. Finally he got caught and Greville Wynne got caught.

This was part of what we were doing all the time, these exchange programs. After the Berlin Wall, a lot of these things just didn't happen. Visas would not get issued. They got much tighter on who they would authorize in delegations. They would knock off a lot of names. Presumably they knew who some of the people were they didn't want in.

Q: How did you find the people you worked with on the Russian side? Were they people who just shrugged their shoulders saying you know how things are today?

WATTS: It really varied. I remember there was a guy from the ministry of higher education by the name of Rastaturov, with whom I felt I had a rather useful working relationship. On a couple of occasions, not often, but a few times, when the Department, knowing of this relationship, would send a cable saying, "Would embassy officer Watts, if he feels it appropriate, ask about such and such." Perhaps a visa had been turned down or something like that. I would go to Rastaturov and say that we would really like to have this guy go and what was happening. And a few times I would get it done; a lot of times, not. So, that could happen.

Another guy I got to know well in the State Committee for Cultural Relations, Burov, I don't know whatever happened to him. I think he was a real candidate to defect. He had been at the UN mission and he loved the United States. He was always getting me tickets for special shows. I gave him tickets to go to the Robert Shaw Choral, he and his wife, and they were absolutely thrilled over the performance.

So, there were a few like that. And Burov was another guy that I could say, "Look, this one we want, let's....," and sometimes it worked. You couldn't do it too often. There were a lot of others who were just cold fish and didn't give a damn. It varied. But, I think it was true that you could have exceptions and obviously you had to be able to deliver in return. So I would have to be able to tell the Department that he gave us on this, I am going to come in for the pro quo somewhere and they would usually do it.

Q: Can we talk about the missile crisis (October 1962) which was over in Cuba but this was probably the most dangerous point of the whole Cold War period?.

WATTS: Yes, I think it probably was. Events were developing at the UN, Adlai Stevenson showing those pictures of the missiles, and there were missile carrying ships on the way and we were scouting them like crazy. The tension increased day by day. A letter came into the embassy that I was not aware of, the first letter from Khrushchev to Kennedy. That was sent off to Washington. Then, about Tuesday of that week, a second letter was sent over from Foreign Minister Gromyko to Ambassador Kohler with instructions that this letter was to be totally secret and sent top priority...our equivalent of FLASH, which we used very, very rarely. Kohler gave

this letter, it was about two pages long, to four of us and said, "Here, translate this." We had to go up to the secure room in the embassy, which was located on the top floor and was an enclosure inside a room that you went into, shut the door and turned on air pumps. I am not quite sure why we did this since the letter came from Khrushchev, but we did.

The interesting part was that each of us when we got part way through our translations sort of looked up stunned. This letter was intemperate. I recall, and this may now be memory playing tricks with me, in the segment that I translated at one point it was saying, "*Kennedi, ti sukina-sin.* Kennedy you son of a bitch." In any event, this was an intemperate letter by any stretch of the imagination.

We took this back down and gave it to Kohler, who was impatiently waiting for it. He knew it had to be something important. He read it...we used to kid about Kohler being the whistler because when he got a little nervous he would start to whistle...this time he went into a full symphony. I will never forget when he said two things. "Gentlemen, you may not discuss the contents of this letter with anybody including your wives." And then as he turned to go in and write his cover note, he said, "I think this may mean war." When your ambassador in Moscow says that, that sort of shakes you up.

Well, the message went off. I later was told that in the ExComm meeting, when the second letter was being discussed, and there were various accounts of what happened, but the account I got was via Chip Bohlen who was there. There were lots of different things thrown out as to what to do. Kennedy then turned to Thompson, this was dealing with the second letter and what it meant, and he said, "Well, gentlemen, you are the two top experts on this, I want your advice." This had been agreed before that he was going to turn to them. So, Bohlen opened this discussion, as I understand the meeting, and said, "Mr. President, we have discussed this at great length and are at complete agreement with what Ambassador Thompson is going to say. He is the senior of the two of us, and speaks for both of us." Thompson, according to this account I got, said, "Mr. President, you never received the second letter. Quite frankly we have read this over and over and over and we can't tell whether Khrushchev might have been drunk, might have had somebody with a gun at his head, there may have been a coup underway, we just don't know. But, whatever it is, if you respond to the second letter, whoever is the cause of that letter is on the hook. They are now committed and we don't know how you deal with that. The first letter you can deal with, it calls for two things -- removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey, which were obsolescent anyway, and essentially a no invasion pledge which is no big deal as we weren't planning to invade anyhow." I was told that President Kennedy said, "Gentlemen, that is why we need career diplomats who know their stuff. Well done."

I told this the other day to a friend of mine, Luke Battle, and he said, "Yes, I had heard about the unanswered second letter and the way I heard it was that somebody said that 'an unanswered letter is a letter that is answered.'" In any event, the thing that was intriguing about this...we didn't know about this yet as it occurred in Washington...and I had been invited to go out to Paris and give a lecture at the NATO Defense College which I can do periodically. Because of my wandering around the Soviet Union I gave them a picture of what was happening there that was quite different. I was leaving Friday to go out. I went to Kohler and said, "Mr. Ambassador, given what is going on, should I cancel the Paris trip?" He said, "No, no, we are going to act as if

nothing is wrong. They know you are going and if you cancel it is a signal of something. We are not going to give any hints of any kind.” So, I left, got on the plane and felt like a real shit in a way. I might have been going out and they are all dead. I got into Paris and stayed with my wife’s parents who were then in Paris. In the meantime I hadn’t told her. I took a taxi and went to the apartment and came into the door and Brantz, my then father-in-law, said, “Did you hear the news?” I said, “No.” He said, “The ships just turned around.” They had just heard that news and that was when it was over. That was really high drama.

About a week or ten days later...I did not keep a diary which in retrospect I regret...we had a reception at Spaso House, the ambassador’s residence. I can’t remember what the occasion was, but the guest for the occasion was a pretty big deal. We expected absolutely nobody from the Soviet leadership to show up, we figured they would send...at the most Gromyko might come in for a minute or two. But, then the whole shebang marched in, Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Kosygin, Gromyko, Malinovsky, they were all there. Everybody was completely startled. It was obviously some kind of statement. How that was interpreted back in Washington, I don’t know. And they were all being...Khrushchev as usual was bubbling around. Finally I went to Kohler and said, “Ambassador Kohler, wouldn’t it be interesting to see what Rodion Malinovsky, the minister of defense, might say if I mentioned the second letter to him -- just to see how he would react?” Kohler said, “Okay, once. You can make a reference to the second letter, once and no more. Don’t follow it up. If he starts asking questions about it, just say you don’t know anything about it; just that there was one. Get out of it immediately. Just drop it in a sentence and leave it at that.”

I went over to Malinovsky, who was a caricature of a Soviet general. He was square with medals that went from his shoulders to his waist. You could just see he didn’t want to be there. He was obviously there under command orders; they were making a show of amity. We chatted a little bit and then I said, “What do you think about the second letter?” He just froze. He stared at me for what seemed like hours but was maybe five seconds. Then in this deep voice he said, “Now I can believe in God” and turned around and walked out. Obviously what he realized was that we did get it and didn’t respond to it and that it may have averted war. It was an amazing thing.

Q: I guess Khrushchev was feeling his weaknesses and also he was intemperate anyway at various times.

WATTS: When he was finally overthrown, a key charge against him was “adventurism,” which meant he would go off half-cocked and they didn’t know what he was going to do. A very interesting man though. When Benny Goodman came, Khrushchev came to the reception for Benny Goodman and I wound up interpreting for him for about a half an hour. Goodman was born in Minsk. He was what now would be a Belorussian Jew. Khrushchev was very interesting to interpret for because you never knew what he was going to say. There was an exhibit at the *Manezh*, an old Tsarist building used as an art gallery, showing of some of the modernist painters. It was shut down after three or four days and he referred to it, to Goodman, as “*bychee gavno*, dog shit. He didn’t care what he said. He was a fascinating man. I think the Russians when you talked about Khrushchev there was no question that he had a real hold on a lot of Russians. This thing about being seen as a man of the people, I think that’s true.

Q: A real populist.

WATTS: Yes, and he was. I think Gorbachev very consciously tried to pick up on some of that during his period of power.

Q: Although you were on the cultural side, were you getting any feeling from the rest of the embassy about how we felt about Khrushchev?

WATTS: Yes, it was a very close knit group as you can imagine, although lots of tensions as well when you live that close together. You get real groupings within. I certainly had good friends working in the political section so we talked about this stuff a lot. I think there was a general sense that Khrushchev was about as good as we were going to get. But I didn't get any hopes for a huge break through or anything like that.

Q: In your travels were you getting reflections of ethnic, nationality differences, etc.?

WATTS: A lot. When I went down to Tbilisi in Georgia, which I really love, the Georgians are a really wild people. You start off breakfast with a bottle of cognac. The anti-Russian feeling in Georgia was so obvious and the same thing in Armenia and Azerbaijan. It was so clear. A group of us were among the very first in the embassy allowed to go up to the Baltic States. We went to all of their capitals, Riga, Tallinn, Vilnius, and the same thing there. I remember going swimming one day and some guy came along and it turned out he was very open and his Russian was very good. He was very open about his anti-Russian state of mind. He told me, and again you are never sure, some of these may have been agents just trying to feed you stuff, you are never 100 percent certain, but he claimed that a lot of the Russians in all three of the Baltic States, with Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian passports, were in fact Russians.

What happened would be somebody would die and they would take that person's passport and recreate them. A Russian would be given that name and passport and a new birth date and would just move in. He was telling me that there were tens of thousands of people who now were supposed to be Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian citizens who were in fact Russian transplants. I don't know whether that is true, although I have heard that elsewhere as well.

Yes, I must say it was not very hard to run up anti-Russian feeling wherever you went.

JOHN A. BAKER, JR.
Political Officer
Moscow (1957-1958)

John A. Baker, Jr. was born in 1927 and raised in Connecticut. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Yugoslavia, Germany, the Soviet Union, Italy, and Czechoslovakia. Mr. Baker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September 23, 1992.

BAKER: ...I was assigned to the US Consulate General in Munich, but actually posted to Oberammergau where the US Army had established what was called "Detachment R", which sounds rather spooky but was really a two year course taught entirely by Soviet defectors. There was nothing classified taught in this course because none of the people giving it had any access to any. They were giving the course in Oberammergau because most of them, because of the McCarran Act, couldn't come to the United States, having been Communists in various parts of the Soviet Union.

In this sort of sanitized environment in a pretty little town in southern Bavaria, I attended one year of this two year course that the Army had established. That course was taught entirely in Russian. We asked our questions in Russian and did our exams in Russian. So it was excellent preparation both linguistically and substantively for an assignment to Moscow which I was aspiring to and to which at the end of that year I got. It was on the way to that assignment in Oberammergau that I did the audience survey in Yugoslavia.

Q: You served in Moscow in 1957-58?

BAKER: Yes, I went there in June, 1957, after an interesting month that I had spent in Spain at the request of the State Department which had pulled me out of the Soviet area program. The assignment in Spain was to interview the children of the Spanish Civil War who had been taken to Russia as the Civil War was ending in northern Spain. Many of them had been orphaned and as orphans of heroes of the Spanish Republic campaigns, which the Soviets had heavily supported, they were protected citizens in Russia. When the war started they moved out to Central Asia but were never allowed to return to Spain until 1956 when they were given that option. Most of them took the option together with their Russian wives and husbands and came back to Spain. They were one of the first sociological samples that we had of what living in the Soviet Union was like so an interview project was set up. Since I spoke Russian and Spanish, I was asked to participate in that.

Q: What was your impression of this group?

BAKER: They had lived in very difficult circumstances, although probably not any more difficult than the rest of the Soviet population during and after the war. Many of them, particularly the women, probably had gotten better educational and professional opportunities in the Soviet system than they might have in Spain. In Franco Spain, having been children and orphans of Republican heroes might have somewhat limited their opportunities.

They came back to Spain, even those of them who had become chemists and engineers, primarily for Spanish reasons, I concluded. They were Spaniards. They kept on feeling like they were Spaniards even though they were in the Soviet Union. In spite of the fact that most of their adolescence and young adulthood was spent in the Soviet system, they felt like Spaniards and they came back to Spain. Some of them had a rough adjustment, particularly the women, because in the mid-fifties a professional woman in Spain was a rarity. But they were not regretting their decision. They had some respect for the opportunities they had in Russia but a lot of the same kind of discontent with the authoritarian nature of the system that the Russians had as well. I

think they also felt they had never really been fully accepted into that society. They had always been regarded as foreigners, different, and maybe not to be totally trusted.

Q: Then you went to Moscow.

BAKER: I got there in June, 1957 just about the time when Khrushchev was dealing with the anti-Party group.

Q: He had already made his 20th Party speech denouncing Stalin and all that. The repercussions must have still been going on.

BAKER: Of course the repercussions of that speech in February, 1956, I had already encountered somewhat in southern Germany and Austria in the fall of 1956 because the Budapest events in the fall of 1956 were certainly a repercussion. There were Hungarians who were roaring through southern Germany back into Budapest to help the people there. A month or two later there were people trying to help them cross the border to escape the Russian reprisal. So by the time I got to Russia the Russian leadership had been somewhat sobered by the consequences of this secret speech at the 20th Congress. They were retrenching a bit. Khrushchev was under pressure both for his initiatives at the Party Congress which had these dangerous, for them, consequences in Eastern Europe, but even more for the reforms he was trying to carry out in the Soviet administration, particularly the administration of industry.

He was creating councils of national economy, giving more local power to bureaucrats in the provinces and republics and less power to the people in the ministries in Moscow. Those were the people who had basically come up through the Moscow Party ranks and formed the basic support of Molotov and Malenkov. They were the people who that group relied on in their effort to unseat Khrushchev in June, 1957. It was these newly empowered people from the provinces around the country who Khrushchev and Zhukov brought in by airplane to the Central Committee who rescued Khrushchev from an adverse vote in the Soviet Politburo.

Q: You were in Moscow when this happened?

BAKER: I arrived in Moscow just afterwards. I was assigned to the political section to analyze Soviet foreign policy. I was interminably analyzing the Soviet press for clues about changes in foreign policy. It was kind of a deadly job. I had to read about seven or eight newspapers a day and produce a telegram that summarized what was significant in them about Soviet foreign policy. It struck me as a kind of bizarre thing to be doing because you could get those same papers back to the research people in Washington within a few days and they could do it probably better. But just to get maybe 48 hours jump...

Q: Sort of being one up or showing you are on top of it for the embassy.

BAKER: That's what it struck me as doing and it just seemed to me, having been trained to be able to move around and talk to people, not to be the best use of my skills.

Consequently I went out, whenever I wasn't poring through these papers, and did things and met

people and had some rather unusual experiences, the consequence of which was being expelled from Russia at the end of my first year.

Q: Before we come to that, what about the Embassy? What was the spirit, how did Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson operate?

BAKER: Llewellyn Thompson operated with his cards very close to his chest. Apparently he is a very good poker player. The press used to play poker with him and had a lot of respect for his abilities in that regard. He was a quiet person. He didn't glad hand much with the staff. We had very little contact with him. Neither he nor his wife did a lot of outreach to the staff socially. That was left to the Deputy Chief of Mission, Richard Davis and his wife, Harriet. Harriet Davis was sort of the den mother to the Embassy, more than the Ambassador's wife, Jane Thompson. It was a good embassy. I enjoyed serving in embassies in the Communist countries because you had the sense of working in conditions of adversity and on the front lines of the Cold War. You had colleagues of high quality because I think the Department tried to send people of high quality to those posts.

Q: That was certainly my experience in Belgrade. It was the best group of people I ever served with.

BAKER: So, to me, in terms of working atmosphere and working personal relationships, it was a real high. Those were good people. David Mark was the political counselor. The political section had Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs sections. Morrie Rothenberg, who had a long career in INR and had been Wristonized, was heading the Foreign Affairs section. In that section with me was Ted Eliot who had come up after a year of doing the admin work in the Embassy. Ted was later Ambassador to Afghanistan and Executive Secretary to the Department. These were, I thought, first rate people. We got along well, had fun together. We had fun with our British counterparts, the Canadians, the French, etc. There wasn't any significant social life with the Russians because a Russian wouldn't want to risk socializing with the Americans.

Q: Did you get involved at all with the Soviet bureaucracy?

BAKER: Not very much. I guess the only people in the Embassy who got involved with them were the people in the Administrative or Consular sections. I went rarely to the Foreign Ministry because we didn't have even that much contact with the Foreign Ministry and what we did have was handled by the Ambassador or the DCM or the chief of the political section. So I had virtually no interaction with the Soviet bureaucracy, except when I went on a field trip of some kind and then I would attempt to call up various local authorities to gather information about that area. That was generally fairly unsatisfactory.

I found most of the standard information I got about that society was a result of accidental one-time exposures. Sitting down next to somebody in a crowded restaurant where the waiter would put you at a table that was already partially occupied. Or sitting next to someone on a plane or a train or in a theater, or at the university.

Those occasions were really extraordinary because often you would feel that the person you were

talking to soon realized that you were an American and thought this was the one chance to say everything that he might want to say to an American. It was a chance to say things he wouldn't even say to his neighbor because he couldn't trust him. So you often had a two-hour conversation of the most extraordinary intimacy with somebody you had never met before and who you would never see again. They knew and you knew that they might be able to explain that conversation on the grounds that the guy was sitting next to him, but how would you explain going back for another conversation? You couldn't. If you went back to see that American diplomat you must of been working something against the interests of the Soviet state. So there was that sense that everything had to be said, communicated and exchanged...

Q: What type of things would the discussion evolve around?

BAKER: Often very personal tales of their own experience of great hardship, hardship of their families, losses in their families, pressure by the authorities of one kind or another, often many questions about the United States, on the one hand illustrating that they had been infected by Soviet propaganda, but on the other hand illustrating that they didn't trust it and they wanted to check it against another source.

Q: In your analysis of Soviet foreign policy, how did you see the threat to the West from the Soviet Union?

BAKER: In the fall of 1957, there was a big conclave of all the Communist parties on the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution and that produced a heavily negotiated document about the purposes and goals of the international Communist movement. It was one of the first documents that attempted to do that. It was significant because the Chinese were there and because East Europeans, after these tumultuous events of 1956, were there and because the Yugoslavs were there, beginning to be pulled back into the system but not being sure they wanted to.

That document, I think, illustrated the ambitious intentions of the international Communist movement as led by the Soviets and, significantly, it began to open up the attack on revisionism - revisionism being the kind of thing that happened in Hungary and Poland, but also the Yugoslav variant. So the Yugoslavs didn't sign on to this, or at least not all of it because they could see that the international Communist movement was pulling back away from the promises of the 20th Congress of a more co-existing, open approach to the rest of the world and more tolerance within the international Communist movement.

So this sort of retrenchment was occurring. I don't think we understood fully at the time all the reasons why it was occurring. One of the important reasons, in retrospect, was the Sino-Soviet relationship. The Chinese under Mao were disturbed by what happened in 1956 and they were trying to push the Soviets back towards a more orthodox and confrontational stance vis-a-vis the US. And sure enough in the winter of 1957-58, not only did you have these increasing signs of tightening up within the system with the anti-revisionist drive, but you also had the launch of a campaign vis-a-vis the West in Berlin. That was Khrushchev's declaration that the anomalous situation in Berlin would have to be somehow changed or resolved, or else. It was never very clear what "or else" would be, but it was somewhat menacing and Khrushchev, being a man of

temperament, had a way of occasionally adopting a menacing posture.

So that was the atmosphere of that winter. We had seen in the summer of 1957 a sort of benign face of the Soviet system in the form of the First Moscow Youth Festival, where they had really gone all out to make Moscow appear the capital of the Socialist, and not only the Socialist but the non-capitalist world, and it was heavily oriented towards the third world. There were a lot of Africans, and Asians and some Latin Americans there. It really looked like a bid to establish a Communist movement as the leader of the underprivileged of the earth which would eventually encircle the small developed societies grouped around the United States and Europe.

It was run, for Russia, in a very open way. Russian young people had an opportunity that they never had before to meet all these people and to talk freely to them, pretty much. That really blew their minds. So in a way, it had a reverse effect.

I had a chance to experience that because I had a rather unusual experience in that year of 1957-58. In the early fall of 1957 the Embassy got a telegram from the Department saying, "A couple of Russian diplomats have applied to George Washington University." This was the first time that had happened. The Department's general message was: It probably is a healthy thing and we don't have any real way of obstructing that. Washington is not a closed city. George Washington is not a closed university so if they pay the tuition...what do we do? But we want to keep things reciprocal. We want to say to the Russians, "Yeah, sure those guys can go there, but that means there has to be access to Moscow University for some of our diplomats."

So I raised my hand. I didn't want to spend all my time reading the newspapers. I volunteered to go to Moscow University. I had an idea what I might want to do there because I had made some inquiries during the Youth Festival about the history faculty and I had identified a course which I thought sounded quite innocuous and would not frighten anybody that I was taking this course.

We sent a note to the Foreign Ministry saying that Second Secretary John Baker wants to apply to Moscow University and we would appreciate the support and cooperation of the Ministry. Eventually, and it took them about a month to deal with this unusual idea, they gave me the go ahead and I went to the University and saw the Dean and was allowed to attend this one course which was called, "History of the Soviet Union in the Feudal Period." What it really was was a history of the different peoples of the Soviet Union, their respective feudal areas, but they didn't want to say history of Russia because that would be too great Russia. It was a history mostly of Russia but also some lectures on some of the other nationalities from about 800 AD down to the beginning of the 19th century. The professor was fairly good. I went there once a week. They wouldn't give me a student pass because they didn't want me roaming around the buildings, but they would let me in on my own recognizance every Friday morning and I would attend this two-hour lecture.

The students immediately identified me as an American and in the wake of the Youth Festival they thought the fact that I was at the University must make me fair game, that maybe I was some kind of an American leftist, or what have you. I fairly soon identified myself as to what I was and what I was doing. That cooled some of them, but not all of them, particularly not those who were organizing the history faculty's basketball team. I am about 6'4" and played basketball

in school and at the University of Geneva in Switzerland, so I agreed to play as long as there was no objection by the administration. So I went out and practiced for about a month with the history faculty's basketball team and got to know these young guys. Partied a little bit with them. Even had some of them come over to my house and listen to records. Sometimes when we got an American hockey team or basketball team in town I would get a few extra tickets. So in a fairly innocuous way I developed a set of acquaintances there which was interesting. Obviously they had no secrets they could share with me other than their personal lives, but it gave me an insight into the society which was unusual.

Eventually the Dean told me that I couldn't play basketball for the history faculty. Clearly I was a revisionist influence on the court! It was put on the fairly legitimate grounds that I wasn't a full time student. I kept up these connections but over the winter the anti-revisionist campaign developed and penetrated the University and I began to be increasingly isolated. The people who I had been friendly with in the fall began to tell me that it was not going to be healthy for them to continue to chat with me.

I had been going to parties occasionally over at the Lenin Hills dorms. Of course, these were never parties in the rooms of Russian students who would be compromised by that. It was all set up so that the hosts would be Egyptians or Syrians, who were very much in vogue at that time and seemed to be willing to stage interminable parties as long as anybody else would provide the vodka. I was barely turning 30 and a lot of these students were in their middle twenties and this was a cheerful and interesting experience. Obviously I was being surveilled all this time and therefore the people who were talking to me eventually were contacted and told to lay off. So by the late winter I wasn't seeing a whole lot of these guys going to class. In May I went on leave to London with my wife and while we were in England, the Embassy contacted me and called me and told me that I had been thrown out of the Soviet Union and couldn't go back. This got a little press coverage. There was protest by the US Embassy. The Chargé, Dick Davis, went in and demanded an explanation. They said that I had violated the norms of diplomatic behavior. Dick said, "What norms had he violated to make sure we don't violate it again?" They said, "Ask Mr. Baker to search his conscience."

Q: Isn't that nice.

BAKER: So I have been searching my conscience since 1958 as to what norms I might have violated. But clearly the norms I violated would not be violable norms in any normal country. I was simply getting more exposure to the Soviet citizenry than was convenient for the authorities and they finally wanted to put a stop to it.

Q: Now it is almost an exquisite ballet of tic for tat. Did a Soviet diplomat get kicked out then?

BAKER: Yes. I don't know to this day whether this was in response to my being kicked out or whether this particular Soviet diplomat had been identified and was known by the Soviets to be about to be thrown out when they threw me out, so that they could make it look like a retaliation. Subsequently, on one or two occasions later in my career when we tried to test the waters as to whether I could return on another assignment, the answer always was, "Yeah, you can return but only if one of ours gets to return." Since most of the Soviet diplomats who were thrown out here

were for espionage, that deal was never made.

Q: Just to get a feel for your personal reaction and maybe those around you, after all you had devoted a great deal of time to your Russian training and all and to go there for such a short time and be told "no more," careerwise this is sort of a blow isn't it?

BAKER: Yes, I thought it was quite a blow. A blow from several respects. I had been abroad just two years, one year in Germany and one in Russia, and I had hoped to be abroad at least five years in a couple of assignments and get through the period while we were having young children and use some of the good help you could get overseas. But when I dropped suddenly onto the hands of the personnel system they couldn't drop me into another appropriate European assignment, so I was brought back to the States. That was not very convenient because I had a young son and another on the way.

Secondly, I was dropped into an assignment which didn't look all that promising from a career standpoint. But, it turned out that I was able to make something of it that was kind of interesting.

DAVID E. MARK
Political & Economic Counselor
Moscow (1957-1959)

Ambassador David E. Mark graduated from Columbia University in 1943. Shortly after completing a year of law school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Near the end of World War II, Ambassador Mark joined the Foreign Service. He served in Korea, Romania, Switzerland, Burundi, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Henry Precht on July 28, 1989.

Q: Okay. So then in 1957 you're off to Moscow as political counselor?

MARK: The title was "Chief of Chancery," a British rank, but for me it was being the political and economic counselor.

Q: Both of them?

MARK: Both of them.

Q: You had never done economic work before?

MARK: No, I had never done economic work. We had ten people in the section including me, and two of them sort of worked on economic matters, to the extent that one could amidst Soviet statistical secrecy. There's nothing I can add to the history of the Khrushchev era that I participated in. I worked for a tremendously able ambassador, Llewellyn Thompson--"Tommy" Thompson. This was the first of his two ambassadorial tours there. He had an easy working relationship with Khrushchev, whom he often saw informally.

It was a time of great change there. Not as much as now with Gorbachev, but since we were much closer to the Stalin era, it seemed like a lot. Moscow was scrubbed of any anti-American posters that I had remembered from 1952. We were able to speak to many more people.

We also had weekly meetings with counterparts from many embassies of NATO allies to exchange specific information and insights. From these many sources and from some contacts during rail and automobile trips in Russia, I came to the conclusion that the Soviet dictatorship was too strongly entrenched to be overturned. This conclusion, of course, would have great significance, if true, for U.S. objectives during the Cold War confrontation. I wrote a long essay on this matter in 1958, and Ambassador Thompson sent it on to Washington with an introduction of his own saying that matters were not as hopeless for a pro-Western outcome as I was predicting. I wanted to rebut his argumentation, but he said that I was being impolite to a superior. So that my addition never went in. I couldn't foresee the Gorbachev era 30 years later, but I wish that Ambassador Thompson were still alive to experience it as a validation of his relative optimism.

Regarding automobile trips, I was the first non-military American to get a driver's license. Nowadays it's done reciprocally. Soviets get them in Washington and we get them in Moscow, but I had to go through the whole exam business.

I was excused from just one thing that Soviet drivers had to do and that's to pass a mechanic's test for repairing the car. But I had to take a big physical exam and then I had to learn all the rules and regulations. There they don't have signs--they didn't then at least--have signs on the streets saying, "Parking Two Hours," or "No Parking," or whatnot. You just learned all the rules, that within ten meters of such and such a lamppost or whatever, one doesn't park. Or when you have double trolley tracks, you can't do certain things about turning left. There was a large book of rules, and I had to study, study, study because you were tested via a sort of a little gaming board, moving cars around, and then you got a road test in addition. And so, as I say, I was the first American to get a license and I had my own car over there.

I don't know--I guess we can say it; enough time has passed, about 30 years. Some things can be declassified. But one day before I went to Moscow the--I guess he was still deputy assistant secretary--Jake Beam, who was soon to become ambassador to Poland, called me in and said, "David, the CIA would like you to support them a bit when you're in Moscow."

And I said, "Well, what do you mean?"

He said, "Well, they don't have anybody in Moscow."

Q: They didn't?

MARK: Well, that's part of the story. [Laughter] "They don't have anybody in Moscow and so they need some help with things. If you agree, why, I'll put you in touch with them and they'll tell you about it." So that happened and I was put in touch with some people from the operational side in the agency.

And they said, "Well, you know, you just have to learn some of the tasks that we have vis-a-vis the USSR, and of course, there will be surveillance on you which you must keep in mind." And so they gave me some sporadic lectures in Washington, before I went out there, and I was to use a channel of communication through the diplomatic pouch.

Well, about four or five months after I got there, someone arrived as a security officer at the embassy, and he turned out to be one of the people with whom I had studied Russian back in 1951 in the Department. And I knew at that time that he was CIA officer, so I immediately asked through my channels, "Well, isn't this a CIA officer?" and they came back in due course and said, "Yes. But we'd still like you to go on with support work." So we only communicated with each other writing inside the embassy, since we suspected that the place was bugged, which it was, as we now know for sure. As it turned out, only occasionally did he ask me to do something, but, at those occasions, I did try to help.

And I guess the Soviets suspected it, because they began tailing me even more closely. I should have guessed this perhaps when, on some Saturday going to visit a country museum near Moscow, I came back to my car, started it off--it was a Jeep station wagon actually--and soon, after I'd gone a little distance back toward Moscow, a taxi driver said at a red light, "Say, you're leaking some oil underneath." And sure enough, the KGB agents, at the museum parking lot, wanting to wreck my motor, had pulled the plug on the oil reservoir. So I got towed the rest of the way back by an embassy truck; and that saved the car.

Then, a little later on, there was another big incident involving their effort to take away my driver's license under some spurious pretext. I kept driving anyway and we complained to the foreign ministry, which eventually returned my license. What this finally led to after I had been in Moscow two years, and when I had been assigned to Tokyo as my next post, was that I was declared PNG (persona non grata).

Q: Was this a reciprocal action because of something that happened here?

MARK: Yes, it was. We had just thrown a guy out of Washington who had been dealing with agents, and about a week later they threw me out. Well, our ambassador complained at the Soviet foreign ministry, and even saw Gromyko; but Gromyko just said, "Oh, well. If you knew about him what I know about him, you'd agree with me, but I can't tell you what I know about him."
[Laughter]

The formal charge was that during a trip to Riga in Latvia, which I had made 19 months earlier as the first U.S. embassy official to visit a Baltic state since their annexation by the USSR in 1940, I had tried to suborn an Intourist agent. They had, in fact, gotten it wrong. It had been a U.S. military man who tried to do the suborning. The Intourist agent paradoxically had just returned--he was a Latvian--had returned from forced exile in Siberia, so he was bitterly anti-Soviet, and beyond suborning anyway. So that was just a pretext, and I'll tell you more about that a little later on.

But I think, you know, in retrospect, the services I performed for the CIA were marginal, and I think it was a great mistake ever to have been asked to do this by the Agency. And I told that to the people in the Agency later on, because the guy who got me involved was later on was the Agency's chief of station in Paris, when I told him that. My job was too prominent in the embassy as the political counselor to get involved in that sort of thing. Now, my job may have made me attractive to the Agency. They may have thought that it was less likely that I would be followed as closely, but I think that since they know the KGB and its operations much better than I, they should have known what the KGB would do, particularly to a person with his own private car. Indeed, Ambassador Beam should have rejected CIA's approach, instead of putting the question to me. And the CIA, after all, knew it was untrue that they had no representation of their own in Moscow.

Q: It would seem in bureaucratic terms, from their standpoint, they were getting the services of someone without the usual risks. They always risk losing someone through compromise and have to start all over training a replacement. They didn't have to worry about that with you.

MARK: A friend of mine in the Service who left--who was "PNGed" from Moscow a year before I came, I think pretty clearly had been in the same position vis-à-vis the CIA, and they had had their own person there at the time, too. So I think that because they were at that time limited to a very small station of their own in Moscow, they wanted to have supplemental "assets." But in using Foreign Service officers to help them they were coming close to upsetting a basic State Department rule that the CIA cannot be given the protective title of "Foreign Service officer" for its own personnel. Or, at least, that is the way it was through 1980.

Q: But the State Department limited the CIA size in Moscow then?

MARK: I think probably we did, but also owing to general circumstances; and the CIA station expanded, I guess, later on. But in any case, this episode really changed my whole career. I mean, I think my career was headed pretty well in the Soviet-U.S. orbit. Still, I must admit that I don't know how far upwards I would have gotten anyway, because I committed one other sin in Moscow within the Service, when I told something to an Egyptian colleague which I shouldn't have done.

Q: That was not a sin that the Soviets objected to?

MARK: No, no, no. No, no, they didn't know. But what happened was that I had been let in on some information that I now know involved the U-2 spy plane. It involved the Gary Powers-type thing that came to public attention in 1960.

Q: You mean the source of the information?

MARK: Yes, the source of the information, and that was sort of the only way such facts could have been known--or by some other means of intelligence operation. And I had not been cleared for that information, and therefore had never really been warned about its sensitivity. Nevertheless, I was given the information in the embassy with an injunction not to pass it on to anyone. But in a conversation, trying to get somewhere, get something in return out of my

Egyptian colleague, I mentioned it, and the Egyptians noted it, and it got back to the ambassador, and he was very upset about my mistake. So that my efficiency report for that year said that there was no harder working, no more brilliant reporter in the embassy, but that he, at times, did not show the discretion that he should have. And it took me until 1962 to get promoted--that had been five years--up to Class 2, I think very directly reflecting upon my lapse in Moscow.

But in any case, regardless of how that turned out, getting PNGed by the Soviets changed my whole career pattern. Even in 1973, when I next tried to visit there, the Soviets refused a visa. But I had been assigned to Tokyo anyway. I was to be the officer who followed all Japanese foreign policy, except toward the United States. That is, all other aspects of Japanese foreign policy, and the Department planned to give me an intensive six months Japanese language course using a new pedagogic method, which much appealed to me. But instead of going directly to Tokyo--

Q: You left Moscow when?

MARK: In, I guess it was June 1959. I had arrived in June of '57.

But at the last minute, Washington said, "Well, instead of going to Tokyo right away, could you please put in three months on TDY--temporary duty--in Geneva, because we have this conference going on to ban nuclear weapons." I think at the time, it was soon after the conference to discuss the scientific possibilities of banning nuclear weapons had ended more or less successfully. The final agreement had said that there were enough possibilities of verification scientifically to justify the political negotiation effort. But anyway, they told me, "Would you go down there, because we always have a sort of Soviet expert on the delegation, and our Soviet expert is being pulled away very suddenly for some other job. So until we get another one, could you fill in there?"

I said, "Sure." So I went down to Geneva for three months and began learning something about the subject. I fell into the hands of the extremely able disarmament crowd, including such people as Ron Spiers. And after three months, there was an adjournment. That was at the end of September 1959. These conferences always have periodic adjournments. And they said, "Well, you know, we're going to resume soon and go on up to Christmas. We will see how these things go, but you've learned enough now. So couldn't you stay another three months, and we'll fix it up with the Japan desk about your Tokyo assignment." And I said, "Sure. It's okay with me."

Q: Did you want to stay in Geneva?

MARK: Geneva was a nice place. I went back to the States actually in October 1959 and got engaged at the time. I had met a lady in Moscow, an elegant American lady who was running the Anglo-American school there; she left the year before I did, but we corresponded. I went back to the States, and on that leave in October 1959, we got engaged. So Geneva was sort of closer to Washington than Tokyo, it seemed to me, and thus I went back to Switzerland for another three months.

Well, as you might imagine, by year's end, I had acquired six months of experience, had begun writing many of the speeches for the disarmament delegation for its formal presentation, had begun learning the details of the issues there, and had begun understanding something about how arms control efforts were evolving. This subject was the name of the game at the time; the nuclear test ban was politically important; and so the Department said to me, "Well, you know, if you want to stay in Geneva and don't want to go to Tokyo, you can."

The East Asian office was very upset. They said, "We've had this job vacant nine months now and it's an important job; but, okay, we've taken our lumps," and I went back to Geneva. So I was there four years altogether, until the conference ended in July 1963. By the time it ended, much had happened. We always had a political appointee as the head of the delegation. Initially, it was James Wadsworth, who had been our U.N. ambassador for a while, and then, after that it was Arthur Dean, who had been the head of the prestigious New York law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell.

We had initially had a couple of very distinguished Foreign Service officers as chief of staff. When I first got there it was David Popper, who doesn't need any description, later Ambassador to Chile and Assistant Secretary for UN affairs. Then it became Charles Stelle, who died very suddenly later on but who was, of course, an old Iranian hand, too, like you, Henry (Precht, the interviewer). But anyway, he came to Geneva, and when he left, I became chief of staff, "Coordinator", of the delegation. Thus, I got heavily involved in the disarmament side. I finally received my promotion, because I had sort of worn away the stigma, I guess, of that lapse in Moscow, and because I had learned something useful about disarmament processes with the USSR.

Q: Did you like it? I mean, that technical business is quite different from what you had done in the past.

MARK: Right. But it was political too, because the aim of the conference--there were three countries negotiating it: Britain, Soviet Union, and the United States--the second aim of the conference was to prevent nuclear weapons from spreading to any additional nations, besides the first aim of stopping the testing; and this political aim was going to be realized through the clauses of the eventual test ban treaty. It was a very complicated formula that was going to involve bringing the French and the Chinese into the arrangement.

But no one could envisage in those days what happened subsequently. I mean that, in 1966, a separate treaty was concluded to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, which is still in existence. Our conference was just on testing, but since non-dissemination was then the side aim of the negotiations, we were heavily engaged in all kinds of political issues at the same time regarding non-spread, and we also wanted to set up the structure of a test ban verification agency. It got us into intrusive verification questions that were, you know, quite insoluble until more recent days.

Also, in the last year of the conference, the test ban issue was subsumed under the new 18 nation disarmament conference that was set up in 1962. We three nations maintained a kind of separate identity as a "subcommittee" within that larger conference. But our delegation--again it was still

the same delegation--had now to spend time on the new conference's attempt, that went on for a year, to negotiate general and complete worldwide disarmament, nuclear and conventional.

Q: Did you take this all seriously?

MARK: Well, people didn't take the conventional disarmament side so seriously, but nevertheless there was the glare of publicity on it, and we had to come up with overall disarmament plans. We had all kinds of staged conventional disarmament plans, getting rid of planes, tanks, and artillery and troops and zones and whatnot. I mean, these things were thought out. They've only come to life really in the present day. But 25 years ago, we were discussing lots and lots of these same issues.

Q: But did you really think that you were doing work that would have a practical outcome?

MARK: Yes and no. On the nuclear test ban side, we always had hopes of success because, obviously, the Soviets had an interest there, too. But on the rest, no, we didn't. But nevertheless, it was an exercise in which for the first time we were forced to think about all these matters in a systematic way. I mean, if you were serious--and as far as world public opinion was concerned we had to seem to be serious--then what did you propose you do? What kind of disarmament plans; and what was wrong with the Soviet plans, because they had come up with them, too? So anyway, that was all.

Q: You were talking about your service at the Geneva disarmament conference.

MARK: Well, this conference went through a number of phases. Of course, to jump ahead, we do now have a nuclear test ban treaty; it's a partial test ban treaty. It doesn't cover underground nuclear tests. Our negotiations were aimed at concluding a total nuclear test ban, but we ended up with a partial one as a result of direct negotiations between Kennedy and Khrushchev in 1963, that at the last stages brought in Averell Harriman as chief negotiator.

To jump ahead even further, after the end of this conference, I was sent for my senior Foreign Service training to Harvard to be a Fellow at the Center for International Affairs, of which Henry Kissinger was then deputy director. And one could do almost anything one wanted during that year; and one of the things I did was to write a book about my nuclear test ban experiences. This turned out to be a fairly lengthy book of a couple of hundred pages, and it does record my experiences, as well as describe the details and motivations of the four years of negotiations. Unfortunately, I never could get it published in the United States. I tried a number of university presses and they said, "But you don't have footnotes."

And I said, "Well, a lot of this is my personal recollection."

And they said, "Well, we're not sure it will sell very well."

And I said, "No, but that's why a university press exists." And in any event, the book finally got published in 1965 in German by the German Foreign Policy Association.

Q: You didn't have to translate it?

MARK: No. I didn't have to do the initial translation draft, but after each section was translated, it was sent back to me for correction--the German text was sent back for correction. It had taken me four months to write the book, but it took five months to correct the German.

But incidentally, and this is jumping ahead to the present day (1989), a friend of mine still on duty in the State Department in Soviet matters, who has kept up with disarmament types on the Soviet side all these years, was in Vienna in 1989 to talk with the Soviet diplomat who is now involved in negotiating with us on the conventional arms force cuts. I believe that's the conference that I'm talking about.

Anyway, this man, named Oleg Grinevsky, had been a very, very junior man at the time of the test ban talks. He was then just starting his Soviet Foreign Service career. But he said to my friend that he is now putting together all his recollections to write a book of memoirs about disarmament efforts from the Soviet point of view, but unfortunately, he didn't have any really solid recollections about the test ban negotiations. And my friend said to him, "Oh, haven't you read Dave Mark's book about it?"

He said, "I didn't know he'd written a book."

And my friend said, "Yes. He wrote a book but it's in German, unfortunately."

And the guy said, "Well, I don't read German."

So my friend said, "Well, I'll talk to Dave and find out whether he's got the original English manuscript." And I rummaged around and found an English original and sent it to my friend in Washington, on condition that he xerox me a copy, as well as xerox one for our Soviet colleague. And so now a Soviet has a copy of it and may look through to see how that contributes to his recollections of this conference and to his understanding of American negotiating positions.

But anyway, getting back to the time of the conference, the Eisenhower Administration carried the conference in effect up through November 1960. That's when we adjourned. We adjourned just about the time of the election in which Kennedy was elected. And this was the only Soviet-American negotiation that survived the U-2 crisis in May 1960; it continued going. Much of our emphasis had been on test ban verification problems. How, if we got to a nuclear test ban, how could we be sure on our side that the Russians weren't cheating on the treaty?

Well, nobody had been talking about Gary Powers and the U-2, even though he and his colleagues in U-2s were flying over the Soviet nuclear testing site in Siberia, Semipalatinsk. So we had a lot of intrusion. We could see every time the Soviets began surface preparations for blowing up a nuclear weapon. I mean, there were extensive towers and testing equipment and whatnot, that one could see from the U-2.

Q: And presumably they knew we could see?

MARK: I would think so, because I had not been let in on the U-2, but while in Moscow in 1958, I had read a debriefing report of a defected Soviet soldier, who was really Polish, but had ended up in that part of Poland taken by the Soviet Union in 1944-1945, and who had been drafted into the Soviet army when he got of age. He had been a young boy at the time the war ended. And he told about being in a unit in Siberia which periodically got very agitated. Then, he heard from one of his officers that there was something hostile flying over now and then, but that there was nothing that the Soviets could do about it. He was in an antiaircraft unit, but they couldn't do anything about it and this got everybody very excited.

So, of course, that was the U-2. I didn't know its name then. Even after reading it, I thought, "Well, that's an interesting kind of defector's report." But, in fact, the U-2 was what was going on. So obviously the Soviets did know about it. They knew about it all too well.

But we had the U-2's information, and we also had technical detection possibilities which we talked about, and which meant tracking seismic events. I mean, earthquakes cause seismographs to register, and so do nuclear tests. But then the question was, "Well, if the Russians did it in certain kind of rock layers, wouldn't that tend to mask the seismic waves or cause us to confuse them with natural events?", natural events being the earthquakes. Then we got into the "big hole theory"; namely, that if you had a tremendous cavity in the earth like a salt cavern and the U.S. or the USSR did the explosion in that, it would muffle the sound. And there were, you know, scientific postulations that supported the "big hole theory."

So we said that, obviously, to be sure about things, you had to have on-site inspections. I mean unless you could have on-site inspections, you couldn't ever know what was a "natural event" or a man-made nuclear event, or whatnot. And so the Soviets, naturally, in that era said, "On-site inspection is espionage." But after much to-do, they said, "Well, we'll agree to three of them a year."

That was a tremendous concession. And they agreed to three of them without ever agreeing, then or later, on what an on-site inspection would consist of, on what specific steps the other side could take in terms of looking around the suspected place. That was another whole set of arguments that occupied days of meetings. But the question of whether a mere three could ever be accepted by us was not a very difficult one. The answer was "No." Three were never going to be enough. Because if you used one, then you had two left. And if you used one of those two, you felt that you had none left, because if you ever used it, if you ever used your last one, then the Russians could test with impunity because you had no on-site inspections left.

Q: Did we really want an agreement? Did our side?

MARK: Well, I'm coming to that in a minute. [Laughter]

So what would be enough? Would five be enough per year, or seven, nine, eleven? The question you just asked, "Did we really want an agreement?" then came into play. A lot of people didn't want an agreement, and the top of the Eisenhower Administration was split very clearly. Defense didn't want an agreement; the Joint Chiefs didn't seem to want an agreement; State wanted an

agreement; and Disarmament was not then a separate agency, it was within State; Eisenhower wanted an agreement, but only a sound and politically defensible one.

Everybody wanted to get rid of nuclear testing in the atmosphere because it was producing radiation. Strontium-90 was affecting milk and all that sort of thing. Testing was the origin of what we now call the "green movement," but those kinds of tests in the atmosphere could have been easily prohibited by a simple agreement. There was no danger of cheating on that. You didn't need international verification means other than what the U.S. possessed on its own; and our military would have preferred a simple thing of that sort.

But other people wanted a total nuclear test ban, not just an atmospheric ban. I even invented for one of my speeches at the conference, I think sometime in 1960, the phrase, "preventive disarmament." In other words, if we could prevent nuclear tests, we'd prevent all the weapons that new nuclear warheads could go into. As a matter of fact, from what we now know we couldn't have developed MIRV missiles, multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles. We couldn't have had them because, if we had had a complete test ban in the early '60s, we never would have been able to develop a warhead for a MIRV missile. As a matter of fact, our whole range of missiles would have been totally different, much, much simpler. The whole problem of large-scale disarmament would have been totally different if we had arrived at a nuclear test ban treaty.

Q: Why were some people opposed? Why were some people in favor? What was the motivation?

MARK: Well, some people, of course, didn't want to have agreements with Soviet communists under any circumstances. I mean, we find people more or less like that today. I would say the people represented by Richard Perle in current-day Washington (1989).

Q: People so distrusting of communism or fearful of the Russian power?

MARK: Or not wanting to reduce the United States to seem a mere coequal instead of a greater and better nation. You know, if you sign an agreement in which you pledge not to do what they're also pledging not to do, you give them legitimacy as coequals, and these people didn't want to give that status to the Soviet Union. They also thought, there were a lot of people who still thought, we could gain supremacy if we kept on testing. You know, we had more technology and we had more resources.

It's this old idea that has come up again in the Reagan years of spending them into bankruptcy. We have succeeded more or less in doing that, but we've done it to ourselves almost as badly in the course of it, so that's the irony of the thing. But in any case, there were those factors there in the 1960s.

And yet there were other people who were for disarmament, people like Ambassador Gerald Smith, who was already involved in those days and for years after, ultimately as head of the Arms Control and the Disarmament Agency, a Republican serving in all kinds of administrations. I mean these people believe that disarmament is one of the means by which we would gradually reach a Soviet-American entente, or at least an understanding about live and let

live. And of course they were urging this in the Khrushchev era, so there was then already some reason to think that evolutionary possibilities existed.

Q: Did you get the sense that there was a similar division on the Russian side?

MARK: Not on those issues, and the Russians were extremely difficult to fathom then. We were only tentatively starting at that time what is now standard practice at disarmament conferences. It began for us in '62 when we merged the nuclear test ban into the new 18-nation disarmament conference. And the new aspect was that, after each meeting of the 3 nation test ban subcommittee, the sides would get together informally and just exchange notes, exchange remarks on the meeting, or sometimes use it as an occasion to talk informally about what might be going on in the other's capital. That began in 1962 and is, as I say, now standard practice, which led to the hit Broadway nuclear disarmament play, "A Walk in the Woods," that sort of thing.

But it had not happened before mid-1962. Before then, at most, we had lunch together every now and then, of which more later. There was also for me another incident. But the Russians were extremely tight-lipped about things. The only hint we got was that there might be a fight in Moscow about whether they should resume nuclear testing. Because the Soviets, when they went into this conference in 1959, had declared a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing and we had not. I mean, we came to stop testing later, but we didn't declare it officially. So we went on testing in 1959, and then we did get into a short moratorium. But then we said that we were going to come out of the moratorium soon, whereas the Russians were still stuck with their earlier unilateral moratorium; and they obviously were uncomfortable militarily with this one-sided hiatus. We got a sort of threat from them--"Well, if the U.S. doesn't come around, and if the U.S. reserves the right to resume testing, then the Soviets would have to resume testing, and so forth." I mean, they finally did resume in--just to jump ahead--in September, I think, September 1, 1961, but this issue was clearly a problem for them within the delegation.

Also, there was some problem with their scientists. We got into such trouble in 1959 about how to distinguish seismic tests, which were natural events versus to distinguish natural events, that we decided to have another conference of scientists (there had been one in 1958). Indeed, we had a couple of them on different technical issues. And their scientists came to Geneva and clearly they were willing to say certain things about the difficulty of verification with instruments alone; and therefore they implied that one would need on-site inspections, but in saying this, they were deviating from the official line. So much so that after one of these scientific meetings, when there had been a joint U.S.-Soviet declaration by the two teams of scientists, the Soviet government repudiated its own scientists officially at one of our political meetings. So that was another sign of some intra-Soviet disagreement, but that was not on the political side; that was on the scientific side.

Also, we did have the impression that the Soviet delegation took the lead at times in pressing Moscow to agree to adopt a certain position. It wasn't that they were taking sides. They were being creative in proposing ways around impasses with the U.S. and UK. We did feel that happen from time to time. But to get back to the American point of view, there were those differences, and the differences centered most visibly, though not uniquely, on this question of

how many on-site inspections per year would be enough. And people in Washington in 1959 generally agreed that ten were probably as much as we needed to ask for, but they said, "Well, but look. We're in a negotiating business with the Russians, so you can't ask for ten because you'll never end up with ten. Let's ask for 20." So they asked for 20. And, of course, once they asked for 20, 20 became a sacred number, supposedly reflecting technical necessity. Everyone forgot, if they ever knew, that 20 had been put in there purely for bargaining purposes, but it became the "scientifically valid" number that the U.S. would need for its security.

Well, of course, there was nothing scientific about any of these numbers, even ten. It was just a value judgment about how intrusive you had to be to keep the Soviets honest, and there were some Americans who thought you really didn't need inspections at all, because you had photographic satellites soon that replaced the U-2. I mean, we had the first, I think, KH-4 satellites, not long after that, and though they weren't as refined as some of the later ones in terms of distinguishing objects on the ground, they certainly could tell about nuclear test preparations. Plus, as I mentioned seismology told us a good bit.

We said that, after all, you don't have to be 100% sure that the Russians had not tested. All you have to do is create a situation that would prove frightfully embarrassing for them before world opinion if they were ever caught red-handed. And you could create such a situation just by your seismic monitoring and a few on-site inspections. That would be enough. The Russians wouldn't dare cheat, particularly when you kept your powder dry, i.e. you kept yourself ready to resume testing whenever they cheated. Indeed, that was one of the conditions that the Joint Chiefs later forced us to append to the ratification protocol in the Senate, that we keep our powder dry, keep our nuclear laboratories going, be ready to test at a moment's notice.

So, anyway, toward the end of the--I guess it was in 1959 that we came to 20--December 1959--this demand for 20 inspections, and that, of course, became a hang-up for all the remaining period of the negotiations, this inflated number. There were lots of other issues that developed, and I can say with all modesty that you can find this recounted ad nauseam in my book on the subject, which is one of only two serious full-length books on the test ban. [Laughter] There other one was written by a law professor at, I think, either Michigan State or the University of Michigan; and I've been told by objective outsiders, who have read both, that if you want to really know what that conference was all about, you must read both books, that each by itself is not as good as taking them together. And I'm sure that very few people ever will so read or ever have done so.

Q: But did Henry Kissinger find your research, or the research you did for him in Harvard, interesting?

MARK: Well, it was written at Harvard, but it wasn't done for him. I don't know that he ever looked at it. I sat in on a course there that he gave, which was a seminar on world security issues. The head of the Harvard Center of the time, though Kissinger later succeeded him, was Bob Bowie, who was later Policy Planning Director in the Department. Maybe he was also an assistant secretary in the Pentagon at one time. He is still, now in his late seventies, very active in foreign affairs matters.

As I say, I attended this Kissinger seminar, and so for some years if we met thereafter in the State Department or wherever, he would say, "Oh, yes. That is my old student." [Chuckles] But that's about as close as I ever got to Henry Kissinger, despite a few occasional meetings later in the State Department on transient issues.

The conference on a nuclear test ban had a long break from November 1960 when Kennedy was elected, because he wasn't going to be inaugurated for a while and would then want to review negotiating policy. He was inaugurated on January 20. And so, after our last meeting in November 1960 we went to a farewell luncheon with the Soviet delegation.

There were three of us on each side, including me, and we ate in a very nice restaurant in Geneva. We started at 1:00 p.m. and everybody drank a lot, and the head of the Soviet delegation, who was named, Simyon Tsarapkin, later the Soviet ambassador to West Germany, drank more and more and more vodka. And about 4:00 in the afternoon that day, he pulled me aside and spoke Russian. Well, he always spoke Russian to me, but this time he spoke used the "you familiar" form, which he had never used before and never used again.

He started by saying to me, "David, I know what you did in Moscow, and it was a terrible thing for a young man to have done such harmful things against our great Soviet motherland. But, you're a young man still, and you can make up for it. There are things you can do which will right the wrong which you committed. I want you to think about that and I want you to do the right thing. And when you've decided to do the right thing, speak to Yuli over here."

Yuli was his number two. "Yuli" is Yuli Vorontsov, the Soviet first deputy foreign minister, currently ambassador to Afghanistan, who I don't think was ever a KGB agent. I think he was pressed into service as liaison for the KGB just as I had been contacted earlier by the CIA. But in any case, I never responded to that effort. I just reported it to my boss and to the CIA; and Tsarapkin, after a few more vodkas, passed out dead drunk. [Laughter]

So the two delegations didn't get together again until March 1961. And I should say, speaking of Tsarapkin, just on the side, that once early in 1963, when we were still negotiating, at that time on general and complete disarmament as well, we were at a cocktail party that someone gave. My wife was there, as well, and Tsarapkin came up to my wife and spoke English to her and said, "I can't tell you how difficult it has been for me all these years sitting opposite your husband."

"Why?" she said, "What's the matter?"

He said, "Because he chews gum, and he's there all the time chewing gum while I'm talking and while everything's going on. It's a terrible habit, you know, and why don't you tell him that he should stop?"

So my wife did, and I said, "Well, the Soviets are right for a change." And not a piece of gum, despite much temptation, has crossed my lips since that day. [Laughter]

IDAR D. RIMESTAD
Administrative Officer
Moscow (1957-1960)

Ambassador Idar D. Rimestad was born in 1916 and raised in North Dakota. He received a Ph.B. from the University of North Dakota in 1940. His Foreign Service career included positions in Moscow, Paris, Geneva, and Washington, DC. Ambassador Rimestad was interviewed by Thomas Stern on June 22, 1990.

Q: Your next assignment was to Moscow?

RIMESTAD: In 1957, I knew that my tour of duty in the Department was coming to an end and I had to think about what my next assignment would be. I talked to Sid Lafoon. He said he would look into overseas possibilities. He said that there were two jobs that he knew would be opening in late 1957: one, was administrative counselor in Madrid and the other was administrative officer in Moscow. There were some other people in the room during this discussion. Everybody jumped and said that I should take Madrid -- beautiful housing, a nice club, etc. Every single person in the room said the same thing. They thought I would be a fool not to take Madrid. It would be a delightful place to spend four years. I thought to myself that I heard this so much -- an officer goes to a post because of family considerations, for reasons having nothing to do with the job. Then he's stuck; he sits for four years doing little in a very nice set-up. So I asked for a few days to consider the choice. I talked to my wife; she thought Madrid would be great. There was a school there. If we went to Moscow, we would have to send our two girls to West Germany -- it had the nearest American school -- a school run by the U.S. military. One of my daughters was to be a junior in high school and the other would just start eighth grade.

I thought about the various issues and finally decided on Moscow. It was a post where things were happening. If I were to make the Foreign Service my career, then that would be the place to go. So I surprised everybody. Fred Irving called me and asked: "Are you sure that this is what you want? You prefer Moscow over Madrid?". I said: "Yes". This was the Fall of 1957. It was one of the career turning points for me because I got to Moscow and everything broke loose. First there was a big American exposition during which the Nixon-Khrushchev "kitchen" debate took place -- I was just a couple of feet away from Nixon during that dialogue. Then the U-2 plane, piloted by Gary Powers, went down -- I was one of the half-dozen officials who got the first view of the plane.

Q: Let me take you back to late 1957 when you were first assigned to Moscow as administrative officer. Until then, your experience had been entirely in the field of personnel. Your Moscow position had a much broader range of responsibilities? How was the transition?

RIMESTAD: It was very easy because as a salary-wage man, I had become familiar with all the administrative jobs. I had spent lots of time in procurement, lots in finance -- reviewing what people were doing. It wasn't going into something that was completely new. As a salary-wage analyst, I had gotten into every one of those administrative activities. And I knew them pretty well.

Q: So you felt comfortable with other areas of administration besides personnel?

RIMESTAD: Yes. I would not have been comfortable getting into economics or political work or public affairs; that I wouldn't have messed with.

Q: Who was the ambassador in Moscow in 1957?

RIMESTAD: Llewellyn Thompson -- a great guy. I didn't know him at all when the assignment was made. Thompson called Fred Irving, whom he knew well. He asked Fred whether he should take me. Fred said: "Yes. Absolutely. Take him". I arrived in Moscow not knowing anybody, the Ambassador, the DCM, anybody, not a single soul.

Q: How did that feel?

RIMESTAD: It was difficult because Fred Irving sent me with some instructions. For example, the Political Section and most of the Economic Section were using Embassy vehicles as if they were their personal cars. Fred wanted that stopped. He was concerned that one of the people would get involved in an accident and that then the Department would have to explain what an officer was doing on a Sunday afternoon on an outing with his family in a government car. These weren't trips in the city; they were going out into the country-side. Fred wanted that practice stopped. So I went to the Ambassador and explained to him that the Embassy had a problem with its senior officers using government cars on weekends for personal use and that I had been instructed to stop the practice. If anyone needed a car, he or she should get either the Ambassador's or my approval, so that we could document the reasons for the use of the car. That new directive did not go over very well because the use of government vehicles for personal purposes had been the practice for many years. We only had five or six sedans and every Friday night, officers would take the cars and use them over the weekend. But that stopped.

Q: What were the living conditions in Moscow in the late 1950s?

RIMESTAD: We had two sets of living quarters for the American staff. We had apartments in the Embassy itself -- that is where I lived -- and then we had an apartment building near the University. I wouldn't say that living conditions were tough. The most difficult aspect of living in Moscow came from the isolation -- we had no Russian friends; all contacts were with other Embassies. The diet was fairly restricted. There were two or three restaurants one could go to. We got a half a dozen tickets to the Bolshoi every week, which would be given to whom ever asked for them. The first year of my tour was alright. It was interesting. The second year was not so interesting. When I got into the third year, I didn't like it at all. It was dull; you couldn't do anything. You could walk the streets, but there was no social life except within your own group. I was very friendly with the Germans, the British, Italians, French and the Scandinavians. We had good relations with the Turkish Embassy and the Japanese Embassy. That was about it.

Q: How often did you get out of Moscow?

RIMESTAD: Every six months. I got out easily because there was the Ambassador's plane that

came in every six months. I would take it to Germany to buy goods for the Embassy and the Commissary. I would fly back to Moscow the following week. The plane would also carry about a dozen staff members. There were a lot of people who didn't want to avail themselves of this opportunity because the plane flew into Berlin and then they were on their own. They didn't want to go there. Tickets to Copenhagen and Stockholm were very cheap. So there was no problem in leaving Moscow. People would save up their leave so that they could take an extensive vacation in Italy or France or some other country.

Q: But the limited social life was wearing?

RIMESTAD: Yes. As I said, not for the first year. Everyone enjoyed the first year; it was fun and interesting. Most people didn't stay for more than two years. I stayed more because Eisenhower was scheduled to come to Moscow. That didn't happen, but I was requested to remain at post during the planning period. I didn't leave Moscow until August 1960, although I was eligible to leave the previous November. The Eisenhower visit was canceled because of the U-2 incident.

We had one or two private Americans in Moscow at that time and they found it a hardship. Most of the Foreign Service personnel had been in places like Nicaragua or Indonesia or other Third World countries. They didn't find Moscow too bad in terms of living conditions. They thought they were pretty good.

Q: What is the role of administration in an Embassy like Moscow?

RIMESTAD: Total and complete logistical support, including groceries. We worked with the Russians (BUROBIN was the name of the organization we worked with) in handling problems that our personnel got involved in or getting more trips to Leningrad and matters of that kind -- the social aspects, not the official ones. My office was the contact with the Russians on everything, except for political or economic work.

Q: The Russians provided the local personnel?

RIMESTAD: Yes. All good KGB people. That was well known -- no question about it. We were always finding wire-taps on telephones. Some of the Russians were maids. I'll never forget the Naval Attaché who was fiddling around with his telephone one day. He unscrewed it and out popped a small gadget. It was a listening device which had been placed between the two beds. He said: "Wait until my wife finds out. She is always after me to come over to her bed to visit her. She will be very unhappy!". We found a lot of that type of thing. I remember that when Ambassador Thompson wanted to discuss some sensitive issue, he would hand me a piece of paper and we would exchange written notes instead of conversation. He used to say that there was just no way of knowing how the Russians might have bugged his office. It was about at this time that we got a secure room, but your inclination is to blurt out one sentence assuming that this wouldn't make any difference.

But the whole building was bugged -- every room. They bugged the rooms by placing devices behind the radiators. The bugging system was a single system so that moving one radiator didn't make any difference. You would have to shut the whole water system down. They had been there

for several years before I got there. They were there during the two and half years I was there and they were there after that. If someone would have moved his refrigerator, he would have spotted the bug.

Q: The local employees had access to the Embassy?

RIMESTAD: Yes, up to the fifth floor. On the sixth floor, there were the DCM's and the military attaché's residences. The seventh and eighth floors were offices. So the locals did not have access to those floors unless they were escorted by a Marine Guard. My office was on the first floor to which the locals had access.

Q: How was the American staff while you were in Moscow?

RIMESTAD: It had its ups and downs. In general, I thought they were very good. On the administrative side, with probably one exception, I would have hired them all. They were very good. They were a gung-ho group. I didn't realize until I was leaving that one of my officers was an alcoholic. I never knew it. I always wondered why he was never available on weekends. You could never reach him. That is when he would load up. The rest of the week he didn't touch alcohol. He was the only one who could have been a problem. As a matter of fact, after his return to the U.S., he got into some kind of trouble and was let go. I am sure that the Department screened potential assignees very carefully before sending them to Moscow. One had to be pretty well adjusted to be assigned to Moscow.

Q: Did the stress of confinement and limited social activities affect personnel?

RIMESTAD: Yes, particularly the wives. They would be contentious; they would find problems where there weren't any or complain about perceived problems that couldn't be solved. There were problems that went with being in Moscow; if a wife couldn't accommodate to them, I would call in the officer and asked him to get matters under control because there wasn't anything we could do. Moscow was Moscow and couldn't be changed. Some would be unhappy with us for not having fresh vegetables or meat or something along those lines. I would ask the officer whether he wanted to stand in line at the meat market. He or his wife could stand in line for hours, but would probably get some meat. There was no way the Embassy could provide the meat. The complaints were about little stuff. It didn't affect efficiency or subject people to KGB enticements. There were a number of individuals, as history has told us, who apparently did play around, but it was not obvious to us at the time. The KGB was a problem for single people.

Q: You had a Marine detachment during your tour?

RIMESTAD: Yes. They were no problem while I was there. The problems with the Marines came later after my tour. We did have one Army fellow who was socializing too much; so the Army transferred him out.

Q: Who was the DCM when you arrived in Moscow?

RIMESTAD: Richard (Dick) Davis. Just before my departure from Moscow, Davis was replaced

-- he had been the DCM for two of the years I was there. Neither of the DCMs was involved in the management and administration of the Embassy. They generally left me totally and completely alone. Dick would listen to his wife and come back with some tales about alleged problems. For example, we needed a garage for our automobiles. We had a big vacant lot beside the Embassy. I had decided to take one-half and build a garage on it so we could get all our cars under cover. We had eleven vehicles and only three could be inside. The ladies opposed the idea because the vacant area was being used by their children as a playground. I had watched this for sometime; there was a lot of mud when it rained. It wasn't really a playground in any sense of the word. But Mrs. Davis got all the ladies together and they all agreed that no garage should be built and that the playground should remain as it was. I went to the Ambassador and told him that we desperately needed the garage. I pointed out that half of the lot -- 75 feet by 100 feet -- would still be available for play. That is a big lot to play on. He asked: "For heaven's sake, who is creating this problem?". So I told him that Dick Davis's wife was leading the opposition. He said: "Forget it. I'll take care of it". I never heard another word about it. That was the only time that I went to the Ambassador with an administrative problem. We had all sorts of problems on who could get on his airplane -- we had twelve spaces and sixteen wanted to go -- and that sort of thing. But we managed to decide that at my level. The Ambassador made a studied effort not to get involved in my work unless he had to -- like the playground matter.

Q: Was the Embassy staff a congenial group?

RIMESTAD: Yes. I think there was a good team effort. You had the political and economic officers -- that was a clubby group in that they didn't mix much with anybody else. Then you had the administrative, consular and military personnel -- a group that socialized together a lot. At Christmas time or Thanksgiving, the whole Embassy got together. There was no animosity between any of the groups, except that the communication people, the military sergeants, the consular and administrative people -- who were all more or less at the same level -- tended to want to be together. The political and economic officers, of whom there were only six, more or less stuck together. But these divisions didn't create any tensions.

Q: You mentioned car usage as a major problem at the beginning of your tenure. What other administrative problems did you encounter when you were in Moscow?

RIMESTAD: Housing. That was a perpetual problem. There was always a shortage. Our Embassy was growing. Even if Washington assigned one additional person, we had a problem. We were always pushing the Russians to give us more housing. We couldn't do anything with the main building itself. That was completely filled. The Russians had set aside some housing units for the foreign diplomatic community. All were looking for more space. The others would complain that we were getting more than our fair share. It was a constant battle with the Russians to let us have another apartment or two. That was true throughout my tour. The Russians were building at the time; they also broke relations with Israel and other countries. The units occupied by the diplomats from those countries would be immediately reassigned to other foreign missions. But there was a continuous great demand by all, although probably more from us because we had by far the largest Embassy in Moscow.

We didn't have temporary quarters. We wouldn't permit any new arrivals unless we had

permanent quarters for them, unless it was for a very short period and then they would stay in a hotel.

Q: What about financial resources? Any problems with that issue?

RIMESTAD: We got extra-special treatment from Washington. When we desperately needed money for something, we would get it. Our needs were small compared to London, Paris or Rome. We would ask for \$18,000 when Paris would be asking for \$1,800,000. We never had any problems with money. We knew what our budget was and what our expenditures would be. We weren't going to get any more housing, cars or anything else. The Russians put the limits on. So money was never a real problem.

Q: How about visitors?

RIMESTAD: We had lots of visitors. Until the U-2 incident, we had a tremendous flow of visitors. I had opened up a small restaurant in one of the bays of the old garage. Most of the officers objected to it because it would affect their cost of living allowance if it were found that we had a restaurant which would provide breakfast or lunch at lower rates than otherwise would be available. They went to the Ambassador, asking that the restaurant not be opened. The Ambassador found it hard to understand their position. He knew that the facility would be welcomed by a lot of the staff, particularly the single people, who had to go back to their apartments every day to make their sandwiches. So we opened the restaurant and it was a great addition to the Embassy. It is still there. But it was a problem when the visitors heard about it because they could get bacon and eggs there. They came over to the Embassy for breakfast. We couldn't refuse them since most had seen or would see the Ambassador. It would have been impossible to deny them access to the restaurant. The restaurant operated with non-appropriated funds totally and completely. The US government supplied the building and the utilities. The fixtures had been gotten from the American exhibition when that was closed. We made a lot of money from the Commissary sales -- cigarettes and liquor. That supported the operations of the restaurant. If in some months we would run short in the restaurant, we would use the Commissary surpluses to support it. The restaurant was for Americans only.

Q: How much time did the Embassy devote to visitors?

RIMESTAD: In the summer -- June, July and August -- it would devote considerable time. If an Embassy officer was in town, he would have to see any visitor who wanted to see him.

Q: Who were these visitors? Businessmen? Congressmen?

RIMESTAD: I am going to say something I have never said before and my comment applies not only to Moscow, but to many foreign service posts. Americans travel to the post, come to the Embassy, sign in -- usually want to go to the Economic Section -- ask a couple of questions, get the answers and their business is done. Now the businessman has his trip paid because it becomes tax-deductible expenditure as a business expense. I saw more of that in Paris than in Moscow. Many would sign in, do something that was reasonably official and were never seen again by the Embassy.

We had a number of Congressional visitors. That was when I first met John Rooney, whom I found to be a very nice fellow -- contrary to his reputation. He liked to tweak the State Department on such things as too many cars, too many secretaries, plush furniture and those sorts of things. But he always gave us the money.

Q: Rooney had an unusual agenda when he visited Embassies. What did he do in Moscow?

RIMESTAD: In Moscow, he wanted to see the building. I took him through the building. He wanted to go to a typical Russian restaurant. We took him and he thought the food was terrible. He was in Moscow for three nights -- two days. He saw the Ambassador and got a briefing, although he didn't really care for briefings. He just didn't care for them. He had an assistant with him by the name of Jay Howe who took notes and wrote up the trip reports. When we asked whether we could write any of them, he said: "No. Jay will write whatever needs to be written". He did spend a lot of time in the building and Jay took notes on what a terrible place it was. He went to the garage. We had paved the parking area outside the garage and marked it for badminton and basketball courts. He looked at that and said: "Is this what you got several hundred thousands dollars for?". I said that it was for the garage building; this was a parking lot. I added: "Mr. Congressman, the markings that you see on the paved area are the latest markings in parking lots". He laughed and told Jay not to note this innovation.

We also had the Foreign Relations Committee and Agriculture Committee people visiting.

Q: Were these official visitors hard to support?

RIMESTAD: No, because they invariably had contacts already made with the Russians whom they would see. In any case, most of them wanted to leave Moscow as soon as possible and see Leningrad and Kiev. We had enough transportation to support them; if we didn't we would rent cars. We only had four sedans available and needed one or two for the Embassy all the time. We would send cars to meet the official visitors at the airport and bring them back. If they wanted to do some sight-seeing, then we would have to rent cars.

Q: Were the hotels adequate for the visitors?

RIMESTAD: They hated them. But they were the best available. The Ukraina, which was close to the Embassy, was a nice hotel, but it was not a Hilton. Before we close this chapter of my career, I should say that it was a fascinating experience -- absolutely fascinating, mainly because we were dealing with another culture -- totally and completely different. You had to remind yourself of that all the time. Just because we do something one way, doesn't make it right. In their viewpoint, their way was correct.

COLE BLASIER
Temporary Duty
Moscow (1958)

Cole Blasier attended the University of Illinois and Columbia University. He Joined the Foreign Service in 1951 and served in a number of posts including Yugoslavia, Germany, and the USSR.

Q: You had one final temporary duty as a Foreign Service Officer in Moscow in 1958?

BLASIER: Yes, while assigned to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR).

Q: Was this standard practice or was this unusual?

BLASIER: Not unusual, nor frequent.

Q: It was to avail the Department a particular skill on your part or was it to reward you? What was the motivation?

BLASIER: Somebody might have wanted to reward me but I doubt it. No reflection on me but things usually don't work that way. The Embassy had a pressing temporary need and Washington found me and the money to fill it.

Moscow was busier that summer than at any time in recent memory. Moscow embassy was being flooded by delegations from the U.S. and the Embassy wanted to take advantage of new political reporting opportunities created by the "thaw." I served as escort and occasional interpreter for three large delegations and took on a few other odd jobs. I spent most of the rest of my time writing political dispatches on a wide variety of subjects based on trips in Western Russia and Central Asia.

Q: What sort of delegations was this, congressional or...

BLASIER: The three main delegations were: the first for U.S. University Presidents to visit the USSR, a delegation of social scientists, and a delegation of veterinarians. I helped other visitors. My work led me to fascinating political, economic, and cultural topics beyond the scope of this oral history.

Q: Was that when Llewellyn Thompson was American Ambassador to the USSR?

BLASIER: It was. I could add a word about him if you want.

Q: Please, please. What can you tell us about Thompson?

BLASIER: Tommy Thompson was already an icon. I had followed his negotiations on the Austrian State Treaty from Belgrade. The Ambassador was thin and did not appear strong physically. I had the impression he was under great stress, had medical problems, and was caught between boorish leaders in Moscow and Washington. He had to internalize so much of the frictions and controversies that it was a very heavy burden for him to carry. Much of the management of the Embassy was in the hands of his deputy, Richard Davis, who I had met at

Columbia. Thompson came into the Embassy to handle the most pressing business and then would leave. I didn't see much of him initially.

My first opportunity came at a smallish reception at Spaso house. During the course of the reception, he invited me sit down for a talk. I have met and talked with many famous people in my life, who almost without exception want to do all the talking. Instead, he wanted to learn about what I'd observed there, and had read my dispatches. His interest was not a compliment to me, but more to him. Few celebrities ask anything about you; they want to tell you about them. He made an indelible impression.

On another occasion I learned about Thompson's interview with the Soviet foreign minister - maybe it was Molotov. Discussing some controversial issue the latter went into a rage against the U.S. that went on for about ten minutes and then he stopped. And then Thompson just sat there in silence for maybe five minutes. Didn't say a word, not a word - just sat there. Silent.

Molotov didn't know what to do, became flustered. At last he said what about this? Thompson replied: "Are you finished?" The Ambassador gave him this silent rebuke.

Q: In your reporting or analyzing time there, what were your particular monuments? Did you do studies of education, studies of the internal processing?

BLASIER: Most of these dispatches are probably in the diplomatic archives nearby in Maryland which I hope to consult some day. Among the subjects I now dimly remember dealt with anti-Semitism, maintenance of public buildings, an interview with the Grand High Mufti of Central Asia, my treatment by the secret police including entrapment efforts and poisoning, descriptive pieces on living conditions, and visits to Central Asia. In order to answer this question properly, I would need to go through these dispatches.

Q: You had an advantage later in your academic career of going back to Moscow in different periods, which gave you a chance to notice changes from one period to another. What struck you doing this? Was change as slow as you thought it would be, or faster?

BLASIER: Many of the underlying aspects of Soviet public opinion and politics were pretty similar from the time of my first visit in 1958. During Khrushchev and the thaw, the USSR was much more open and rational and under Brezhnev authoritarian and bureaucratic themes became stronger again. With Gorbachev trends were in the opposite direction. About all I can say now is that many of the leading themes during Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and Putin were similar but their weight and arrangement varied substantially.

The first time I returned to Moscow after leaving the service was in 1978. I arranged that second visit while on an inter-university travel grant in Warsaw. On that visit I laid the ground work for the U.S.-USSR exchange in Latin American studies. IREX covered the U.S. costs of the delegations of U.S. scholars and the USSR Academy sciences through its Institute of Latin America for theirs during the years 1985 to 1990. As chairman, I went to Moscow one or more times a year for the exchange, and on others for research on my book, *The Giant's Rival*, the USSR and Latin America. Until 1980 continuities in political attitudes and political organization

were greater than the changes. After Gorbachev had been in office attitudes towards the regime and towards the U.S. changed rapidly. What has been wonderfully consistent since the last years of Gorbachev to the present is the free climate for personal and political discussion with Russian friends and colleagues. To answer this question properly requires more space and time than we have here.

The Exchange ended in late 1990. Since that time I have been to Russia every few years on various missions. For example, one was serving as a consultant for the International Executive Service Corps at the State University in Vladivostok. And in 2000 I was an observer for Putin's election as president for the OSCE in Kazan, Tatarstan. I continue to research Russian subjects, especially topics related to Germany.

Q: In 1958 when you were on temporary assignment to the Embassy in Moscow were you already more or less determined to go back to the great outside world?

BLASIER: My conversations with Chancellor Litchfield and other university presidents in 1958 started me thinking. That was probably the most difficult time in my life, a decision-making process that was having adverse impacts on my life.

Q: You discussed this with your chiefs in the INR or did you weigh some offers before you decided to...

BLASIER: No, I didn't. In the end I only had one offer. I looked around at various places. None of the opportunities appealed to me, nor I to them. In the end, I had only one offer that was acceptable and I took it. It was from Everett Case, the President of Colgate University, a former Harvard business school assistant dean, and assistant to the founder of General Electric, Owen D. Young. He was one of the most respected college presidents in the country. He later became president of the foundation of his father-in-law's competitor, Alfred P. Sloan of General Motors.

Q: Oh, I meant offers within the Department of State.

BLASIER: No, I assumed that I would be in INR for some months more and then get another assignment. It seemed too soon to seek another assignment, and besides one assignment was not the issue. Meanwhile, Grover Penberthy, my personnel officer and by chance a personal friend, urged me not to resign and to take extended leave instead. This was good advice and I was touched by his and maybe the Department's concern. Convinced, however, that I had to make a firm decision, I declined and resigned in September 1960.

Q: The Department was the big loser in this, but you went on to a very distinguished career in the academic world, particularly in the field of Latin American studies and relating them to the Soviet Union in part.

BLASIER: Yes, thank you.

EDWARD HURWITZ
Staff Aide to the Ambassador
Moscow (1958-1960)

Edward Hurwitz was born in New York in 1931. He received his bachelor's degree from Cornell University in 1952. After serving in the US Army from 1953-1955 he entered the Foreign Service in 1956. During his career he had positions in Moscow, Seoul, Washington D.C., Afghanistan, Leningrad, and an Ambassadorship to Kyrgyzstan. Ambassador Hurwitz was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in August 1996.

Q: After INR, in 1958 where did you go?

HURWITZ: In 1958 Llewellyn Thompson had just recently arrived in Moscow and he wanted a staff aide. Now, prior to me, not acting as staff aide, but living in the residence, Spaso, was a bachelor officer who had come from Indonesia. He had a job in the embassy but because of the housing shortage and Spaso was a big rambling house, he lived there. Well, Thompson wanted to have a staff aide who would actually live in the residence and also take care of the ordering of his food from commissaries in Frankfurt and deal with the household staff, do his accounts, etc. So, I went out and considered it one of my greatest opportunities in my life, and lived in Spaso.

It is a curious story, though. Once I got out there, Thompson really didn't give me anything to do particularly. At one point, Mrs. Thompson, Jane Thompson, was saying that "Tommy, Ed has to have an office right here at Spaso and I will work with him on a daily basis." Thompson said, "Oh, no, no, he has to come to the embassy every day." So, I went to the embassy every day and Thompson gave me his correspondence. He got lots of letters from the States. The Soviet Union was just opening up to tourism, etc. He would throw these to me and I would answer them. He was very anxious, correctly so, that these letters be answered politely and with as much information as could be given to the writer. I remember one case, for example, where he got a letter from a kid who was collecting soil from around the world. He wanted some Moscow dirt. Already becoming an adept bureaucrat, I said, "Okay, I will assign this letter to be answered by the agricultural attaché." Well, he let it sit until finally what happened was that the kid getting no answer from the American embassy in Moscow, wrote a letter to the Soviet embassy in Washington which dutifully sent the kid some dirt. Probably they went out in the back garden of the Soviet embassy in Washington and dug up some dirt and sent it to him, but at least they responded to him. We found out about it because the kid's congressman wrote to the State Department saying, "See, our American embassy doesn't help us out, but the Soviet embassy did." Thompson was a little annoyed at that. This was precisely what he was trying to avoid with these letters.

So, I did that sort of thing. I did deal with the staff. But, still it took up only a little of my time. The rest of my time I was spending very fruitfully going around to lectures, but that is another story. It turns out the reason Thompson didn't give me anything to do was very curious. We had an inspection, Ed Gullion was the inspector. He later became ambassador to Vietnam. Gullion brought in all the political type officers and staff aide into his office, one by one. When my turn came he said, "Sit down Ed. I have always wanted to see one of you." "One of me? What do you

mean?” He said, “I have always wanted to see an FSO who was a member of the CIA.” I said, “But, I am not a member of the CIA. I am an honest FSO.” He said, “Well, the ambassador thinks you are. Let me go back and check.” There were secret files apparently and it turned out I was an FSO. But, Thompson thought because he wanted a single officer and they sent out a Russian speaker that I was really full time CIA. We settled that, of course, and from then on I did a lot more work in the residence.

Q: From your perspective, how did Llewellyn Thompson operate in the Soviet Union?

HURWITZ: Thompson was very self-contained. He wasn't a very articulate guy. He played a lot of things close to the chest. But, he had long experience there during the war. He knew a lot of people. He was able to get along with the Soviet leadership. And, this was a time when Khrushchev would show up occasionally at the embassy, Khrushchev would deal with the diplomats, other Politburo members would come to the Fourth of July. It was a totally different atmosphere from either before or after during the Brezhnev period. So, we saw a lot of the Soviet leadership.

Q: You said you went around to lectures, etc. What were you getting out of these?

HURWITZ: There always had been during all my tours in the Soviet Union, a system of lectures. Some were completely open to the public, some were not publicized. I was an inveterate walker, walking the city endlessly and would see notices on clubs, writers club, etc. about lectures on political, cultural subjects and would go. My Russian by then was getting very good and in short sentences (“I want a ticket to get in” or “What time is it?”) they couldn't distinguish me from maybe a Latvian or someone like that, so I got into a lot of these things. The lectures might be straight party line, but the questions often were incredibly revealing about how people felt, their complaints, their living conditions. People would say things you would never see in the press. Why are so many people denied housing? I have been living in a hovel in a basement and nobody is interested in my welfare, I can't get any food. Things that were diametrically opposed to what you would be reading in the Soviet press.

I recall one that was very revealing and we used it quite a bit. I heard a lecturer say point blank at a time when this was not supposed to be known that Castro was a communist. He was getting full support from the Soviets. This was at a time when Castro was trying to force himself off as a home ground revolutionary having nothing to do with the Soviet Union. I remember we got a call from the guy who was then assistant secretary for ARA. I did this throughout my career and turned up a lot of very fascinating stuff.

Q: You were in the Soviet Union this time from when to when?

HURWITZ: This was 1958-60.

Q: Were you able to take any trips outside of Moscow?

HURWITZ: Oh, yes. I went to a lot of interesting places. Most of them by train. For example, one of the more interesting trips was to Yakutsk, way up in eastern Siberia. I went to Vilnius. I

went to the out of the way places, Kishinev, which is in Moldavia; Kirov, which is in western Siberia and had just opened up. I did an enormous amount of traveling by train.

Q: How would a typical trip work? What were you trying to do?

HURWITZ: You were just trying to see what was going on. On the typical trip you would go with somebody else, very often a Brit, Canadian, or Australian. We would go to a town and just look around. Go to the market. Go to bookstores and try to buy books that were not on sale elsewhere. We had a very active book buying program but everybody participated. There was a publications procurement officer, but everybody picked up stuff. We would go to restaurants. At that time restaurants were crowded and you were virtually always seated with people who were already at a table. If they felt nobody was listening and they felt you were an American, which was easy for them to determine, they would really open up on what the problems were. So, we were able through these trips into the countryside, where you have to realize that you may have seen this in Visket, but you go 50 kilometers outside of Moscow and you are going back a hundred years in time--people pulling water out of wells with the yokes. Through this we were able to present a picture of the Soviet Union which was totally different than the one that the propaganda machine was trying to purvey and making it clear to what extent the Soviet effort to mount a space program or to what extent the emphasis on military development was really costing the Soviet Union in economic terms, an enormous amount.

Q: Did you have any problems with the KGB during these trips?

HURWITZ: Yes. I was young and silly, I think, my first tour. Rather early on I began to notice the same people around. Someone I had noticed in a crowd last week was there again. So, I began to play a few games with them, which was a big mistake. For example, going down into the subway and then waiting until the last minute to board a train to try to avoid them. I should have realized that from their standpoint that is not a game, that it appears suspicious or malicious. So, I had a few run ins. They got annoyed and began to follow very closely. During my second tour I didn't do that at all and I can't say I wasn't followed all the time. When you went outside of Moscow you would be followed. The local KGB or police were always much more enthusiastic and concerned about having something happen on their turf.

Q: I found this true in Yugoslavia.

HURWITZ: The only real incident I ever had was in 1970 when the Jewish Defense League in New York was really being very nasty with Soviet diplomats and families. It was really scurrilous what they were doing--spitting at wives, etc. So, one day I was taking my morning run in January and as I was running around the area where I lived a car came up onto the sidewalk where I was running and a guy got out blocking my way. He said, "Hurwitz, some day you are going to fall off the platform of the subway or walking under a building and a brick is going to fall from the top of the house." From that day on for two weeks, it was lock step. If I went into a bookstore and stood in front of a shelf, there was a guy at my shoulder. They never touched me. They were very disciplined. This went on for two weeks and then it ended with a crescendo and stopped. The crescendo was that I was in a car with my wife coming back from a reception and there was the follow car which was right on my bumper. I stopped for a light, they stopped and

somebody got out (I didn't see him) and went up to the back window and smashed it in. Then it stopped. Sol Polansky was in the embassy at the time and also shared a little bit of that. They may have singled us out. But, their purpose in doing this was from their standpoint perfectly logical and reasonable. We kept telling them in New York, for example, "Look, this is New York City jurisdiction and we can't do anything about it. We have no control over the courts." They couldn't understand this and they turned out to be right because in the wake of all this what happened after they started harassing our people we had some laws passed protecting diplomats.

Q: That was a very difficult period for you. But, back to the time you were there first, 1958-60. You were there during the U2 time. How did that work out?

HURWITZ: I got married in Moscow to the daughter of the Norwegian ambassador. She came in 1958, we met and got married in 1960. Our plan had been to go out of the country, to Vienna for a honeymoon. I think those plans were interfered with by the prospective visit of Eisenhower. In fact, the Soviets were building a golf course some place for him. But, then the U2 stopped the visit. We couldn't resuscitate the Vienna trip at that point. I was leaving pretty shortly. Yes, the U2 was a big deal.

Q: What about demonstrations against the embassy?

HURWITZ: Demonstrations were the order of the day depending on the issue. In July, 1958 there was a huge demonstration outside the embassy in connection with our having landed troops in Lebanon. It was the typical well organized demonstration, by the numbers, with the very carefully done placards saying "Hands Off Lebanon" and that sort of thing. There is an extraordinarily wide, broad street in front of the embassy, Tchaikovsky Street, and it was just solid with people. There was the throwing of ink wells, breaking of windows and that sort of stuff. But, here again, throughout all of this I was never really concerned about my safety vis-a-vis these goons, as we called them, or the demonstrators. It was all thoroughly orchestrated and controlled and almost nobody had any real spleen. The average person, whether organized to do this or not, really liked the United States. That is the strange part of it. So many conversations that I had made that clear. So many people, especially the older people, were appreciative for what the United States had done. So many people would talk about "I remember the canned ham, spam, and the jeep", etc. Even during the darkest days of the Cold War, the United States was still loved by the average Soviet.

Q: Did you get out into the crowds during these demonstrations?

HURWITZ: At that particular one, the Lebanon one, I had been at the ambassador's residence, which is about a fifteen minute walk from the embassy, for lunch. The demonstration had begun while I was having lunch there and the street was filled. I later went back and stood around the fringes of the crowd, without, again, the slightest bit of concern for my personal safety. It is not as if you are in a Pakistani demonstration or something like that.

Q: What was the impression during the time you were there of Khrushchev?

HURWITZ: Khrushchev was considered a wily, but very unorthodox by Soviet standards, person. An earthy, peasant type, who was interested in not having a real confrontation with the United States. He was somebody who Thompson could talk to. He came to the embassy. He talked to any number of American visitors of the Rockefeller type. He was interested even at that time in seeking some kind of common arrangement to avoid confrontation. It was a totally different atmosphere from Stalin and from what came later with Brezhnev. It was an “otopel”, a thaw from what had gone on before. It was a period when Solzhenitsyn was being published and the theater was opening up. A period of blossoming of something that had been suppressed.

Q: Was there a feeling that sort of on the cultural side things were more open?

HURWITZ: Yes, by all means. We had our first contingent of IREX students. We had the Sol Hurok exchanges. We had “Porgy and Bess” coming there. You know, when I was there for a young Foreign Service officer, it was absolutely...I was in seventh heaven. We had Adlai Stevenson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Carl Sandburg, Saroyan, Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Gary Cooper and Edward G. Robinson. All of these were opportunities for enormous outpouring of interest on the part of Russians. It was a very active and interesting time. Perhaps the most influential, the most striking evidence of this was a triumph of USIA and US policy initiative there, the US exhibition in 1959. The big kitchen debate venue. This was really a masterpiece because it was all geared to American consumer items. Things that blew the Soviets’ minds. It was done in a very effective way. There were American hairdressers doing Soviet women. There was a huge book exhibit at which we knew the books would disappear. Some genius in USIA had the idea of having a Yiddish book section which was fantastic. I stood there frequently and watched people gaze up at these books and be almost afraid to touch them. I had many really revealing conversations at that area. I would reach up and pull down books trying to encourage other people to pull them down. They were sort of quaking. As I say, the books disappeared in enormous numbers. It was really a great triumph and opened up people’s eyes in the Soviet Union, those who may have believed America is okay if you are rich but for the working person it is no good. They had this theater in the round, a 360 degree film, which even the Soviets would say you couldn’t fake. It showed, for example, a Ford plant with the workers leaving the plant at the end of their shift, going out into the parking lot which was a sea of private cars. So, that was a really beautifully executed...

Q: Did you get any feel for how the famous kitchen debate between Vice President Nixon and Khrushchev went?

HURWITZ: I wasn’t there at that particular debate. Nixon said a few things later on TV that weren’t taken too well. But, by and large, the atmosphere was just...

Q: Were people involved in the arts, ballerinas, musicians, etc. given a little looser leash as far as contacts with the embassy?

HURWITZ: Oh, much so. I was just reading one of the letters I wrote home. We had a number of dances, Mrs. Thompson arranged this, to which ballerinas were invited. I remember writing home that I hoped to be able to dance with Ulanova, who was the queen of Russian ballet. Well,

it turns out I danced with somebody else who later became famous. That was something that faded away in time during the Brezhnev years.

Q: You left there when in 1960?

HURWITZ: In July.

Q: What was your impression whither the Soviet Union at that time?

HURWITZ: There was no inkling on my part that it would come to grief later. That the propaganda was totally just that and the realities were completely different. That there were great dissatisfactions. But, that even at that point they were beginning to live better. They had gone through this period of terror, had gone through the war, deprivations of all kinds, but things were better. Whether they would continue to get better, I didn't really consider. But, even then you knew it was physically an enormously rich country. I had the feeling that the people (and this became clear later) despite everybody saying that they wouldn't work, that the system simply discouraged real work, could be motivated to work and that the average person was against war and really did want peace. The people couldn't really be mobilized to fight against the United States unless they were invaded. So, I think I felt the Soviet Union was not destined to come apart by any means, nor was it destined to rule the world, that neither Khrushchev nor the people in charge were interested in doing that sort of thing.

JOHN D. SCANLON
General Services Officer
Moscow, USSR (1958-1960)

Mr. Scanlon was born and raised in Minnesota, educated at the University of Minnesota and served in the US Navy in WWII. Entering the Foreign Service in 1956, he first served in INR in the Department, before being posted to Moscow as General Services Officer. After Polish language study, he was assigned to Warsaw, followed by postings to Montevideo and Poznan. Mr. Scanlon was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: You finished with INR when?

SCANLAN: The spring of 1958 I was asked if I would accept an assignment to Moscow, which delighted me, as general services officer. I didn't know what a general services officer did in those days. I was told that I would be responsible for logistical support and maintenance of the embassy and embassy housing. I was delighted to be able to go to Moscow. I then went back and took the second part of the A100 course. On my own time, I did some Russian language refresher through one of the teachers at the FSI who had been earlier at the University of Minnesota and I knew him. On his own time and my own time, we got together several hours a week. Then they gave me 2 weeks general services training and out to Moscow. I went to Moscow in mid-July 1958.

Q: You were there to when?

SCANLAN: I was there for a little over 2 years. I left in mid-late July 1960. I actually got married on June 28, 1958. We spent about a week in Washington after we got married because I couldn't get visas for my wife until she became my wife, so that was a pretty hectic week. Then we got on a plane and flew to Europe and spent about 10 days going through Europe, various stops, a hectic honeymoon on the way to Moscow.

Q: You were there from '58 to '60. What was your impression of the Soviet Union when you first arrived?

SCANLAN: Our arrival was rather unusual. We went by train from Vienna via Prague to Warsaw because I wanted to see something of that countryside but also because the embassy wanted us to escort in a shipment for the embassy commissary. In those days, we could ship anything we wanted to into Poland. Poles were very liberal in that respect. But we couldn't into Moscow. Some things we could get in; some things we couldn't. So, what we would do is, we would ship things from the Berlin commissary to Warsaw and then we would have a diplomatic traveler going into Moscow pick it up in Warsaw, go in by train, and this shipment would be in the baggage car as part of his personal effects going into Moscow. We were asked to go in via Warsaw and take in 6 tons of frozen meat for the embassy commissary. Part of that operation was, you had to observe the transfer at the border because at the border, the Polish trains were on European standard track and Russian trains were on Russian broadgauge track. At the border, they would take the train off to a railroad yard where they had a system where they would jack them up and take out the Polish wheels and put in the Russian wheels. But they didn't do that with the baggage car. They just pulled up to the baggage shed, which was right near the passenger depot. On one side of the baggage shed was European gauge and the other side was Russian gauge. You had to go there and visually make sure the boxes of meat were transferred.

Well, this was right when we landed troops in Lebanon. And the Russians decided to make an issue of it. When we were in Warsaw for about 3 days, the first big demonstration was held in front of our embassy. Khrushchev was really rattling his saber and suggesting that the Russians were not going to sit back and idly watch this take place. There was actually something of a genuine war scare. So, the embassy in Warsaw asked Moscow whether we should go ahead or hold back a while. Obviously, they needed their frozen meat. They said we should go. So we got on the train in Warsaw. When we got to the border, there was no incident. I watched them transfer the meat and we got back on the train. Now we were on a Russian train going from Brest on the border to Moscow, which was an overnight ride. The Russian trains in those days had loudspeakers in each of the cabins. We had a sleeping compartment. But you couldn't turn the loudspeaker all the way off. You could reduce the volume, but you could still hear it. We were getting all of this bellicose business about mobilization of Russian troops and "Americans must take their hands off Lebanon" sort of thing. Fortunately, my wife did not at that time understand Russian and I didn't tell her what I was hearing.

We arrived in Moscow at Belorussian Station - they had 6 or 7 stations in Moscow and this was the station that came in from the west from Poland - expecting to be met by the embassy. We

were out at the end of a long platform. The Russian porters, who liked to work for the Americans because we'd give them some cigarettes and things like that, were there waiting because they knew that somebody was going to be on the train. So, we got off were there waiting because they knew that somebody was going to be on the train. So, we got off the train. We had at least 6 pieces of personal baggage and Peggy in her arrival suit with a little hat and everything. They unloaded everything, including the meat, in a pile on the platform and half a dozen Russian porters standing around waiting for the people from the embassy and nobody came from the embassy. We waited about 15 minutes and they still didn't come. So, I talked to the head porter and he said, "Don't worry. They'll be here." Another 15 minutes, they didn't come. So, I didn't know whether we were at war with Russia or not at that point. So, I said to my wife, "Why don't you stay here with our things?" I asked these guys, "Are there pay phones?" They said, "Oh, yes, there are pay phones up at the depot," which was at least 100 yards off. By this time, we were a lonely group at the end of the platform. Peggy stayed with the baggage and the porters, not terribly confident about her welfare. There were 2 pay phones. One was out of order and the other had a line of about 10 people waiting to use it. I thought, "This won't work," so I walked back again. It seemed like a week but it must have been 45 minutes to an hour before they finally came from the embassy, a sedan and a truck. In the truck were 4 Russian workers who worked for us. In the sedan there was a Russian driver. He was a building maintenance officer. I later on worked with him in GSO. A very nice but kind of excitable fellow named Ted Chariot. He got out and said, "Sorry we're late. We're having a little excitement in the embassy but don't worry about anything. Did you get the meat? Did you get the meat?" It turned out that the last traveler had somehow or other not watched the transaction at the border and they lost about 4 tons of frozen meat. He said, "Okay, you and your wife get in the car and the driver will take you back to the embassy. Don't worry about your baggage. I'll take care of that." We get into the car, the driver pulls up, pretty soon we're on the Koltso, this big 16 lane street that Stalin constructed. We get up near the embassy and I see the embassy slightly ahead of us. There must have been by that time 5,000 or more Russian demonstrators out in front of the embassy being held back by a couple hundred militiamen, including 40-50 on horseback. You could see that things had already started there. Noisy demonstration. So, I said to the driver, who didn't speak English (I remember his name was Tikho Mirov, which in Russian sort of means "quietly, peacefully")... I knew we had reservations in a hotel, so I said to him, "Mozhet' mi poyedim v gostinitzu? [Maybe it's better to go to the hotel and call the embassy]." He said, "Nyet, nyet, no, no. Everything will be alright." He just said, "Lock the doors and we'll be in the embassy soon." So, I told Peggy, "Don't worry about it. These people are here because they're told to be here. This is not a violent crowd and it'll be alright." He pulled up and lined himself up with the gate to the embassy and did a right angle turn and started nudging his car through the crowd. They started rocking the car a little bit and banging gently on the windows. Poor Peggy sort of looked at me. I said, "Don't worry. These people are not an angry crowd. They were trucked in from the factories and they're not going to do..." When we got up near the embassy, the police finally came out and opened the lane for us. We got up to the embassy gate and there were Marines behind the gate and they opened the gates, let us in, and closed the gates. People were there and said, "Welcome to Moscow."

Then we were taken up to a fourth floor apartment. About half of our apartments in those days were in the Tchaikovsky building. We were taken up to the fourth floor apartment of my boss for lunch. In the middle of lunch, an ink bottle came through the window. We could hear the

loudspeakers outside saying, “Raz, dva, tri ruki protiv ot Liban. And 1, 2, 3, hands off Lebanon!” At a certain point, they gave them ink bottles and stones and all the small boys and young men were told to fire at the embassy. They started showering us with ink bottles and stones. We moved up to the seventh floor to the DCM’s apartment, where he had a television set. We were watching this process on television. Finally after a couple of hours, by that time, it had reached 80,000 people. The police said, “Okay, demonstration’s over. Everybody go home.” Most of the people went without any trouble, but there were some people whose adrenaline had got worked up in the frontlines. The police had to very gently push their horses into the crowd, moving them back until it was all dispersed. Something like 163 windows in our building were broken. Of course, the whole building was stained with ink. Many apartments, rugs, were stained.

Q: Wasn’t that the last time they used the ink?

SCANLAN: Yes, that was the last time. That was the last time there was ever a really violent demonstration.

Q: I guess the bill came in and they...

SCANLAN: Yes, the bill came in.

Q: Which is your responsibility.

SCANLAN: People were kind of exhausted after this day. It was 6:00 or 7:00 at night by then. We were put in an embassy car and sent to the Leningradskaya Gostinitza, one of these tall Gothic style high rise buildings that they had in Moscow. About 7 of them were gathered around the city. Two of them were hotels. Here we were, first night in Moscow. We were all alone in this cavernous room they gave us in the hotel. We didn’t sleep too comfortably. This was a Friday. The embassy in those days worked Saturdays. I went in. I found that we did have one empty apartment that we had just acquired in an area about 5 kilometers away, a place we called Prospekt Mira after the street, Peace Prospect. We had 20 units in that building. There were well over 100 diplomatic units that the Soviets had set up. We had about 20 where we had fixed up the apartments, linking 2, putting in our own appliances. We had 3 new small 1 bedroom apartments that we hadn’t fixed up. Everything was Russian. The stove was a crummy old gas stove. The sinks... We ultimately replaced all the stuff. I said, “Could we move into an apartment? It’s not very comfortable being in a hotel after that kind of arrival.” So, they agreed. We didn’t have much adequate furniture for it, but they took me out and showed it to me. There were no provisions for closets or drapes or anything. But we moved in enough stuff. We got some old drapes which we tacked up on the windows and we got one of these steel framed clothes hangars on wheels, which was our closet, and we got enough other furniture to furnish the place. That was our honeymoon pad for a couple of months. We gradually improved it, of course. We ultimately moved in to one-

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

SCANLAN: Llewellyn Thompson.

Q: How did he operate?

SCANLAN: Very professionally. Rather quiet, reserved individual. But a man who instilled confidence in you immediately. The Russians respected him, among other reasons because he had been there during World War II and had gone with the Russians when they evacuated their government to Kuibeshev. It was a “He was with us during the war” sort of thing. But he was very professional. Very good Russian. I liked him. I felt it was a great honor to begin my diplomatic career working for a man like that. Of course, I was way down in the staff. There were 3 first tour officers assigned: Byron Morton, Ed Horowitz, and myself. We had all entered the Foreign Service with rather strong Russian either in my case from academic Russian; in Bryan and Ed it was both from Army language school. We had all worked in INR before going to Moscow. We had all been in a couple of years and we all had third secretary jobs.

You mentioned the bill for this. I was involved a couple days later when the people came over from the support part of the Russian foreign ministry. It was called UPDK, the administration for providing support services to the diplomatic corps. You literally couldn’t buy a nail in Moscow without going through them. It was that tightly controlled. But they came over. I remember walking through with them. We ran the bill up as much as we could. It really cost them a lot of money to repair our embassy. They accepted the responsibility for doing it. It was all done.

Q: Did they ever make any comments about who the son of a bitch was that handed out the ink bottles?

SCANLAN: No, no, no.

Q: One of the interesting things would be that your job probably put you in closer contact with the Soviets than really the political officers, who were stuck with Reading Izvestia and Pravda.

SCANLAN: You’re right. I didn’t recognize it immediately because I got involved in a lot of mundane things that probably later on helped me out when I bought my first home. I was supervising plumbers, electricians, carpenters, the char force, painters, what have you. We had 80 housing units. I was the only Russian language speaking officer on the administrative staff. I was out on the street a lot, more than in the embassy. I was out doing customs clearance, negotiating with the UPDK, where the people didn’t speak English. I had a great opportunity to practice my Russian at very practical levels. It was great. I was out in the city more dealing with Russians at various levels. There were certain things they let us do. If we wanted to get a batch of furniture reupholstered or something like that, UPDK would say, “Fine, you can use 1 of 2 or 3 shops.” They’d facilitate it and then we’d go and deal directly with people. I had some fascinating conversations on many occasions with Russians who would get to know me. It was great. From that point of view, it was marvelous. Also from the point of view of learning an awful lot about electricity, plumbing, carpentry, and what have you, which served me well several years later when we bought our first house in Falls Church and I became a harried homeowner.

Q: Did you get the feeling that UPDK was trying to give you a rough time?

SCANLAN: Yes. You could measure the state of our relations. When our relations were good, it was very easy to deal with them. We could get anything we wanted that was available. Of course, that was a measure right there. They were friendly, they were helpful, they were responsive when things were going well. When our relations were bad, when there were incidents of various kinds, it was like pulling teeth to get even the most modest type of need fulfilled. That was true in general in Moscow in those days. There were not very many tourists there. There was a very small western presence. There were no western businesses. There was a fairly sizable corps of foreign correspondents, but they were all subject to censorship. They couldn't file stories without going through censorship. And if they violated that, they would be expelled. The Russians had it very well controlled. There were fewer diplomatic missions then and they were smaller. On the one hand, there was a tight foreign community. On the other hand, there was a sense of doing something very important because you were a small presence in an alien world. The other good thing about it was, there were so few of us there that you could go to the Bolshoi Theater on a moment's notice and it probably only cost you about \$1.50. What was there was available, 6 really quite good restaurants. I liked the Russian theaters because my Russian was quite good and you could go anytime you wanted to go. Now, I understand that not only does it cost \$50-60 or more to go to a Bolshoi, but you maybe get to go twice in a tour or something like that. There were advantages and disadvantages to being there during the height of the Cold War.

Q: As GSO, you were part of the cadre. What was your impression of the American Russian service?

SCANLAN: I was very impressed. I felt very fortunate to be associated with those people. They were a very impressive lot. I thought my Russian was very serviceable and quite good, but I stood in awe of some that were in my view much better, including Ambassador Thompson, people like Lou Bowden, Vlad Toumanoff, Harry Barnes. And not just the language but their understanding, their knowledge, their background. They were impressive people. They helped give me the inspiration to try to measure up to what I perceived them to be doing, although in fact, I probably had the advantage of being out on the street more and out among ordinary Russians more than anyone. They traveled quite a bit. In those days when you traveled everything had to be approved by the Russians in advance. A third of the country at least was out of bounds. You couldn't go more than 50 kilometers from the center of Moscow without permission. And they would give you permission or deny it at the last minute. They made all the reservations for you, the hotels, the trains, every place you went you had to have an Intourist guide. Of course, the Intourist guide was actually KGB. They followed you.

They worked all 3 of the junior officers into travel programs. It was a fairly small embassy and you couldn't travel alone. Frequently a political officer would come to see one of us working in another section and say, "I want to take such and such a trip. I need somebody to go. Could you go with me?" You'd ask your boss if he'd let you off. I took several trips with people in the political section. One fascinating trip was with our cultural counselor, who you'd call a PAO today, when I went with him to 5 cities in Central Asia. It was the first time he got permission to visit universities in that part of the Soviet Union. We went on a 2 week trip and visited 5 Central Asian universities.

Q: What was your impression of the situation in Central Asia at that time? Was there any knowledge or interest in the United States that you found?

SCANLAN: They controlled your contact very much. We were dealing almost exclusively with English speaking university professors, mainly English departments in universities. We would always have the usual formal meeting with the rector, maybe his deputy. They'd maybe entertain us on 1 occasion or another. The only students we were able to have contact with were students of the English language. My impression at that time was that there was a great deal of segregation in education there between the Central Asians and the Russians even in the English department. We noticed this in places like Frunze (now Bishkek), in Alma-Ata (now Almaty), Samarkand... There would be a Russian language university and an Uzbek language university. There was a great deal of segregation. We also noticed that the students of English tended to be much better in the Russian universities than in the Central Asian universities. You really got the impression of the colonial presence of Russians in those countries, probably a little bit less in Uzbekistan because there weren't as many Russians there. But by and large, you got that impression that this was a colonial empire. The Russians had brought technical modernization and some other things there, but by and large, they were the colonial masters. You clearly got that impression. All the important officials seemed to be Russian. I was there last summer to visit my son who was in the embassy in Kyrgyzstan. Now it's quite the opposite, the senior officials are mostly Kyrgyz.

Q: On these trips, were you harassed at all by the KGB?

SCANLAN: There were incidents. I never was. We were clearly followed and sometimes very obviously followed even though we were assigned an Intourist guide. But the Intourist guide wouldn't be with us all the time. You'd walk around the city and be by yourself when you weren't going on official programs. But you always had a sense of being followed. Sometimes it was very obvious. One time I went with Bob Owen, a political officer, head of the internal part of the political section, to Gorky. Then we went by train from Gorky to a place called Penze. Gorky has now reverted to its own name [Nizhniy Novgorod]. In Gorky we were followed very obviously, almost humorously. They'd keep changing their headgear. We used to call it the Comical Hats Program. The same people were following us all the time. Then we went by train to Penze. On the train we met a fellow in our compartment from Penze who was very friendly. I think he was legitimate. He invited us to his apartment in Penze, wanted us to come and visit him. He had been in the Red Army right at the end of World War II and he claimed he had met some American soldiers. He didn't speak more than a few words of English, but he remembered this experience fondly. My recollection is that he was an engineer or something. He had an apartment in the center of Penze. So, we were in Penze 2 or 3 days and we debated whether or not we should go. He hadn't set a time for us to go. He had given us the address. We were to come by in the evening to have hors d'oeuvres and a drink. Finally we decided to risk it, not for ourselves, but we didn't want to get him in trouble. We thought, "Well, he asked us. Maybe he is KGB." We went to his apartment and he and his wife received us. They were extremely nervous the whole evening. We were only there a couple of hours. They were friendly enough but they were very nervous. We concluded that the KGB had observed us on the train and had told him, "Okay, go ahead with this, but we'll be watching you and this is a black mark." But it was that controlled in those days. In 2 years, I was in 3 Russian apartments. Every situation was rather

similar to that. On the other 2 cases, Russians insisted on taking me to their apartments, both in Moscow. In both cases, I said, "You probably shouldn't be doing this." I was a little nervous that it might have been a provocation. It wasn't. It was just some Russian that thought he had more freedom than he had. But it was that tight in those days.

Q: Although you weren't working the political angle, you were one of the group. What was the impression during this '58-'60 period of Khrushchev?

SCANLAN: It was a period where it looked like there was going to be an opening to better relations. In the summer of 1959, Nixon visited Moscow. We had the exchange of exhibits, the big American exhibit in Sokolniki Park in July 1959. The Soviets had a big exhibit in New York. Nixon visited Moscow. It was sort of an opening. Khrushchev's deputy went to the United States. Then there were plans made for an Eisenhower visit to Moscow which was to have taken place in June 1960. I think our initial view of Khrushchev was that he was something of a buffoon. On the other hand, he had made that famous destalinization speech to the 20th Congress. So, there was something to him. On the other hand, some of his behavior was either oafish or just bizarre in a way. He would buy on to slogans like "You can grow corn anywhere." We used to jokingly refer to him as "King Corn." Slogans like "Anywhere you can grow wheat, you can also grow corn." This slogan was widely displayed on billboards. He was trying to move Russia into being a more dynamic, more productive society. We didn't recognize right away some of the things that we now recognize, that he was maybe premature but was trying to do... It was early detente. We didn't call it "detente" at the time. He was genuine in this. But initially we regarded him as a buffoon.

Then from the summer of '59 on until the U2 in May of '60, relations warmed up considerably. We had 2 or 3 minor incidents, but by and large relations warmed up. It looked like we were going to really move forward in relations. We then regarded Khrushchev as a liberal force in the Soviet sense.

Ambassador Thompson developed a very good relationship with Khrushchev on Khrushchev's trip to the United States.

Q: Had that taken place while you were in Moscow?

SCANLAN: Yes, it took place... Nixon came to Moscow in July of 1957. Khrushchev went to the United States that fall or early in '60. Thompson accompanied him on that trip. Americans sometimes behave in strange ways. When Khrushchev went to Los Angeles, he wanted to see Hollywood and Disneyland. Hollywood... He was offended by the way they treated him in Hollywood.

Q: Spurrros got up and made a big speech about-

SCANLAN: Spurrros made a big speech-

Q: About making it big in America.

SCANLAN: That's right, about what he had done as a Greek. Then they had these can can dancers. Then he was told he couldn't go to Disneyland because it hadn't been in the initial plan and we couldn't guarantee security. The reporters were beginning to be beastly at that time, too. He went into a supermarket... We were kind of throwing American affluence in his face. "Look how good we've got it." There were some good moments when he was at the Garst Farm in Iowa and things like that. But Los Angeles was bad and it looked like the trip was really going to turn out badly.

It was at this point when Thompson spent a lot of time with him. They went by train from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Thompson calmed him down and worked with the mayor of San Francisco, Christopher, and got things back on track and came back to Moscow feeling that he had developed a good relationship with Khrushchev, as indeed he had. From that point on, even after U2 when there was a freeze of a month or so and the cancellation of the Eisenhower visit, as long as Thompson was in Moscow, he had a pretty good relationship with Khrushchev. As a matter of fact, later on in the '61-'62 period, when we got over the U2 thing, Thompson and his family used to go out to Khrushchev's dacha as his personal guest. We developed great respect for Khrushchev.

Q: You were there during the U2 thing.

SCANLAN: Right.

Q: Did things get tense at that point?

SCANLAN: Very much so, yes. It really hit us by surprise. It happened on May 1. There was a famous photographer for "Life Magazine" who had been assigned to Moscow a year or so before that. He and his charming wife and 2 kids lived in a suite in the National Hotel, which had a great view of Red Square, looking right into Red Square. He invited a group of people to a May 1st party to watch the parade from his apartment. Carl Mayden was his name. Very nice person. We were among those invited. Others invited were Clifton Daniels and his wife, Margaret Truman, who were visiting Moscow at the time, and a lot of the press corps – Max Frankel, lots of others. We were fortunate to have been invited. We were all watching this thing. I was taking movies. The start of the parade was delayed for about an hour. I had a telescopic lense on my camera, one of those old 8 millimeter cameras with a turret. I had this on telescopic focused on the mausoleum when the Marshall of the Red Army came up and reported to Khrushchev and the others and they looked like they were in some sort of animated conversation. Then the parade went on.

We didn't know what had happened. We didn't find out until Saturday or Sunday. There was a meeting of the Supreme Soviets a couple days later. It was at that meeting that Khrushchev announced from the podium the shutdown of the U2. Thompson attended. I was in the embassy when he came back. He was furious. Thompson was a very calm, quiet, very well mannered person who rarely showed emotion. But I just happened to be in the elevator when he came back and he was obviously very upset. I wasn't in the meeting with him after that, but I was told that what upset him so much was the fact that Washington had not told him. He found out about that at that meeting. He was terribly embarrassed. He was subsequently called in by the Soviets and

read the riot act to them. Of course, the Eisenhower visit was canceled. We had had a month of beautiful preparation. We had had a series of events, parties, we had brought in all kinds of things, including a beautiful fiberglass motor launch on a trailer which was going to be Eisenhower's gift to Khrushchev and it had on the dashboard a brass plate that said something like "From the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev on the occasion of the former's visit to the latter in June." This brass plate was on it. Later on, we got instructions from Washington to remove the brass plate and send it back by diplomatic pouch because they didn't want to be embarrassed by having this brass plate. Then we wanted to keep the boat to use at our dacha. There was a nice little river and a small artificial lake near our dacha. We were told, "No, you have to send the boat out. Again, it could be an embarrassment to have that boat." It was under canvas. We had brought it in by air. So, we had to send it back out. I guess we sent it out by rail. Things got chilly pretty fast then after that and remained chilly for the remainder of our tour. We left in July.

Q: How did you and your wife find the social life in Moscow at this time?

SCANLAN: It was totally controlled from the Soviet side. You had very little social contact with the Soviets. You could invite 50 people and maybe 2-4 would come. And only officials would come. It was a little bit better during that honeymoon period between Khrushchev's visit to the United States and the U2. But usually either controlled official presences or cultural people who were involved in cultural exchange. We began to get invited to more things by the Russians, usually musicales or receptions in honor of cultural exchanges. Leonard Bernstein came with the New York Philharmonic. But as far as informal home entertainment, it was almost exclusively the diplomatic corps and other resident foreigners, which meant the press corps. That was your social life. But it was pretty lively, maybe sometimes too lively, with 6 or more events a week. We were never bored.

Q: Were the Soviets into foreign students at that time?

SCANLAN: The first student exchange agreement was formalized with the Russians in the fall of 1958. I was at a reception in the DCM's apartment where this was anointed and toasted. The people who had come from Washington to negotiate it and their Soviet counterparts were there. In those days, we never said "Russian." We always said "Soviet." I remember vividly that reception. We were invited. It was kind of nice being the youngest people in the embassy because they usually invited us to anything that had to do with youth or students. It was a formal agreement. The exchange was supposed to be 20 for 20. It was a graduate student exchange. The following year, the first group of Americans came, maybe not even 20. But most of the Americans were at the University of Moscow. There were 2 or 3 that were in other places. Among those that came, we became close friends with Bill and Heidi Shinn. A year or 2 after that, Bill joined the Foreign Service and had a very good career. Unfortunately, he came down with Parkinsons and had to leave right at the time when we thought he was going to move onward and upward probably to ambassadorial level. But Bill and Heidi were in that first group of American students. They were from Minnesota. I'm from Minnesota. So we developed a good friendship then.

Q: How about foreign students? Did you get any feel of how foreign students were being treated?

SCANLAN: There were a lot of African students there. They had this Patrice Lumumba University. Some of the African students seemed to feel pleased that they were there and others seemed to feel that they weren't being treated very well. We did on occasion see some of these African students, particularly those who were unhappy and hoped that they could go to the United States instead of staying in the Soviet Union. But by and large we didn't see much of foreign students there.

Q: You left there when?

SCANLAN: In July of 1960.

Q: During a freeze period.

SCANLAN: Yes. There was one noteworthy incident even during that freeze period which was rather interesting because of something else. I was embassy duty officer sometime in mid-June, 1960. It was a Russian holiday, I think Constitution Day. I got a call from a doctor in a small town named Gzhatsk, which was out west of Moscow in the direction of Minsk and Poland, maybe 150 miles west of Moscow. This Russian doctor wanted to tell us about 2 Americans who had been in an automobile accident near Gzhatsk. He had them in his hospital. He said, "Our conditions aren't adequate to take care of them. I'm taking care of them in my office, where I can give them better treatment. They've had a lot of facial cuts, nothing serious. They're ambulatory. But couldn't you come and take them off my hands?" I said, "Well, have you spoken to Intourist?" There was no Intourist in Gzhatsk, but they had called Intourist in Smolenski and they were entirely unresponsive. He said the Americans had been traveling by car from Warsaw to Moscow on their honeymoon and had missed a turn or come off a sharp turn or something and they had gone airborne and landed in a ditch. I said, "Well, I'll see what we can do." I didn't want to be caught in an incident of any kind. Frankly, it was one of those days when practically everyone was gone in the embassy, the ambassador, the DCM, the admin. officer. I had to make decisions on my own. I called our embassy doctor, an Air Force captain. Then I called back and talked to this guy. I had him put the American on. He put the American on and he told me what the situation was. He said, "It's pretty primitive here." He gave me his passport number. It sounded legitimate. So, we decided to give it a try. I called the foreign ministry and told them the situation, asked them to verify it. They verified it and said they would give me permission to go. Our Air Force captain, since he was a military attaché, had to go through the military channel. He got permission.

We both jumped in an embassy sedan. I drove 3 hours to Gzhatsk. We were tailed very closely all the way. We got to Gzhatsk. Talk about squalor, a miserable town, muddy red streets, wooden and log cabin houses, a few brick buildings but in bad shape. We were directed to the hospital. It was a sprawling partly wood, partly brick place. We went in and the doctor's office was decent but the rest of the building smelled of urine and stale bandages and it was really pretty bad. The doctor turned out to be a young fellow in his late 20s who spoke fairly good German. I should have said these Americans spoke reasonably good German, the man in particular. The Americans

were mid-20s probably. The reason they had been going to Moscow on their honeymoon was that his parents were of Russian Jewish origin from Moscow and he wanted to go back. They didn't speak any Russian. So, we agreed to take them back, but first we had to go out on the edge of town to arrange to get their car hauled to Moscow. It was right near a collective farm office. We went into this meeting in this really modest meeting room of the collective farm with the chairman of the farm and 6 of his board members and we negotiated. It seems now improbable that you could have done it in those days but we negotiated for 1 of their trucks to take this car to Moscow at a certain price that the American had said he would pay to take it into the American embassy garage. It wasn't that badly banged up. A little sports car, a convertible. The chairman of the collective farm said he'd been out by the highway and he saw the accident. He said, "They took off like angels and landed like the devil." Then we even watched them load the car. In order to load the car, they had to angle the truck into a ditch so that the back of the truck would be at the level of the car and they pushed it up onto the truck. They took off for Moscow and we went back and picked up these 2 Americans. We got about half way to Moscow and we came across the truck by the edge of the highway. We wondered what was going on. They were washing the truck. They said, "Oh, Moscow. 100 rubles fine if you've got a dirty truck or a dirty car." We said, "You know where to take it?" They said, "Yes, the American embassy address." The whole thing worked beautifully. We took these people in. Our doctor took care of them for a couple of days and then they put them on a train back and arranged to have their car fixed up and shipped out. But remember the miserable, squalid town? Unbelievable. Shortly thereafter, the first space flight was by a man named Yuri Gagarin. I read his biography. He was born in Gzhatsk. I thought to myself, "What a contrast. This miserable, squalid town produces the first man in space." That is the contrast of Soviet society. You had all of the assets put into the military industrial complex. They can produce things like that and they would still have in the second half of the 20th century these miserable squalid towns in European Russia, not in Central Asia. I tell this story only because of the Gagarin part. But the other part of it was interesting, too. When I wrote up the report of it, Harry Barnes, who by that time was back in Washington on the Soviet desk, wrote me a nice little note of "Congratulations. You took pretty good initiative. That was the right thing to do. But I'm amazed that they let you do it."

VLADIMIR I. TOUMANOFF
Political Officer
Moscow (1958-1960)

Vladimir Toumanoff was born in Constantinople in 1923 to Russian parents. He attended Harvard University and joined the Foreign Service in 1950. He served in several posts including Germany, Iceland, Moscow, and Canada. He was interviewed by William D. Morgan in 1999.

Q: This would have been, then, September, roughly, of 1958.

TOUMANOFF: That's right, August or September. I was surprised as I had not finished my tour in Frankfurt, but delighted because service in Moscow had been my goal from the start. Remember, to make some contribution to the course of U.S.-Russian relations was the main

reason I sought to join the Service.

So I arrive in Moscow, and it comes to me as an extraordinary surprise in a number of ways. One was that having grown up in a Russian family after the Revolution and knowing how profound the changes had been since then, what extraordinary traumas the society had gone through, and the insistence by the Government and the Communist Party that it was remolding everything, destroying the old and remolding entirely the Czarist society, all its institutions, its mores, values, and its very people, I expected to recognize very little from what I had lived with, had learned by living with my parents and their Russian friends, all of whom had grown up under the Czars, before the revolution. I was astounded at how familiar it all was, that except for a certain coarseness in the language, a certain loss of vocabulary and introduction of much bureaucratic slang, the Russian language had changed very little.

Q: And Russian culture, despite the inordinate attempt to change it.

TOUMANOFF: Body language had not changed. Facial expressions had not changed. Forms of humor had not changed. There was really remarkably little of the impact I had expected after nearly 50 years of Soviet power and unbelievable traumas and human sacrifice. It was astounding to me how little the communist experience had changed the people. That was one major surprise. So I found myself being taken for a fellow Soviet. Except for my foreign clothes, I did not stand out as an alien in spite of the enormous and shocking differences in the physical appearance and amenities between Russia and America.

Those were a second surprise, as anyone who visited Russia in the late '50s will attest. Materially, even Moscow was a different civilization, to say nothing of the condition of the rest of the country. The people impoverished, stunted and too often maimed or crippled. Structures, except for Stalinist showpieces, worn out, shabby to slum-like, neglected and crumbling, with huge identical poorly built "new" apartment blocks already breaking down. Crowds and lines everywhere seeking scarce or nonexistent goods. Truly appalling, backward working conditions. And with all that a stalwart, energetic, intelligent, kindly and humorous people, looking aged ahead of their years.

I thought I would be a Rip Van Winkle, that the place would have changed to such an extent that I wouldn't understand it, and it wouldn't understand me. And that was simply not true. Incidentally, I had no relatives or parental friends in Russia. They were wiped out or escaped.

Q: Oh, we should have raised that earlier. That's very important.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, it is. Because had I any relatives or friends, they would have been targeted by the KGB and used against me.

Q: For the record, Helen Semler, Peter Semler and his wife, who were with me in Moscow in 1962-64, was told that they could not go on assignment to the USSR., because of her family back in Russia. But she got it overruled, and the policy ultimately changed. She was the first one to enter, I was told, that had family there.

TOUMANOFF: Good for her.

Q: Now it wasn't the Officer. It was the spouse, but still.

TOUMANOFF: Another surprise was how quickly an event occurred which showed me that the place was not all that friendly, or all that easy to navigate in. The first day in the Embassy, I said to myself, Great Scott, here I am in Moscow! And I went out for a walk, just to look around and soak up the reality that I really was in Moscow, with all the associations the name of that city had for me. And I hadn't gotten a block and a half from the Embassy when I heard footsteps behind me, which quickened when I quickened and slowed when I did, several times. When they were very close behind as I approached an intersection, I turned as I came to the curbstone, to the person who was just behind me at my shoulder and asked, in Russian, whether there was something I could do for them. The individual was rather taken aback, but in very short order it turned out that he was a Yugoslav. He had been incarcerated at some point, jailed or in a *Gulag*, had been finally amnestied or released having served his term, and he wanted to escape from the country. As a former prisoner, however, he had no right to visit Moscow. He had waited in a barber shop across the street from the Embassy until he saw someone who was obviously an American, or at least a foreigner, dressed in foreign clothing, come out. He hoped an American diplomat could help him escape.

Q: But couldn't do it immediately in front of the embassy or try to enter. The Soviet guard would stop him and it would probably result in his re-arrest.

TOUMANOFF: That's right. He could see the two uniformed and armed Soviet guards, one on each side of the entrance. Moreover, the barber shop may easily have been a KGB observation post to see and record who went in and out. But in his innocence he probably didn't realize that I, as was every American diplomat, was probably being followed by the security "organs" at some distance back. I explained to him that I was an American, in the American diplomatic service, and that my purpose in being in Moscow was not to worsen relations between the United States and Russia but rather, if possible, to improve them, and that even if that were not my purpose and duty, I certainly was not in a position to help him in any conceivable way. I suggested he go to his own, Yugoslav, Embassy, which he rejected in disgust because they would just turn him over to the Soviet police. I then told him that I was probably being followed by the KGB and that he would probably be picked up when he left me. His earlier manner and now obvious terror convinced me that he was genuine, and not a Soviet plant calculated to trap me on my first outing. So I suggested he say he had asked me directions to the post office, I would point down the side street toward the center of town, and we should part. Which we did. I crossed the street and after a few steps looked back. He was already surrounded by several men forcing him against his struggles into the back of a large black car. I did not stop to watch and walked on. They must have driven up quite close behind us as we talked on that corner.

Q: You'd been there only one day.

TOUMANOFF: First day, and first walk on Moscow's streets. That was the first episode which started to tune my radar pretty finely in terms of what to expect. It was not to be the last. But more about that later on.

Q: This is a real experience, versus the briefing you got from security and so forth.

TOUMANOFF: Exactly. I hadn't anticipated that it would happen so soon. I thought I'd have a certain amount of time to acclimatize and get my radar tuned and develop the street smarts that one simply has to have in any city.

Q: Okay, let's back up just a bit. You were assigned to the embassy in Moscow in September, '58, because of this PNG situation. To what position were you assigned?

TOUMANOFF: Second Secretary, Political Officer in External. The Political Section had an "internal" and "external" Sections.

Q: Okay, and how many were there in that section? Could you give us a slight snippet of the atmosphere at that point and who was in charge, so we know the names of the individuals?

TOUMANOFF: Llewellyn Thompson was the ambassador. The Political Counselor, David Marks was PNG'd shortly after I arrived, and Boris Klosson came to replace him. Under him were two Sections of three Officers each, The Internal Section under Robert I. Owen covered Soviet domestic politics, and the External under Ralph Jones, with Francis Meehan and myself covered Soviet international relations.

Q: You had an area of the world that you-

TOUMANOFF: No, there were too few of us for that. Essentially the assignment was that all of us looked quickly, when we first arrived in the morning, through the incoming and outgoing telegrams from the previous 24 hours, and scanned the main Soviet newspapers. These were normally Pravda (the Party paper), Izvestia (the Government), and either Trud (labor) or Sel'skaya Zhisn' (agriculture), and occasionally Krasnaya Zvezda (the military) although the Service Attaches could be relied on for that. I think we divided up the newspapers, but not consistently. We would then meet with the Political Counselor to decide and assign drafting duty among us for anything important enough to warrant a separate cable to the Department. All else worth reporting would be covered and drafted by one of us in a daily round-up cable called the 'presstel.' That was usually a pretty dull chore calling for little if any comment. For press items warranting any extensive comment, we would quickly draft cables to Washington describing the item and adding our interpretation of its significance. For example "The lead editorial in today's Pravda claims the U.S. Government intends to... This new accusation expands on the earlier (Embtel #) intended primarily to cause public concern in the NATO nations over U.S. nuclear weapons policy in advance of the resumption of arms negotiations scheduled next month."

Q: You had a kind of informal list of what you should keep your eyes out for, in terms of Washington's interest.

TOUMANOFF: Nothing formal. The list would have been too long by far, or updated all the time. focus was the purpose of the daily meeting of both sections with Boris Klosson, who reviewed and edited our cables before they were sent.

Q: The "presstel," was probably unclassified, in terms of comments.

TOUMANOFF: The presstel was probably Official Use Only, unless there was some comment in it, as was usual in the separate cables, in which case the comment would define the classification. For example, "There has been no public comment yet from either Beijing or Moscow on the Secretary's announcement last week that... The presence in Moscow of the Chinese Foreign Minister suggests that the topic may be sensitive and coordination of positions awkward," would warrant a higher classification. Once the press coverage was out of the way, we worked on all sorts of other reporting tasks, visiting delegations, negotiations, preparing diplomatic notes, consulting with other diplomatic colleagues, attending public agitprop (agitation and propaganda) lectures, traveling, etc.

Q: Do you want to add in here comments on travel, how you took it, how you arranged it, or is that to be later?

TOUMANOFF: As you know, Bill, from your own experience, very large parts of the Soviet Union, including even parts of Moscow, were closed, off limits to diplomats, especially American diplomats. For the rest, if you wanted to travel at any distance outside of 25 kilometers, I believe it was, from the center of Moscow, you had to have special permission from the Foreign Ministry, whether it was 26 kilometers or someplace way out to the other end of the entire country. So you'd send a note to the Foreign Ministry saying that so-and-so, an officer of the embassy, requests permission to travel on the following itinerary, route and conveyance. Ordinarily that was allowed, sometimes with some emendations by the Foreign Ministry, and if you got this permission, off you went. You didn't even ask to go to places that were closed. We always traveled in pairs, together.

Q: Like nuns.

TOUMANOFF: Well, mainly because a single American diplomat traveling alone would be more vulnerable, more apt to be set up as a target for some sort of provocation or incident, or simply to provide instant assistance and witness in case of accident or illness.

I should recount several incidents. Reasonably frequently, permission for travel would be denied, and I think the one that I found most amusing was that one of our officers had served in the Forestry Service of the U.S. Park Department. He requested permission to go to an "open" Soviet National Park, of which there were many, this one someplace in the Caucasus, I believe. The answer came back refusing permission because that national park was "Closed for repair," which suggested that while officially "open" further requests would be unavailing.

Speaking of Diplomatic Notes. Not specifically for travel, but to give you an idea of the working relations, for the most part at the routine level, with the Soviet Government. Regularly, late in the day on Christmas Eve and on New Year's Eve, the embassy would receive a gigantic diplomatic note running to 15-20 pages and full of nothing much, indeed nothing but the current, routine, standard propaganda boilerplate. The intention, clearly, was to spoil some officer's, or maybe even a couple of officers' Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve, because the Foreign Ministry knew

that the moment any diplomatic note arrived duty officers would have to go in to translate it and to prepare and send a cable to Washington with the translation. At that end some other officer would have to come in to the Department to read the cable and decide if it warranted prompt attention from some senior official.

Q: Even though you know it's trash and done for an irritation?

TOUMANOFF: Right, our standing instructions were to read, translate and send to the Department any Note from the Soviet Government. This was just a calculated annoyance, a form of mild harassment.

Q: Anti-religious, perhaps.

TOUMANOFF: Well, perhaps so, but I read or translated several of those, and I never found one that had anything other than the very, very familiar kind of stuff that you read a week or two weeks earlier in an editorial in some newspaper. We didn't retaliate in kind, perhaps because the U.S. set a higher value on diplomatic notes than the Soviets, and didn't want to cheapen ours.

I should go back and talk about what travel was like. It was rather exceptional on several counts.

One had to do with the change in U.S.-Soviet relations during the period of my tour in Moscow, that is 1958-1960. About the time I arrived in Moscow there was some minor problem going on, I think it was over Berlin, but I'm not sure. In any case relations were a little strained, and standard anti-American propaganda was raised to match. Whatever was the problem, it ended quickly. And then, quite rapidly, the great Khrushchev thaw came into effect, and relations improved markedly. A number of exchange agreements were negotiated, (remind me to tell you about one such) including arrangements for the great American exhibition, and for the exchange of visits by Khrushchev and Eisenhower. "Peace and Friendship" and "The Spirit of Camp David" became the new, overwhelming Soviet propaganda slogans. All that has been thoroughly documented in books and articles. What is not so well known is that the bars against contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners, particularly Americans, including American diplomats, suddenly came tumbling down. They didn't vanish by explicit direction from Moscow. They vanished more by the radical change in the atmospherics, the suddenly favorable propaganda treatment of the United States. The Soviet public, which for some half century had been starved of contact with foreigners, with the West and most especially the U.S., by every means up to and including mortal threat, simply stampeded out of the corral.

In my travels and in Moscow, I met many Russians and other Soviet citizens, mostly by chance, and even developed a few genuine friends. A couple of perhaps important observations. One is that in all these random contacts not once did I encounter anger, antagonism or hostility toward the U.S. On the contrary, in spite of the intense efforts by the Communist Party and Soviet Government since at least 1900 to alienate the population from America, there was profound skepticism about the official image ("we know they lie to us"), great hunger for reliable information, eager curiosity about all aspects of America, and a vast reservoir of admiration and good will. Almost frighteningly so: Firstly because much of the admiration tended to be exaggerated in wishful contrast to their own brutally hard half-century; and secondly I heard

often enough, and in unlikely places busily fixing up, cleaning up, and painting, "Maybe your President Eisenhower will come here on his visit. If he does we will give him a welcome such as no Soviet leader has ever had!" If I was hearing this often, the KGB must have been picking it up in spades. I'm persuaded that Khrushchev's anti-Stalin liberalization, and this turn towards the U.S. resulted in a widespread Public reaction which was read by Soviet authorities as a dangerously spreading loss of control. Unless contained and reversed, I think they feared, correctly, that it could accelerate and grow to torch them, the Party, and the nation. That fear, I believe, contributed to the Soviet extreme reaction to the U-2 incident, and ultimately (together with much else) to Khrushchev's fall and the Brezhnevite clamp down at home and in Eastern Europe. That may seem to some a very long bow for me to draw. But I would cite in support of my view the invasion of Czechoslovakia as prompted in large part by fear of domestic contagion from the "Prague Spring," as well as the later spontaneous collapse of Soviet control of Eastern Europe.

On a personal level, travel for me was unusual on several counts. In the first place, of course, was the general feeling among Russians that contact with Americans was now safe, indeed, seemingly encouraged by the official line. Random contact was easy to make, indeed, sometimes it was initiated by Russians With my very Russian name, and because I spoke without an accent, they would take me for a Russian, sort of pulling their leg. That was dangerous for us, as the KGB was still following American diplomats, and would usually question the Soviet after we separated. I did not wish for the KGB to think I was trying to pass for a Russian So, early in any conversation I would explain that I was not a Russian, that I was an American, an American diplomat, and that I worked in the United States embassy in Moscow. Most often the caution didn't last and after a bit they would say "Okay, fine, but you're not really an American; at heart you're really one of us." and I'd be accepted and the talk would turn unconstrained. Occasionally I'd repeat the caution, promptly disregarded.

Q: My comparable experience was I was always identified as a Latvian, Lithuanian, or Estonian, because I was dressed a little bit differently from the Soviets, even though the others were Soviets, and secondly I had this funny accent in Russian.

TOUMANOFF: Well, I tended to wear some native clothes, by preference, especially in winter, some of it suited the climate or the wear and tear of travel better. But that was not of any great significance, because over all I was obviously a foreigner. The result, however, was some very candid conversations. Outside of Moscow talking with an American fluent in Russian who new enough about life in the USSR not to be surprised, was almost always a first-in-a-lifetime experience, not to be missed. They were so hungry for such contact. All telephone calls from and to the embassy passed through a Soviet operator, and were, of course tapped and recorded. Russians knew that. It seems hard to believe in retrospect that my office phone would ring and it would be somebody I had met on a trip, or a Muscovite saying, "Here I am in town. Let's have lunch, or dinner. Let's go to a concert. Even, as happened once " I've just finished building my new apartment, I'm having a housewarming. Come with your wife and join the party."

Q: Most unusual, most unusual-and suspect. My first reaction is this is a plant.

TOUMANOFF: Well, it wasn't, for the most part. I can tell you about how plants worked and

how you recognized them. After you had established a measure of friendship the next time you met your friend, an "old wartime comrade" would show up and would be introduced, somewhat awkwardly. Your friend would fade away, usually not to be seen again, while the newcomer would try to substitute. Or a friend, after a while would have some forced question or two to insert into our conversation, easily recognized by content or manner as planted. My tendency was to provide an equally obvious, plausible but worthless reply. That done and out of the way, we would resume with relief our natural relationship. But it was a signal that before too long the friend would be told to end the relationship.

Q: How fortunate you were.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, and of course. But all of that came to a crashing end with the shoot-down of the U-2. The telephone stopped ringing. My Russian friends and acquaintances were totally silent, not to be found. And even random contacts were shunned. I didn't even really try as I, like every Russian, read the strident denunciations of America as a clear signal that contact with Americans was again highly dangerous.

Q: Do you think they were told to, or do you think-

TOUMANOFF: They didn't need to be told. They read the Russian media coverage. They read the total change in the tone of the relationship with Khrushchev, vilifying the United States and the President, calling off Eisenhower's proposed visit, making a tremendous scene in Paris. It was one of those wonderful demonstrations of how sensitive the Russian public is to stark changes of official direction. It was okay, "Peace and Friendship" meant you could have American friends, but as the whole tone of the official line coming out of Moscow, and all the press, turned 180 degrees, so, of course, did the Soviet public, and marched in the opposite direction.

Q: The reversal was dramatic.

TOUMANOFF: The reverse signal came out with the shoot-down of the U-2, and everybody read it, and all of a sudden, all of that friendship was cut off. Once again, it was dangerous to be in contact with Americans - which was back to normal.

With one exception, Bill, and this might be of some interest. The telephone did ring. I was due to leave Moscow in the, lets see, it would have been late summer of 1960. This was just... The U-2 was shot down on May Day of 1960, and the trial had already been held. (I attended the trial, and I'll talk about that later.) But the telephone rang one day in the embassy, and it was one of my friends, who was a good friend. He had come out and stayed with us for a weekend in the American embassy *dacha*, and whom I had been instrumental in helping during the Nixon visit. He was a journalist, photographer. He had asked me to help him have some contact with the U.S. delegation and Soviet escorts when we were in Central Asia so that he could get a story and some photographs.

Q: For whom did he work?

TOUMANOFF: Oh, he said he was freelance, and I believed him. He went on to become a very gifted, internationally known photographer with shows, not only in the Soviet Union but also in the United States, Japan and elsewhere abroad. Anyway, he was quite an independent figure, and even to this day I won't identify him further. Who knows what kind of trouble he may be in now? Call him Peter. Anyway, he said he knew that I was leaving Moscow soon (I had told him that my tour was due to end in the summer), and he asked me to do him a favor. I said I'd be glad to if I could, what was the favor. He said, "I promised Howard Sochurek [the Life magazine photographer who also covered the Nixon visit] that I would send him some copies of my photographs of the Nixon tour. I wondered if you could take them with you and give them to Sochurek when you get to New York?" I asked why not just put them in the mail?

Q: This wasn't on the phone, I presume.

TOUMANOFF: All on the telephone. I hadn't seen or heard from him since before the U-2. I'm sitting in my office in the embassy, and he doesn't say where or how he is, nor ask about me and Eileen. No ordinary talk, just business, and his voice is strained and speech awkward. Very unlike himself. He paused, and kind of stumbled and mumbled something and finally said, "Well, you know, the mails are not that reliable, and would you do that for me?" I replied that I was sorry but that was not something I could or should do. And with that, the conversation ended, abruptly. About an hour later, the telephone rang again, and a muffled, slightly disguised voice said, "You know who this is?" I recognized his voice and said, yes, I did. The voice said, "I just wanted to tell you how much I've enjoyed our friendship, how much I hope that some day circumstances will be such that we can meet again." Click. And I realized that the KGB had forced him to make that first phone call to try to set me up for arrest at the transfer of documents as they had, and would again, other unwary foreigners. He had made that call reluctantly and with unusual restraint in his speech and constraint in his voice which might alert me. He was risking the second call to apologize for having made the first, and to restore my confidence in him and our friendship.

Q: Trying to get you lined up.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, because while the voice was muffled and semi-disguised, the tonality was totally sincere because I knew him so well. Well, that was part of the life of the Foreign Service in Moscow.

Q: Readers of the interviews with other Moscow veterans presented by this Oral History Project will see that on this subject they all read alike. I think we've all had similar experiences, even back in the old days, the Stalin days, all the way up to the present.

There's something also that has come out in many of these interviews that you haven't given us yet - the family. That is to say, I found wives often kept out of things, just by the classified nature of the work, or difficult language perhaps, and stress, that inability to have a normal relationship with the society. Is this a good time to tell us how your family reacted to this?

TOUMANOFF: Oh, sure, yes. It was atypical, Bill, because in the first place, Eileen, when we first got married, in fact, even before we got married, when we were planning to, Eileen started

taking Russian lessons.

Q: This, incidentally, was not authorized by the State Department.

TOUMANOFF: No, both of us were still in college at that point. So she started taking Russian lessons, and she took some lessons from my father and some lessons from my mother, and then she took some lessons while she was still in college. So she knew some Russian, and then she went on with tapes and records before we went to Moscow. She could get around reasonably well. So there were four of us in Moscow, my wife, Eileen, myself, and our two children, age 5 and 6.

Q: And reading.

TOUMANOFF: Oh, yes. No problem reading. She could speak Russian more or less and understand much more by the time we arrived in Moscow. She wanted to continue learning the language so she made a special effort when she went out to shop or to the park with our children to speak with Russians. Obviously a foreigner, she attracted curious Russians, especially when with our small children. In addition we got from the diplomatic service, the official Moscow government diplomatic service for foreigners-

Q: UPDK (Diplomatic Service Agency)?

TOUMANOFF: UPDK, yes... We got a Russian language tutor to give her systematic Russian lessons.

Q: But she had to report back about you to Soviet intelligence.

TOUMANOFF: Of course. We all understood that, it was a given, and so was our discretion. Actually, she turned out to be one of our closest friends - not because Eileen and I were revealing anything to her but because she was educated, she was cultured, she was a professional editor of Russian dictionaries at one of Moscow's academic publishers. Also, work with Eileen was an extraordinary opportunity for her to perfect her English, which she was working on. She and Eileen became good friends and enjoyed each others' company. She had a boyfriend who was a master of sports, a champion of one, I think gymnastics. One of the fun things they did was to ride in parades, including the November 7th parade through Red Square, the civilian part, in which he drove a motorcycle and she rode standing on the handlebars as a kind of Winged Victory of Samothrace. We had dinner at their apartment one evening I remember.

Eileen also did a great deal of shopping in the local markets and stores. In those days, there was not a Moscow store that did not have long lines, which served as Moscow's free wheeling, high speed, news and information channel, run largely by grandmothers. Those conversations were one of Eileen's favorite activities, and occasionally my best source of information and insight.

Q: She'd had more exposure than many of the wives and therefore found herself more satisfied, perhaps.

TOUMANOFF: Oh, hardships aside, she was having a wonderful time. She really was. It was a great experience for her as it was for me.

Q: You both were more fortunate, I think, than most. As well - intentioned as those other officers were.

TOUMANOFF: We were extremely lucky to be there when there was that remarkable openness, curiosity and friendship for Americans and the U.S.; when we were sought after and made welcome. We were also used to Russians from my parents and their friends. So they and their ways were not strange, we felt familiar and safe in their company. All that changed soon.

Q: And didn't feel kept out, felt quite the opposite in many cases.

TOUMANOFF: Well, quite the opposite during this extraordinary period. There's another side to this image. Let me give you an idea of just how secretive Eileen and I were in our apartment because there were microphones - in fact, the first apartment we lived in fell down.

Q: Fell down?

TOUMANOFF: Nearly. It was out on I think it's called Kutuzov Street, opposite the National Economics Exhibit, the National Exhibit of Economic Achievements, I think it was called.

Q: "Achievement" was the word, yes.

TOUMANOFF: The building was a hollow square. The Chinese were in one wing, the Westerners were in another wing, and I forget who was in the rest, Eastern Europeans probably, we had little if any contact with them.

Q: The press, perhaps.

TOUMANOFF: No, probably somebody like the North Koreans.

Q: Friendly.

TOUMANOFF: The building started to grow cracks in the walls, and the cracks grew larger fairly rapidly. The embassy kept calling Soviet authorities saying, "Something's wrong with this building." The answer was always, don't worry about a thing, we'll let you know if there is any problem.

Q: This is good Soviet architecture.

TOUMANOFF: Right, well, I don't know whether they would have claimed that, because it would have been so transparently false because the cracks got longer and wider up and down the walls and in the ceilings, ever longer and wider, inches in a day, until one fine day there was a rapid exchange with the Soviets, and they said we were to be evacuated, the entire building, over the next three days. They had found a building for us which was out on Prospekt Mira, you

know, out at the opposite end of town. It was an emergency. We found out later that gas pipes were rupturing. In the mean time, pieces of the building had been falling off.

Q: And they had baskets underneath to catch them?

TOUMANOFF: No, they didn't have baskets, they built a reinforced sort of tunnel from the front door out far enough into the yard so that the pieces of concrete or whatever it was falling down wouldn't actually brain one of us, but bounced off this tunnel. Anyway, literally within 24 hours they had stevedores in and in three days they picked up everything and moved everyone out to the new quarters. I knew where this was, they gave me the address, and I went out on the first day to see what this place looked like that we were being thrown into by the Soviets. It was a brand new building, still under construction, and I had some very interesting experiences. I may as well get into this. I wasn't going to, but it may be of interest to any student of Soviet architecture.

Q: It's personal, so therefore it is relevant, Vlad.

TOUMANOFF: It was another hollow square design. One wing of which was completely finished, and ordinary Russians - well, perhaps not ordinary because they were the lucky few who had new housing, but Russians had already moved in. A second wing was the wing into which we were going to be placed, and it looked just in the last external finishing stages. It was built and it was habitable. I knew which apartment would be ours. There was something of a mess inside. It looked as though the workers had just left and hadn't cleaned up. They left scraps of building materials and junk behind. I won't tell you what condition the toilet was in, but I managed to make it workable. A third wing was still under construction, and as I watched the work, I witnessed one of the flaws that pervaded the Soviet Union, and perhaps still does in Russia.

There were banners all over this construction site. Incidentally, and the huge yard held between these three wings looked like the fields of Flanders after the battle. The ground totally churned up, it looked bombed, with pieces of broken construction materials, hunks of scrap iron, old tires, every conceivable form of trash, some half buried, strewn everywhere.

But back to the banners and posters, which were up everywhere. They exhorted saving. **FOR EVERY BAG OF CEMENT YOU SAVE THE BUILDING TRUST SAVES TONS FOR NEW HOUSING. FOR EVERY BRICK YOU SAVE THE TRUST SAVES THOUSANDS**, and so on and on. So I watched the bricklayers. They saved! Bricklayers would take a small dab of cement, and put it on the underneath brick, and put two dabs of cement on ends of the brick they were laying, and they'd plunk this thing down, and do the same to the next. *Occasionally I could even see what looked like a hole!* I talked with one of them while I watched and explained I was an American, as if my obvious western clothes were not enough. I did not want to be taken for an inspector, although, if there were any, I was pretty sure they and the foremen were paid off with kickbacks. Eventually I asked if someone would come along later and do some pointing up. The answer of course was "no."

Q: They were reading the banners, apparently.

TOUMANOFF: Well, it was a dumb question on my part, but I asked, "How about the holes?" He looked at me as if to say "What holes?" and then I got a very candid answer. "You see that banner? I'm saving cement. If I save enough cement on my shift, I get a bonus. If I save enough bricks, and I save a lot of bricks, I get another bonus."

Q: This was motivation of the highest sort.

TOUMANOFF: This was the motivation, planning motivation. And I think it prevailed throughout the economy, even military industry. The apartment, absolutely standard in the stairwell, and probably in that and thousands of other buildings just like it throughout the country, really wasn't bad at all. It was built for at least two families, with a common kitchen and a common bathroom, and five rooms - two rooms and the kitchen on one side of a central hallway, three rooms on the other side, and the bathroom at the end. So each American family was getting the space assigned, *theoretically*, to two Russian families, but probably in the post-war housing shortage occupied by five, one in each room, with a common kitchen and a common bathroom. One of the problems allegedly discovered by the new American tenants was when they turned on the gas stove, water came out of the burners. It may have been parody, but equally plausibly somebody had connected a water pipe to the gas line.

Q: There had to be a banner to explain this.

TOUMANOFF: That would be my explanation. The more pipes you connect, the more pay you get, the more bonuses you earn, until you make foreman. Then you collect kickback from the workmen, and nobody asks which pipe you connected to which other pipe.

I should mention a couple of other things about it. One is that when I went into the apartment that we were going to get, there was a spot of fresh plaster on a wall in each room. My guess was that each covered a newly installed microphone.

Q: Oh, of course.

TOUMANOFF: They must have had very short notice of the arrival of American diplomats because of the emergency evacuation. So I think walls which had already been plastered, had to be broken into for the microphones and the holes then covered with new fresh plaster just before my visit. It was really of little interest because we naturally assumed rooms would be bugged one way or another. Some months later one of our Embassy officers managed to open a locked attic door to find a battery of tape recorders, and a man with earphones. The Soviets promptly expelled that officer from the country. Remind me later to tell you about one way of thwarting such microphones.

One day, after we finally got a telephone in the apartment, it failed, and of course, the Embassy had to call UPDK, the diplomatic service bureau; repeatedly, and in vain. After a couple of weeks I decided to break the deadlock. By that time I knew the UPDK telephone number, so I called them from the Embassy, all of whose lines we knew were tapped by the KGB. I explained that, as reported to them earlier several times by the Embassy, my home telephone had gone bad

and would they fix it please. They'd say, yes, yes, and nothing would happen. After several more fruitless calls just to build the record for what I was about to do, I called UPDK again and said, "Look, as they must know, the Embassy and I had called many times to request repair of my apartment telephone, and it still doesn't work. It is most inconvenient, and impedes the work of the Embassy. So you leave me no choice. If it is not repaired by the time I get home this evening, I'm going to take it apart and fix it myself." Well, there was a telephone repairman out there in no time at all and when I got home it worked like new. My calculation was that UPDK (an intelligence arm itself) as well as the listening KGB, knew there was a microphone or some other tap in the telephone instrument at home, and they didn't want me to tinker with it, perhaps to find and remove it. That might hit the western press and cause some sort of incident, or protest, or just prompt us to examine all our telephones, or reveal some of their technology. The promptness of repair might have been just coincidence, but I doubt it. Besides, we learned to use the Soviet listening practices occasionally to work to our advantage.

Another example of the same nature: When we first arrived and back when we were still living in the first building, we tried to get someone to help with the housework. So the Embassy called the service agency, and kept calling and calling, only to be told, "Terribly sorry, no one is available." In the meantime, several newly arrived nonaligned diplomatic families had received household help promptly. So finally I called myself and said, "As you know, we've been asking for several months, and a number of other diplomats have received help, diplomats who arrived in Moscow well after we registered our request. If no one is available now, nor by the end of this week, I'll go next Saturday to the collective farm market where I'm sure I can find someone to hire myself." Well, practically instantaneously a lady, Ukrainian, appeared. She was with us until we were evacuated from that building, when she decided to go back to the Ukraine. Interestingly, her reason for returning to the Ukraine was that, unlike our outgoing kids, her own daughter in the care of grandparents was turning into a spoiled, snobbish "aristokratka" and that would never do!

So sometimes you could turn the Soviet system of isolation and control to your advantage.

Q: How to beat the system.

TOUMANOFF: Occasionally, you could use the system, in small, unimportant things. But not abuse it. The country was, and remains, their back yard and they have ultimate sanctions. Some American diplomats, exchange students and others who have overdone it have been expelled, or worse.

In a worst case, an American youth tried to enter the USSR from Helsinki by bus, without a visa. This was possible for Finns on daytrips. He, however, was stopped by Soviet authorities at the border, removed from the bus and told to return to Helsinki to apply for a visa. The bus went on to Leningrad without him. Instead, he tried to sneak across the border through the woods at some distance from the highway. Caught by Soviet border guards, he was tried as a spy and jailed. Tragically, he required medicine which he carried with him. Medicine was extremely valuable in Soviet prisons and in the Gulag. Transported by prisoner train, he was killed en route. When the body was returned, his throat had been cut. The medicine was missing.

But let me finish the story of the evacuation. Having seen the apartments we would occupy, I went in search of a telephone to tell my wife that they would be fine. The telephone was in the construction shack, and chaos reigned there. It seems the pipes in the attic of one wing had frozen in the night and flooded a stairwell under construction. The construction boss was on the only phone, and as I waited and listened he called authority after authority, from the Moscow Government and Party headquarters down through both chains of command; the same with various Construction Trusts involved in the project, from top to bottom, as well as other units I couldn't identify. In part he was absolving himself as the pipes had also frozen earlier that night in another, occupied wing, and all available labor was struggling to stem flooding there. Mainly, I realized, he was spreading responsibility so widely that no ensuing investigation would have much chance of unraveling primary fault, if any.

Q. Soviet Bureaucracy at its best skill, but not unique.

TOUMANOFF: I was going to tell you something more about travel. There were many trips, and much to tell. Too much. So I'll describe a few episodes which will give you some idea of what it was like in 1959 and '60.

Edward Killham (Political Officer in the Embassy "Internal" Section) and I set off together, first stop by air to Kiev. The plane landed in Kharkov instead, without explanation and was going no further. So we were immediately off our Foreign Ministry approved itinerary. The rules called for notification to the Ministry and effort to get back on the itinerary as soon as possible. We telephoned the Embassy, reported what had happened, set about trying to get back on our itinerary by bus, plane or train. We could manage it by catching a midnight train, which would take us to another train which would get us back on route. At the bus station we had been surrounded by a troop of gypsy beggars, complete with a fake baby, (a doll in swaddling) who backed off promptly when we told them we were Americans and probably being followed. We also saw that we had enough time to take a quick round trip to the next town. That turned out to be a huge cement works, blanketed in cement dust, everywhere. No grass, dead trees, almost no one in the street. Dust everywhere, kicked up in clouds by passing trucks. It was a scene of environmental (and likely health) devastation. We left within a few minutes, back by the next bus. The midnight train was "hard" - open compartments with wooden benches facing each other and a small fold-down table under the window. In the station we had found only a half-liter bottle of pepper Vodka of suspicious color, not even bread. We bought the vodka but the omens were for a sleepless 6-hour night.

As the train started, a middle-aged Russian man sat down on the bench opposite us in the compartment. He lowered the table, opened his suitcase and produced two bottles of vodka, pickles, black bread, hardboiled eggs, and a pie. We added our bottle of pepper vodka, which he promptly threw out the window. At our surprise, he explained that his best friend was the director of a distillery, who, early each month monitored a batch of vodka from start to finish, took it all for himself, and provided his friends including our companion. We still looked puzzled, so he explained further. Everywhere in the Soviet Union the workers slacked off from the beginning until close to the end of each month, when there would be a crashing effort to meet the planned quota or even surpass it by a little for the bonus; a little because if by much they knew that the quota would be simply be ratcheted up. During the crash effort abuse of every kind

prevailed, negligence, corruption of input and process, adulteration of materials, disregard of standards, industrial safety. The result was that end-of-month products were not just poor quality, but possibly dangerous. The quality of the monitored early batch of vodka was assured. That is what he was offering us. The pepper vodka was just as likely to be pepper-disguised poison.

He had never before met Americans, let alone Russian speaking diplomats. He showered us with questions and hospitality, sharing all he had brought, at the same time showing much distrust of the official versions of America. After an hour or so a conductor called him out. He returned, a bit preoccupied, but within minutes resumed the conversation as before, this time telling more about himself. He was Chief Engineer (2nd in command) of a very large coal mine, and a Party Member. But mostly we talked of America. Not long after he was called out again, this time for much longer, perhaps half an hour. He returned very upset and angry. After a few minutes of awkward silence I suggested we talk of something else, fishing for salmon in Iceland for example, and started. That quickly became too stilted and artificial to sustain, and he broke out that he held a high position of trust, responsible for the safety and production of thousands of workers, a decorated veteran of the War, and a loyal Party Member, and who were "these people" to tell him he couldn't talk with us! It's not as though he were telling us secrets! With which he pointedly asked us about coal mining in America. Neither Ed nor I knew much about that industry, certainly not enough to match his expertise, which led him to explain the Soviet industry to help us understand his questions. That eventually led to his main concerns, which turned out to be appalling working conditions, water up to the waist, clouds of dust, mechanical failures, shaft collapses, explosions, the prevalence of black lung, phlebitis, and physical injury, resulting in much disability, with high and early mortality. He was called out again, and did not return. I caught a glimpse of him at the next station being hustled off the platform between two burly men in uniform.

Q: Did you keep his vodka?

TOUMANOFF: Everything was left behind. His bag, his coat and hat and the remains of food and vodka, everything. No, we didn't touch it after he left, nor, as I recall, did anyone collect it while we were there. Well, there wasn't much vodka left. We had pretty much demolished the food and most of the vodka by that time, which may account for why he was not more careful. We, too, were at fault for allowing him to run on, following his lead. Although we had identified ourselves as American diplomats, and there was never any question he knew with whom he was speaking.

On another trip we were again deposited by air in the wrong place. Destined for Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, we landed in Sukhumi, on the Black sea coast. Tbilisi, we were told, was socked in. This time, however, after a brief wait in the terminal we were met by a Russian civilian who introduced himself as the Director of the Sukhumi Zoo, to be our escort during our layover. The layover would be until the next day and he suggested a tour of the Zoo until hotel accommodations could be arranged for the night. There being no other offer, and being unexpected guests, so to speak, we made the tour while he described the Zoo as specializing in monkeys due to the benign climate. Monkeys were purchased in large batches from India for the entire USSR, shipped to Moscow, and distributed to the nation's zoos from there. We learned much about the names, habits and antics of various monkeys. Those we saw seemed in good

health and comfortable. Things moved rather slowly and we saw only a small part of what appeared to be a large establishment, widely spread out on a wooded hillside. Our escort was bright, informed about zoos, amusing and good company, so it was growing late when he took us to dinner at a hotel. Our room was not quite ready so we sat down to slow motion zakuski (appetizers) and ample quantities of vodka. Time slipped by. The main course eventually appeared, followed eventually by something else, followed by toasts, anecdotes, and random tales. Our room remained on the verge of readiness and there was nothing for it but to wait. Our escort, never flagged and we were enjoying his company in the well lubricated evening. The room was finally ready shortly after midnight. It was bare, with two cots and blankets, no sheets. My blankets were still warm from the previous occupant, who evidently had been granted half a night and then evicted for us. A common bathroom held a hand basin with one spigot, and a rather noxious round hole in the floor. Never mind, we were tired and had a flight to Tbilisi the next morning. Our escort met us, took us to the airport, and mentioned that he came to Moscow occasionally to receive his quota of monkeys, and would look us up at the Embassy. To my surprise he did, leading to lunches and a couple of supper parties at Russian apartments. I was careful not to go alone but always with another American, to suppers with Eileen. At one such supper party the game was that every guest was required to climb to the top of a 4-foot stepladder at the table head, toast the company with a glass of vodka, and climb down backwards. (I learned from watching Eileen to spill a lot of vodka on the way up in pretended inebriation.) At that party our friend from Sukhumi, quite maudlin with drink, drew me aside and whispered that he was a Communist Party member, and had been reporting to the KGB on all our meetings. I assured him with a smile that it was quite all right as I had assumed both from the start. He then asked me if I had been reporting on him to my government. I, truthfully, said no, as he had never told me anything worth reporting. Years later, in Washington, I learned that the "zoo" he had so artfully disguised from us was actually one of the Soviet Union's main research stations for the effects of nuclear radiation. That's where the monkeys came in.

It is astounding, now, to think back that social conversations with Russians had become so routine that we reported selectively, when there was meaningful content.

Another travel episode is the other side of the coin. We had all been cautioned stringently to be very careful when travelling to avoid being trapped into some compromising, sexually compromising, situation. This had happened to others previously, so it was not idle talk. Consequently I was conscious of this, knowing that in some way an attempt might come. Forewarned, I thought, was fore-armed and I was determined to stay alert to fend it off at the first sign. I forget now who was traveling with me on another trip, this time including an overnight train. This train had sleepers, four beds, upper and lower in each compartment. We had made reservations, but after the train was underway we discovered that we had been separated, placed in different compartments and different cars. That was most unusual, but protests were in vain. We both thought "Here it comes," and that I, with my Russian background and language fluency would be the likely target. Sure enough, two husky men and a young woman entered the compartment and my companion was banished to another car. Evening, and bedtime came. Meanwhile the men, one at a time, kept going out and returning, so there had been little conversation except introductions, all of which heightened my apprehensions. The arrangement was that we three men stepped out of the compartment while the woman undressed, got into her lower bunk, and drew the curtains. The men insisted that I, as a foreign guest, should take the

other lower bunk and go next. I did and, leaving my shoes on the floor as she had, got into my bunk, drew the curtains, rustled about for a while, and finally stretched out, fully clothed including necktie. I calculated that, under assault, my clothes would either daunt the assailants, or give me time to raise a huge ruckus. The men came in, undressed, and climbed into their bunks. Nothing happened, all was still, but I stayed on my guard. And so it remained, all night long. It was the most uncomfortable, sleepless night I've ever spent, punctuated by dreadful dreams when I dozed off, especially when my necktie wrapped itself around my throat as I tossed and turned. In the morning I stayed in my bunk pretending sleep until they all, considerately, left the compartment for me to emerge, feeling very foolish and doubtless looking worse. They turned out to be kindly, interesting, sociable people, and made me feel at home with a game of dominoes. My traveling companion had a quiet night of restful sleep, and couldn't stop laughing the next day over my "entrapment."

Q: What were they?

TOUMANOFF: They were Russians.

Q: But how had they identified themselves?

TOUMANOFF: Oh, the woman was a teacher, one man was an engineer of some kind, and the third some sort of inspector.

Q: A good cover story, if it was a cover. It might have been real.

TOUMANOFF: Oh, I think it was perfectly real, just the usual reservation muddle. Anyway, that was my sole sexual entrapment episode. More like I trapped myself.

Q: That's marvelous.

TOUMANOFF: One more travel item. This one in Leningrad during that famous Nixon "kitchen debate" trip in 1959. The Leningrad Party boss, a primitive called Romanov (no relation to the Czars) famous for smashing priceless museum china in drunken routs, was Vice President Nixon's host, and on the evening before Nixon's scheduled departure the next day, Romanov gave a dinner for the Nixon delegation. As I recall, it was in a reception room at the theater after a performance of the Leningrad Ballet. Toward the end of that dinner a waiter accidentally poured a good deal of brandy on my shoulder, so I rose and stepped outside the room to fan the fumes out of my jacket. A group of some ten Soviet security men were lounging around the antechamber and one of them, clearly in command, asked me what was going on inside. I told him that Romanov was urging Nixon to extend his visit in Leningrad for an extra day. With which the security man jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "What does he think he's doing! I have ten thousand men on this operation all of whose orders will have to be changed!" He was so shaken he looked to me in dismay, and I realized he took me for a high Russian official, probably from Moscow as he didn't know me, who might be able to intervene to prevent the disaster. With hardly more than a word and wave of my hand I dismissed the talk as mere chit chat, nothing would come of it, and quickly returned to the party. That was a close call. Had he realized to whom it was that he had revealed the scale of KGB security and isolation arrangements for

Nixon's tour, I think in the KGB mentality I'd have been guilty of passing for a Russian, if not of espionage. In any case the man's error would demonstrate how dangerous I was, even if unintentionally, and make me a target for expulsion. Being taken for a Russian had its drawbacks.

Actually, by that time I did have some special protection from the KGB. I should explain. The Ambassador during my entire tour in Moscow was Llewellyn Thompson, from September of 1958 to September or thereabouts of 1960. And Bill, if I forget, remind me to tell you about the Francis Gary Powers episode and what a public show trial in Moscow looked like.

Q: And it involved you because you were an observer, or whatever.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, I attended his trial. But, back to the Ambassador. Llewellyn Thompson, by the time I got to Moscow, had established an extraordinary relationship with Khrushchev, and one of the privileges resulting from being the most fluent Russian speaker in the Embassy was that Thompson - whose Russian was really quite good - nevertheless took me along with him for some of his meetings with Khrushchev, and they met fairly frequently. Not to every meeting - he did not take me out to Khrushchev's *dacha*, those were informal, family affairs and I had not been invited. But to the occasional more official meetings he took me along in case he needed some translation. He would also sometimes check his reporting cables to be sure he had properly understood and had missed nothing.

Q: You took notes. You were the official notetaker.

TOUMANOFF: No, I did not take notes. He never asked me to, and it would have interfered with the atmosphere of informal trust and candor. They spoke Russian quite freely and I recall only two occasions when he asked me for help with a word.

Q: But Thompson often spoke in his native language, which diplomats do to get double time, if you will.

TOUMANOFF: No, actually, the conversations were always in Russian. So far as I know, Khrushchev never brought an interpreter to his meetings with Thompson.

Q: And had to be in Russian.

TOUMANOFF: Right. After I'd gone to the first or second of these I realized that Thompson had established a truly almost unbelievable degree of confidence and trust with this extraordinary personality called Khrushchev. I am convinced that when Thompson finally left Moscow - this was after I had left - Khrushchev lost one of probably the only two people in the entire Soviet Union whom Khrushchev totally trusted. The other being his wife, Nina Petrovna. With Thompson I think he knew he would not be deceived, not be lied to, and that he would get accurate, thoughtful information and opinion - that Thompson genuinely represented the United States Government, the President, and that he had the President's confidence and was the epitome of what an ambassador should be. But to have this happen in the Soviet Union was perfectly extraordinary. Eileen and I came to know Nina Petrovna a little, and she was

marvelous. I'm sure that she kept Khrushchev sane, because she was so intelligent, so down-to-earth, so straightforward and so genuine.

Q: And knew the system.

TOUMANOFF: And, well, yes, I'm sure she knew the system, but she did not strike me as manipulative. Just the opposite. I think she must have been emotionally and *morally* a tower of strength for him. There was no falseness; there was no artificiality; but intelligence and thoughtfulness and acuity. The same was true of Thompson.

Q: Thompson recognized this and therefore could use this quality of his to-

TOUMANOFF: Well, I don't think he could be anything else, it came so naturally to him to have that kind of integrity, presence, acuity, perception, thoughtfulness, accuracy. It did work. I mean, he recognized the nature of the relationship, and he valued it, as did Khrushchev. Now let me tell you of an episode which demonstrated this relationship and, incidentally, why I was not troubled in Moscow by entrapments or police harassment, or anything of the kind. You will recall that when we began these interviews, I said that my Russian ancestry was prominent, privileged, and titled aristocracy, that my father was, his final rank was colonel, in the Imperial Guard, which was a very elite group, close to the Tsar. Obviously, my father fought on the side of the White Russian armies during the Civil War, was an adamant opponent of the Revolution and the Bolsheviks, and in the United States actively and publicly opposed recognition of the USSR. To such an extent was he an enemy of the Bolsheviks that they put a very large price on his head and on the heads of the entire family. My mother, who graduated from the law faculty at Moscow University, was equally dedicated and equally able, intelligent, and skillful in her opposition to the Communists. The Bolsheviks captured my father several times during the revolution and civil war, and on each occasion he broke out of captivity, and even engineered the escape of a prominent General. He was anathema to the Bolsheviks, and, as his son, I was not sure (a) whether the Soviets would let me into the country, even on a diplomatic passport, or (b) what might happen to me after I got there.

Q: Because they obviously knew your background.

TOUMANOFF: Well, that's the interesting thing. I don't think they did. Clearly, there must have been a large dossier on my father his family running into the early thirties, until shortly after U.S./Soviet recognition when my parents settled back into private life. American Communists disrupted some meetings, public lectures and a radio broadcast by my mother while she and my father were actively opposing recognition. So I assume Soviet Intelligence tracked my parents in the United States through 1933. Therefore when I got to Moscow in 1958, I thought I'd probably be more of a target of the KGB than most American diplomats, and I had better be alert and tune my radar pretty sharply.

Q: And no signals had come to you before you had received the assignment, from the Security Office or anything.

TOUMANOFF: None. But the NTS episode in Frankfurt made me think that they might have

noticed my presence.

Q: They should have.

TOUMANOFF: They could have, but I guess they were so preoccupied with poisoning the Director of the organization that they didn't bother about the crowd of people who came to that conference.

You remember that when the Germans were approaching Moscow early in World War II, the KGB started destroying and burning their files. My guess is that somewhere in those bonfires the dossier they had on my parents disappeared, and by 1958 nobody remembered anything about Toumanoffs. Otherwise they would have turned up the dossier when the Department applied for my diplomatic visa. Another reason they didn't identify me right away is that the last name, Toumanoff, is a very common Russian name. As common I suppose, as Anderson, or Edwards in the United States. There were probably a hundred thousand or more Toumanoffs in the USSR. Anyway, the following episode transpired, which illustrates, among other things, the nature of Ambassador Thompson's relationship with Khrushchev and his effectiveness as our Ambassador. Khrushchev went off to the Balkans, I forget whether it was Sofia or Bucharest, but he was out of the country. When he returned all the ambassadors went out to the airport to welcome him back, as was customary for a Chief of State, although he was actually chief of the Communist Party. As Khrushchev came down the reception line of ambassadors he stopped at Thompson and said, "There is something I want to talk about with you. When I finish this reception line they will pull up my car and you could ride in to Moscow with me and we can talk on the way."

Q: Down that special reserved lane in the middle of the Ring Road!

TOUMANOFF: Ambassador Thompson had taken me with him to the airport and I stood at his shoulder in the reception line. By that time I had been at several of Thompsons meetings and talks with Khrushchev. He knew that Thompson trusted me and he had accepted me as part of the threesome that met. When they pulled up Khrushchev's limousine, I recall three rings of security personnel between the car and everyone else. I could be wrong on that, perhaps only two, but security was certainly visible and tight. From the car Khrushchev waved to Thompson, who started forward, but I held back as I had not been invited. Khrushchev saw that, called me by name and waved me forward. As I went to the car through those concentric rings of security personnel I knew I was going to be safe for the rest of my tour in Russia unless I did something really stupid, which I had no intention of doing. The fact that Khrushchev knew me by name and trusted me to ride with him would be a considerable shield against KGB harassment or provocation. At the same time, it made me a dangerous person on whom they would concentrate their attention, especially to identify and learn all they could about me. I think they resented that special access and protection, the more so when they finally learned my ancestry. But that was late in my tour, after I had also been the personal escort for Milton Eisenhower, the President's brother, on the Nixon tour of the USSR. (See below.)

Q: So they wouldn't set you up, in order to have you expelled.

TOUMANOFF: Within broad limits on my own behavior, I think that's right. I felt freer than

most, but too much of a provocation on my part by single act or a pattern, would provide justification for action against me and bring them down on me. For example, in any but the slightest chance contact with Russians I would always identify myself early in a conversation as an American diplomat, working in the American Embassy in Moscow. To pass for a Russian, which I could have done, would have been a grave mistake.

Q: You weren't a target.

TOUMANOFF: Certainly nothing ever overt. There was a gentle attempt to recruit me, but that was by sheer accident, as the result of a flat tire during the Nixon visit. We'll get to that later. But I think that ride with Khrushchev probably saved me from any trouble. Strangely, I don't even remember what it was he wanted to talk about with Thompson. Nothing very important, I would guess. But the Thompson cables have all, I think, been declassified and released.

In any case, they finally figured out who I was, but this was in the last six months or so of my tour.

Q: How do you know they found out who you were?

TOUMANOFF: They told me.

Q: Oh, they told you. Who's they?

TOUMANOFF: There was some sort of a Soviet affair, an official dinner for some U.S. delegation, perhaps Congressional. In those days there were quite a few American visitors. Before the U-2, that is. I was sitting across from a Soviet official, I don't remember who he was, but not high ranking. In the middle of the dinner he looked me straight in the eye and said meaningfully, almost in a challenging tone. "We know who you are."

Q: That clearly.

TOUMANOFF: That clearly, with emphasis. I brushed it off with, "Oh, fine, good." And that was that. But he was saying that they'd *finally* figured out who I was. It must have come to them with a jolt to find the son of a titled White Russian, Imperial Guard Colonel and mortal enemy, in their midst meeting and riding with Khrushchev.

Q: And this man was in a position that you recognized that's what he was saying.

TOUMANOFF: Oh, yes.

Q: Because he could have been saying other things by then.

TOUMANOFF: Oh, no. We have identified you, is what he was saying. And he was saying it with a glint.

Q: We finally did it.

TOUMANOFF: We have finally figured out who you are. And there was resentment. There was resentment, in the first place, because it had taken them so long. I represented an embarrassing lapse in their vaunted security services. In the second place, there was resentment because it was too late to do anything about it. There was resentment because they had built a large dossier on me, I'm sure because I had traveled so much, met so many Russians and had friends who telephoned and invited me out, even to their homes. Finally there was resentment that I, of all people, should have enjoyed the kind of access and privileges that none of them had with their own leadership at the highest level.

Q: You were the enemy of enemies.

TOUMANOFF: That would be their immediate assumption from my parentage. But at a more practical level I was a dangerous enemy because Russians I met at random most often treated and spoke with me as to a fellow Russian in spite of my care to identify myself to them. Some simply refused to believe me, and when I showed my Soviet-issued Diplomatic Identification Card, one or two had dismissed it as a hoax, a counterfeit, so common and easily purchased in the USSR. One such randomly met individual offered to show me the district in Moscow where I could buy any sort of counterfeit Soviet document. I demurred.

Q: And you'd been the closest to their leader.

TOUMANOFF: Which they should have prevented.

Q: And trusted by the leader.

TOUMANOFF: And trusted by extension of his trust in the American Ambassador.

Q: But if Khrushchev had been... Maybe that's why he fell, Vlad!

TOUMANOFF: No, many things contributed to his fall. Only one of which, I think, was his turn to the West, and the United States in particular. There are many excellent books written about his rule and fall. Very briefly, let me comment on only one element. Khrushchev launched the Berlin crisis in 1958 amid extravagant missile rattling and threats. That terrified the Soviet population with the prospect of atomic war. Then suddenly he turned to "Peace and Friendship," "The Spirit of Camp David," and an exchange of visits with Eisenhower. The prospect of a visit by Ike, the wartime hero and ally, the epitome of U.S.-Soviet cooperation in an agonizing, mortal struggle, was such a relief from the prevailing fear of war that the Soviet population simply stampeded out of control in their enthusiasm and eagerness to show their gratitude, love for Ike, and yearning for peace with America. All else that coincided with Khrushchev's domestic thaw following his anti-Stalin speech. I think the Kremlin's organs of control were terrified at its increasing loss, and held him to be responsible.

Incidentally, I saw Khrushchev before and after his very successful 1959 trip from coast to coast in the U.S. and there was a real change in him. He had never seen the United States, he had no conception. Remember, his formal education ended with grammar school, about the fourth grade

I think. After that the only education he had was in Communist Party training facilities which gave him a crudely warped picture. So he had no conceivable notion of what the United States was like. He knew little of Western Europe and nearly nothing of the rest of the world. Eastern Europe after the War and Stalinist rule was not altogether different from the USSR. So he was handicapped in dealing on the world scene, and you could tell that he felt himself handicapped when he was talking to Thompson. Somehow he would say things or talk on assumptions about the U.S. and other parts of the world which were simply not so, Party cant. Part of the conversations with Thompson, whom he respected for his knowledge and objectivity, were almost educational, a kind of reality check of his images induced by Communist mythology and propaganda, especially his notions of the United States.

Q: And Khrushchev would be able to listen, and not take it as a criticism or put down. How was his language? How was his level of language, in terms of literacy?

TOUMANOFF: Khrushchev?

Q: Yes.

TOUMANOFF: I didn't see any serious flaw. He loved to use slang, and salty expressions, but that was being a populist.

Q: That's fine, sure. So he never suffered - he never suffered from-

TOUMANOFF: From being inarticulate? No he did not.

Q: Or being embarrassed, maybe, by his equals.

TOUMANOFF: Well, I'm not sure that the latter is true. I think when he ran into cultured Russians who spoke a different kind of Russian language, one of erudition -

Q: As in all languages.

TOUMANOFF: - as you and I might if we spoke with a British don speaking in paragraphs instead of sentences, a very, very articulate Britisher - he would feel this handicap; he would feel that this was a different kind of a person - not superior, because he, after all, had reached the pinnacle and was tough as nails. He had accomplished extraordinary things and had survived extraordinary things, but he knew the difference and felt his discomfort, he was aware of the uncertainty, or unreliability of his knowledge in fields of learning, and was apt to cover it with bombast.

Q: And it didn't enter into the relationship with the ambassador.

TOUMANOFF: Actually, I think it helped. Thompson had genuine respect for Khrushchev and showed it at all times. It was mutual, and they liked each other.

Q: Obviously because he's speaking a foreign language-

TOUMANOFF: No, they spoke in Russian. But this ambassador was the Ambassador of America, and he was different. He represented a great nation, the constant object of Soviet foremost international concerns. Anyway, when Khrushchev came back from his American visit, and I saw him not long after he returned, he had been humbled by his experience in the United States - humbled in the sense of revelation, that is, he never said so in so many words, but you could see that he had been enormously impressed-and challenged. Some part of that sense of challenge and almost defensive reaction was a remark that he made during the trip. He was intentionally driven by car down the New Jersey Turnpike and the Interstate from New York to Washington. It had been arranged to drive rather than fly or go by train with the thought that he would be impressed by the fantastic highway and the unending stream of equally fantastic automobiles carrying ordinary people. Both not to be dreamt of in the USSR. Well, he was impressed. Asked eventually during the ride by Henry Cabot Lodge, who escorted him on that trip, what he thought, Khrushchev turned and, looking at the stream of automobiles, said, "We'll never make that mistake." Of course, they have made that mistake, but their domestic oil reserves are bottomless.

He was thoroughly impressed, how could he not be. By contrast his USSR, still barely recovering from the devastation of the War, was like a moonscape. In Washington, at the end of his trip he had practically flayed the Soviet Ambassador, Menshikov, along the line of "Why haven't you told me the truth about this country?"

Q: "Because I didn't dare."

TOUMANOFF: Well, I wasn't told how Menshikov answered, but he was roundly, roundly scolded by Khrushchev, who was furious that Menshikov had not prepared him for the United States by telling him what kind of a country he was coming to. And poor Menshikov - obviously - you're perfectly correct. Had he described the United States in real terms he -

Q: -would have been removed.

TOUMANOFF: -perhaps even packed off to the Gulag. But to my mind Khrushchev was venting on his Ambassador his own frustrating realization how superior and mighty was the American society. Well informed on U.S. military and technological superiority, he was unprepared for our phenomenal living standard and the scale and efficiency of our national infrastructure. He had already launched his ill-conceived and badly executed "virgin lands" corn campaign, hoping that Garst-like farms would solve his agricultural problem. He promptly ordered supermarkets. At the same time the U.S. challenge spurred his national pride, his genuine patriotism, and his drive for reform with slogans like "overtake and surpass" America. Ultimately, in his impatience he tried to divide the Soviet Communist Party into urban and rural branches to set against each other in an effort to move that glacial apparatus. Small wonder he was deposed.

I think for the moment that's enough about Thompson and Khrushchev. Let me tell you a couple of quick insights on other leadership in the Soviet Union. One was Brezhnev and the other one was Mikoyan.

In 1959 there was the usual 4th of July large reception at Spaso House, the Ambassador's residence, and as this was a time of "Peace and Friendship" a few members of the Politburo and other high Soviet officials came. On this occasion I saw Brezhnev standing alone and looking uncomfortable. So I went over, introduced myself, welcomed him, and invited him to the buffet and drinks table. He refused, bluntly. I asked if I could bring him some refreshment, "No," looking like he suspected poison. I tried to engage him in conversation, small talk, to make him more comfortable. As I recall it was a beautiful summer day, vacation time, so I asked if he had been able to enjoy some leave. He said "No," looking as though I was prying into secrets. I asked if he had been to Spaso before, thinking to tell him a bit about its history. He did not reply. Very plainly he was not interested in small talk and continued to look and feel enormously uncomfortable and awkward. At that moment a Soviet official in a slightly rumpled suit came over to talk to him, whom Brezhnev obviously knew. Brezhnev pounced on him scolding violently for being slightly unshaven. An attempt to explain that he had been working late was cut off in mid-syllable. Brezhnev went on belaboring savagely for so shaming the USSR before Americans by his uncultured behavior, and banished the poor man, fiercely ordering him home to shave. The man cringed under the onslaught and practically ran out the door. Embarrassed to witness so blatant a display of inferiority complex, I had moved off, and I stayed away from Brezhnev, probably making matters worse. I probably should have suggested we have a shot of vodka and forget the incident. But I was in mild shock at this revelation of another, major cultural obstacle, at the top of Soviet power, to U.S.-Soviet relations.

Q: And in front of you. Clearly, you were not spared any of this.

TOUMANOFF: Brezhnev was already feeling out of place, unskilled and powerless to cope with this alien American setting and company. Even as a junior Embassy officer, but speaking his own Russian language fluently while he knew no English, nor probably any other foreign tongue, I increased his discomfort and, for him, a rare sense of inadequacy. He was at a loss for what to say or do or where to turn: Stripped of command. Worse still, this was enemy territory and he was weak and helpless in it. You once asked me whether my training in clinical psychology helped. Well, it helped a great deal. But on that occasion I was taken aback by the scale of the cultural and personal crevasse between him and us, and I failed to bridge it.

Q: At the American embassy residence.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, at Spaso House, the American Ambassadors' residence. But for Brezhnev it was a magnificent pre-revolution, Czarist era, Russian private mansion, full of all these well-dressed, smooth-faced, confident Americans, comfortable, totally at home, speaking Russian on top of everything else. In every way this setting and company was not of his world and it put this tough communist, bred in the Stalin era and barbaric war, this Soviet Politburo boss, completely off his stride.

Q: The Russian inferiority complex-through history.

TOUMANOFF: That vicious, arbitrary tongue-lashing was the result. The poor official, who must have been high-ranking to be invited, had to stand there silently, looking shamefaced and terrified, until the storm was finally exhausted, and then scuttle away home, banished, thinking

his career and perhaps ability to feed his family, wrecked.

Q: The unshaven unsuccessful diplomat, or whatever he was.

TOUMANOFF: As an example of Soviet brutality of governance, it was telling.

Q: Yet it was Brezhnev they chose to be leader when Khrushchev was deposed. I shared your opinion of him throughout all of his years at the top, especially towards the end. I mean, Brezhnev was pathetic at the end, and sick.

TOUMANOFF: I remember Thompson telling me, just before he returned, in 1967, for his second tour as Ambassador in Moscow, that Brezhnev and his Politburo were a limited, narrow-minded bunch to whom he would have little access, and probably to little effect. He was not looking forward to his 2nd tour. Well, they kept Brezhnev propped up long after they should have let him lie down.

Now, by contrast, about Mikoyan. At the end of Nixon's 1959, "Kitchen Debate" visit, there was a small dinner at Spaso for the Vice President, and Soviet guests. Khrushchev and Mikoyan came. I was seated, to interpret, between Mikoyan and Mrs. Nixon.

Q: What was Mikoyan at this point?

TOUMANOFF: Well, he was a member of the Politburo, and I don't think he had any ministerial or formal Government post. But he was obviously a very close associate of Khrushchev. Remember? Mikoyan had been sent to the United States in advance of the planned Khrushchev visit (and to abate the mood of crisis over Berlin); and later to Cuba after the Cuban Missile Crisis to pacify Fidel Castro, who was in an uproar that he had not been consulted about the terms of its settlement. Back to the dinner party; and here I'll be quite candid about my impression of Mrs. Nixon, which is not based exclusively on this particular episode. Earlier in the trip I had interpreted for her a bit, and on the day of the dinner for her visit to a Moscow primary school.

Q: Nor known to you exclusively.

TOUMANOFF: At all times she kept herself under tight control, saying and doing little. The same happened at dinner. Mikoyan had already taken the trouble to be thoroughly briefed about her visit to the school, and knew that she had been a school teacher herself. He promptly initiated conversation with Mrs. Nixon by asking her if she had enjoyed the school visit. She said, Yes. It was very nice. What was her impression of the school? It was very interesting. Was it like American schools, or different in some way? Well, it was a long time since she had taught school. Mikoyan was a little bit taken aback, but not daunted, he tried again, and brought up some other activity that she had been engaged in during the visit. He had obviously been thoroughly briefed and had taken the trouble to remember. But he got essentially the same replies, kind of noncommittal-but-pleasant and brief. No one could take offense, or even make much of a news story of them. But it became obvious to him and to me that she was not going to be responsive. He had tried, gracefully, but Mrs. Nixon clearly wished to avoid conversation. So

he and I had a brief conversation about the school visit to let him know it had gone well, and Mikoyan turned to his other side. I told Mrs. Nixon what I had said to Mikoyan, which was about the school welcome (nothing about herself) and to her relief we turned quietly to our dinners.

In sum, it is my clear impression that Mrs. Nixon was under the tight constraints of Mr. Nixon's election plans. He was already running for the presidency in the 1960 elections, and on this trip in Russia she must have been strictly enjoined neither to distract the press from him, nor under any circumstances to say or do anything that might damage his press coverage. On the unfamiliar ground of Russia, she chose to do and say as little as possible. I would put it more strongly, I think she was actually fearful lest her husband disapprove of anything she might do.

Back to Mikoyan. At the dinner, the time came for after dinner toasts. Khrushchev rose to make a toast, and he was either tired or had a fair amount of drink. He seemed a bit unsteady on his feet and was plainly garrulous. He started off on what turned out to be a very long toast to the Vice President, Mrs. Nixon, the President's brother, the assembled officials of both nations, relations between the countries, events during the visit, contributions to peace and friendship and on and on. But he wandered off so far afield that he lost track of his theme. He'd gotten off on some side track, came to the end of it, and started to pause trying to remember-

Q: -where he'd left.

TOUMANOFF: Sort of like you and me in this interview. What was it we were talking about before I got sidetracked? He hesitated for just part of a breath, and Mikoyan interjected a little witticism, just a quick quip which caused a general chuckle but reminded Khrushchev of his theme before the pause became a noticeable silence.

Q: That's a friend.

TOUMANOFF: And Khrushchev took off, back on track. It happened again. There was this momentary hesitation, and Mikoyan injected another little witticism, an amusing quip which again put Khrushchev back on track. Mikoyan did this *three* times, quickly, skillfully and pleasantly to enable Khrushchev to bring the toast to a successful conclusion.

Q: As a good Armenian would.

TOUMANOFF: -as one of the smoothest, greatest rug dealers of all time. That's an unjust statement. Mikoyan was one of the mysteries of Sovietology. How in the world had he survived as a leading communist from the early '20s through all the deadly Party struggles, all of Stalin's purges, the post-Stalin battles for leadership? He was unique. That evening I began to understand his talents. A lightning quick mind, no ambition for leadership, threatening no one, and with a deft light touch, he made himself indispensable in service to those in power. I think he was never pushy; he was not trying to draw attention to himself, he was not demonstrating any ambition except to be serviceable the best way he could, in a way that I think nobody else in that entourage in the Politburo could match.

Anyway, I did come to know Mikoyan's son, who's here in the United States. He's teaching at the

University of Maryland. When he first came he was at the Kennan Institute, and on some occasion I made a point of going up to him to say that I knew his father a little and I admired him greatly. I told him about the dinner at Spaso and he said it was typical of his father. The son, too, is a very intelligent, sensitive, and by nature a gentle human being.

Q: And what does he teach, the son.

TOUMANOFF: Political science and I'm sure Russian-Soviet studies.

Q: Beautiful. That's a nice story to end on the personalities of the leadership of the Soviet Union.

TOUMANOFF: As we're in it already, let's go on about the July 23 - August 3, 1959 Nixon visit and tour in the USSR, the occasion for the famous "kitchen" debate.

In part, it was a kind of test run for the President's planned visit in 1960, his return visit for that of Khrushchev to the U.S. which was to take place later in the summer of 1959. In part it was a demonstration of improving U.S.-Soviet relations. In part it was necessary international experience for Vice President Nixon. And finally it was part of Nixon's presidential election campaign. It quickly became evident that this last was Nixon's overwhelming primary concern. For him it was first and foremost a public relations exercise. He was on stage (as in the "kitchen" debate). Not only did he and the delegation monitor U.S. and Soviet press coverage intensely, but press briefings were of the essence.

I was not involved in the following episode, but I was quietly told by some who were. So this is hearsay. Back in Moscow, at the end of Nixon's country tour, there were three days of negotiations. By agreement they were to be confidential, no publicity. On the evening of the first day (8-hour time difference) U.S. news media carried reports about the talks, favorable to Mr. Nixon. The Soviets complained, confidentially. The second day there were more such reports. The Soviets complained again. On the third day it became evident to some of our participants that the Soviets had lost trust in Nixon and the negotiations, and talked accordingly.

If the above account is true, that Soviet experience came on top of Nixon's reputation, established earlier in his public career, of being harshly anti-Soviet, and for behavior which gave him the sobriquet of "Tricky Dick". I'm unaware of any evidence that such a sacrifice of trust, if true, affected U.S.-Soviet relations during his presidency. But it wouldn't have helped.

Q: But the coverage may have helped him get elected, and that was more important.

TOUMANOFF; The famous "Kitchen" debate at the American Exhibition in Moscow (which, incidentally, Nixon opened during his visit) in which Nixon and Khrushchev publicly harangued each other, served the same purpose. Our press reported that Nixon not only proved he could stand up to the Soviets, he bested Khrushchev in their contention. But Yes, you're right. If he lost the election, trust or no it wouldn't matter. Some more about the visit.

This one is more about the United States and President Eisenhower. At some stage, when the Nixon visit was being planned, President Eisenhower asked his brother Milton Eisenhower to

join the group, and he agreed and came. I was lucky enough to be assigned to be Milton Eisenhower's escort officer and interpreter, and kind of guide for all of the trip outside of Moscow. Milton Eisenhower was a very thoughtful, very kind, very intelligent and perceptive man. Now while I did help and interpret occasionally for some of the other members on the voyage, essentially I made that trip with Milton Eisenhower. As a consequence I had a fascinating and easy time. That was a great relief, because there was often a huge mob, and noise, of correspondents, security types, delegation members, local Soviet officials, interpreters and other people surrounding Nixon. In the press toes were stamped, shoes were destroyed, people's clothes were torn, it was dangerous to stumble. A mob scene when he toured a factory or other installation. Milton Eisenhower and I would let the mob go through ahead of us and come along behind, sometimes alone, sometimes with one Soviet official detailed to escort the President's brother.

Q: Because the President's brother wasn't participating in any form, or near to it.

TOUMANOFF: He had no official function, but that's the interesting part of this, that as time went by I got the impression - although Milton Eisenhower never explained his role beyond saying that we needn't move with the throng - that the President had asked him to come for more than just to have his impressions of the USSR. It seemed to me more than that. Clearly the President wanted his brother's assessment of the USSR. Milton Eisenhower was alert, intellectually curious and asked many questions of Soviet escorts. But when we were alone our discussions ranged much more widely. He asked about what we had seen, what we had been told, about the Soviet Union as a whole, and the treatment accorded our delegation by the Soviets. Particularly he wanted to know my opinions of it all, and to check his own. We had some candid talks. There was something about his manner, or approach which suggested some psychological distance between him and Mr. Nixon. I began to think that perhaps the President wanted a wholly independent, astute, reliable and trustworthy account of the Nixon visit. Or perhaps counted on his very presence to exercise some sort of moderating influence. This aspect of it was never mentioned and never articulated by me or Milton Eisenhower or anybody else. But the implication for me was that Ike did not altogether trust his Vice President.

Q: And you went at Milton Eisenhower's direction, in the sense of shall we do this or shall we join them?

TOUMANOFF: Yes, I would ask whether he preferred to tag along behind or get in there with the group. It didn't matter very much if we were safely well behind because we could always catch up. Usually he preferred to avoid the throng.

Q: As I remember, reflecting back into history and up to present times, in the sense of what's been written, I think the relationship between President Eisenhower and Vice-President Nixon wasn't probably the best.

TOUMANOFF: Well, I got the impression that there was not total trust-

Q: "Trust" is the way it's put. And also, Nixon seemed very nervous as he wound himself upward through the route of Vice-President.

TOUMANOFF: Well, Mr. Nixon was a strange person anyway, and I don't think I want to get into-

Q: No, no, I wasn't inviting you to. I'm merely saying how it had been a little bit easier, perhaps, to deduce some of Milton's presence and why.

TOUMANOFF: Bill, let me describe another episode of that visit. It was at the very end, the last night before Nixon was flying home in the morning. He and some of his staff were relaxing in a small group at Spaso after dinner. The visit was over and Nixon was off stage. I think he had some drinks, and he sort of let his hair down. He proceeded to review moments of the visit extolling his own performance, "Wasn't I clever to... Didn't I handle that one... I sure showed them when I... Wasn't that the best answer you ever...", and so on and on, becoming foulmouthed in the process. These were not just rhetorical questions. He was pleading for reassurance and, as nearly always happens, the confirmations and slightly sycophantic replies and comments from his staff did not help. His insecurity was too deep, he was too intelligent, and I surmise he had repeated the same scene too many times and for too many years to fool himself. His anxiety seemed to increase. It looked like a long evening, and it was dangerous. I drifted out.

In sum, my over-all impression of our Vice President by the end of his visit was that he had little, if any moral yardstick, and was not well.

Q: And the President was himself, perhaps, with some insights.

TOUMANOFF: From the open literature one gets the distinct impression it was not a completely happy relationship between the two.

A few more quick episodes and I think we may be done with Moscow.

Admiral Rickover, who was on the delegation, was already famous for having firm opinions and speaking them directly. On a flight between two stops in Siberia he said he wanted to talk to a particularly poisonous Soviet journalist who was on the plane with us, and asked me to interpret for him. That journalist, named Romanovsky, I think, specialized in vitriolic front page editorial articles about the U.S.. He was talented and well connected. When we reached his seat the Admiral's first words to him were, "Why are you such a son-of-a-bitch?" These waters, I thought, are mined. So I explained in Russian that I was an officer serving in the U.S. Embassy, that Admiral Rickover had asked me to interpret for him and I would do so not in my diplomatic capacity but strictly as translator. That said, I did so using an exact equivalent insulting Russian epithet, and waited. What came back was a smile, a chuckle, "What makes you think so?" and an invitation for the Admiral to sit down in an empty seat opposite, all in fluent English. I withdrew. I did notice they talked for quite a while.

On the ground in Siberia a motorcade set off from the country villa where the delegation was housed to a theater performance. It consisted of (at least) one security car in the lead, followed by the Vice President's car; another security car; the car carrying Milton Eisenhower; another security car, and more cars carrying Americans with security cars between each. Ambassador

Thompson's wife, and I rode in the back with Ike's brother, and two unknown, unIntroduced and unresponsive (probably both security) Soviets in front, the driver and another. This was the standard arrangement of those motorcades. We were late, and raced down the road trying to catch up with Nixon's car which had left ahead of us. Mrs. Thompson asked the driver, in her Russian, to slow down. No reply, no effect. Milton repeated the request to me, which I passed to the two in front, emphasizing that it was the President's brother speaking. In vain, nothing. They were under iron orders, so we sat back, crossing our fingers. Around the next corner we came upon a woman crouched in the ditch holding her bloody head in her hands, a bent bicycle, and the VP motorcade stopped beyond. With which our front passenger turned to the driver with a chuckle saying, "That'll teach 'em to get in our way." It turned out the lead security car had struck or blown the bike into the ditch, Nixon had seen it happen, his car stopped only when he demanded it, over vehement Soviet protests Nixon had sent his personal physician who was riding with him back to attend the woman. The motorcade moved on again only when the doctor reported that the injuries, despite the blood, did not seem serious, and Soviet assurances that the accident had been reported and First Aid would arrive shortly.

In another such motorcade, our car blew a tire. Room was made for Ike's brother and Mrs. T. in the following security car and it moved off. I was put in another security car further back. There I was, alone in a car full of KGB officers with the rest of the motorcade already off in the distance. It was a novel experience for all of us, and got more so. I introduced and identified myself promptly. They asked what had happened and I told them. That broke the ice and talk continued. They were very curious about this American diplomat with the Russian name who spoke Russian like a native. They asked, really in wonderment, about that and I explained about growing up in the U.S. in a Russian-speaking family. They asked how long I'd been in Russia, in Siberia, where else in the USSR, how I liked Moscow, which they had never seen. They turned out to be locals, and were asking at random as they had never seen an American, not up close, and not like this one. I think they, too, were beginning to think of me as a Russian when one of them asked, "But don't your heart strings draw you to your native land?" I said I thought they had a great nation and a great people. They took that for a 'yes' and suddenly political reality struck. After a long pause one of them, in a different tone, said, "When?" I replied without hesitation, "Well, someday when your Government cares much more for its people, maybe then I might think about it." The language I used implied that the "someday" was doubtful and, at best, distant. I had expected that, dutifully, there would be some reply defending their government, but our conversation stopped. Siberians are different. They are far from Moscow and its age-old imperative deceits. More straight forward, their silence suggested they understood, far better than I, the Soviet reality, but would neither discuss it with a foreigner, nor bring themselves to defend it with artifice.

Yes. Let's pick up on the U-2 and the trial of Francis Gary Powers.

Q: It also takes us into the last half, the end of the Peace-and-Friendship era.

TOUMANOFF: Right. The first we came to know of the U-2 was that the Ambassador was invited to attend a session of the Supreme Soviet at which Khrushchev, of course, was going to give a speech, and for whatever reason, Llewellyn Thompson took me along with him, the first and only time I've ever been to a Supreme Soviet session, because they're not open to American

diplomats. They certainly were not in those days.

Q: And not that frequent.

TOUMANOFF: And not that frequent. Once a year, as I recall, at which the Supreme Soviet enthusiastically rubber-stamped whatever the Party presented. It was held in the Kremlin, the Great Hall, and Thompson and I were seated prominently in a balcony. It was a gloomy, cloudy, drizzly day, and the Hall had a large skylight. Well, Khrushchev made a long report and toward the end, looking directly at Thompson, he revealed the fact that an American spy plane had been shot down.

Q: For the first time this was revealed.

TOUMANOFF: Yes. This was the first announcement. It was a very long speech by Khrushchev, a kind of state-of-the-nation report, which was of course in wonderful condition and even better than it was the last wonderful time. There were the usual interruptions by applause and exclamations of approval and praise. It went on and on and carried nothing of particular interest for the Ambassador, and I began to wonder why he had been invited. We could have heard it on the radio, or waited to read it the next day when the full text would be in the newspapers, and then report with commentary to the Department. Toward the end of this speech, Khrushchev paused. He stood on stage at an elevated podium in a theatrical position, with all the audience of the Supreme Soviet below him, and Politburo, high Party and Government officials behind. He looked up at Thompson, and announced the shoot-down. At that moment the sun broke through the clouds and a bright ray of sunlight beamed down upon him through the skylight. It was very dramatic, and after a pause the audience went wild in applause and shouts of acclamation. Khrushchev was in his element and launched into his denunciation of America's perfidy. As he went on and on piling accusation upon accusation it seemed clear that the Spirit of Camp David, and the era of Peace and Friendship were over. Meanwhile, the cameras had swiveled and, following Khrushchev's gaze, every eye was on Llewellyn Thompson, the American Ambassador.

Q: Where at the point of the speech did this come?

TOUMANOFF: Oh, at the end, Khrushchev had saved it for the climax. As he went on and on about how appallingly nefarious and dangerous was this action by the United States, he did not accuse the President of ordering or perhaps even of knowing about the flight, but pointed out that if not, any American general could start World War Three. He also said nothing about the pilot. The rhetoric and theatrics were full scale, and the audience applauded often and mightily. It was a trying, not to say traumatic, time for Thompson, but he showed no sign of any kind. (He was, by the way, a masterful poker player.) When it was all over we left quietly, and back at the Embassy he immediately prepared a telegram to the Department in which, my recollection is, he pointed out Khrushchev's silence on the fate of the pilot, which suggested that he may have survived and be in Soviet hands. If so, we should assume the pilot might be forced to tell the Soviets everything he knew.

Q: And didn't take the pill.

TOUMANOFF: Well, actually it wasn't a pill. It was a poisoned pin hidden in a silver dollar. He did not use it. I'm inclined to believe the explanation for it which Powers gave at his trial. Be that as it may, this was the beginning of the great U-2 affair, which has been described and analyzed in book after book, with the benefit of much declassified material and extensive discussions with the Russians. As you know, the President took personal responsibility for the flight. The summit meeting in Paris was aborted and Eisenhower's visit to the Soviet Union was canceled. The Soviet public understood the message, contact with Americans was again taboo, and broken off. In the garage at the embassy was a large motorboat, intended as Ike's gift to Khrushchev. It was one of the first motor boats which was water-jet propelled rather than propeller driven. It had to be sent back to America.

Q: Out at the little dacha where they were to meet, at the corner of the lake and the river the Russians had a jet, their own proud version, and they showed me and told me about it when I visited there three or four years later. They were so proud of their boat, and of Ike's planned visit. Their disappointment was sharp. They felt it deeply. They were local scientists there. I felt their professional and personal sorrow.

TOUMANOFF: As I mentioned earlier, I think the extreme Soviet reaction to the U-2 was prompted, in part, by their fear of a public welcome for Ike so massive as to generate a spontaneous and general public escape from their control. The population, massed in welcome, might realize that opposition to the regime was common, and act on it; as happened later in Eastern Europe. Whether that fear was accurate or not none can tell. But atomization of society, and ruthless suppression of opposition, especially when grouped, was a key component of Soviet rule.

Q: An appreciated foreigner.

TOUMANOFF: Ike was much more than that. If I was seeing and hearing this exuberant public response to the prospect of his visit, the KGB must have been picking it up in spades. And bars really had tumbled down and the stampede out of the corral was everywhere evident. The kinds of conversations that I was having, and that any foreigner could be having, in Russia at that time were such as must have terrified the KGB. I think that was a very large part of the motivation of Khrushchev and the Soviet government in rupturing good relations over the U-2 and going back to essentially Cold War attitudes. After all, the Government knew that U-2s had been overflying the USSR for several years already.

Q: They had to crack down.

TOUMANOFF: I'm not sure they had to. But I'm sure they thought they had to.

Q: Otherwise their system might have fallen.

TOUMANOFF: That's right, That is precisely what they feared. Who knows what might have gotten out of control if Eisenhower had come. So in a sense, we handed them an excuse to do so on a silver platter with that U-2 flight.

Later, they invited the Ambassador to attend the trial of Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot. Obviously, he did not go, but he sent two of his junior officers, Vice Consul Lewis Bowden, and myself.

Q: Trials of American citizens are normally attended by a consular officer anyway. Ambassadors don't go to trials.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, especially Moscow propaganda show trials.

Q: It was also probably wise to send two of you.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, for corroboration, if not for safety. So we two went. Again, that trial has been written up at vast length, but there's one part of it which I have never seen in print, and that was about a part of Francis Gary Powers's behavior in the course of that trial. There he was, on trial for his life so far as he could tell. He had been held for something like three months with no access to anyone except Soviet authorities, interrogators, and a "planted" cellmate. No Americans nor any foreigners. He'd been held completely isolated from information except what the Soviet authorities provided, and that seems to have been exaggerated accounts of the staggering consequences of his "crime." More than enough to warrant execution.

Q: And Bowden hadn't gotten there under any-

TOUMANOFF: No consular visits. Nobody. He was being interrogated for intelligence, and being prepared to be put on show at the trial.

Q: No press, period-not even Soviet?

TOUMANOFF: Bill, they wanted to have total control of what he knew, no surprises or conflicting information at the trial. It was to be as nearly totally scripted as they could manage. He was isolated from the world except as they wished him to think it. Outside, the Soviet propaganda machine was, of course, grinding full speed and at very high volume. Besides, Powers knew no Russian.

So there was Powers, on stage, for a Moscow theatrical, called trial; the full panoply of press from all the world in the balconies, provided with every technical facility; and a packed and picked Soviet audience below, largely KGB and military, plus some carefully selected foreigners, Lew Bowden and myself.

Q: You were the only two foreigners?

TOUMANOFF: The Powers family was there, with their lawyers. I don't know about others except for the press corps, which was international and included a large American contingent. The more press, the more cameras, the more microphones the better. Anybody that would serve their propaganda purposes.

Q: But the press corps was relatively open?

TOUMANOFF: Probably. Remember, this trial was staged for world-wide propaganda. Otherwise they could easily have tried Power in a closed, secret court, as they did with many dissidents.

I believe what follows has never been published. After introductory remarks by the Judge/Prosecutor the trial moved to presentation of evidence, and that is my topic. One bit of evidence presented was Powers' flight map with commentary stressing that the routing over Soviet cities was for bombing run practice to wreak future havoc and slaughter. At the end of the official presentation the Judge asked Powers if he had anything to say. To his surprise Powers rose and asked to see the map. It was the size of a newspaper page. Holding it up with his left hand, he examined it carefully, tracing his flight path with the index finger of his right. The map never shook. It was absolutely still and steady. Satisfied, he confirmed that it was his flight map, and handed it back. Two things struck me: on trial for his life he was suggesting by his request and action that he, at least, thought this court capable of presenting false or tampered evidence; and that he must have nerves of steel not to show the slightest tremor while doing so.

The Court then called a series of learned, scientific commissions, each of which had been tasked to examine other pieces of evidence. Each Commission, in turn, was introduced with elaborate recitations of the members' impressive credentials. Most were members of the Soviet National Academy of Sciences.

Q: Oh, to support the technical aspects.

TOUMANOFF: To support the weight of their testimony and findings. The first commission had been asked to examine his pistol, and they concluded that Powers had been given the pistol to murder innocent Soviet citizens. The judge, having set the precedent, again turned to Powers and asked "Is that your pistol?" The pistol was brought to him, Powers rose, looked at it and replied "Yes, that's my 22-calibre pistol." He then went on to explain that it was part of his survival gear, if down in the some wilderness, to be able to shoot small game such as birds, rabbits or squirrels, for food. The 22-caliber was well known in the Soviet Union, common in most of the world, it is a plinking gun. One that's not much good for anything larger than a woodchuck, or porcupine, if that.

Q: But not Soviet citizens.

TOUMANOFF: But not people. If your purpose were really to go murder people, which includes innocent Soviet citizens, you wouldn't take a .22; - in the 1950s more like a standard army Colt .45, as the Moros taught us in the Philippine War. So here's Powers, on trial for his life, discrediting the learned commission and its testimony, and undermining the validity of the court.

Q: To defend himself.

TOUMANOFF: Certainly in that legitimate mode, but risking his life by undermining the credibility of the Court.

Q: They couldn't cover up, they couldn't change that.

TOUMANOFF: The next learned commission dealt with the poison pin. And they, too, concluded and testified that it was given to Powers for him to murder innocent Soviet citizens, this time in a surreptitious fashion, so they might not even know that they had been poisoned with a deadly poison. Having set the pattern, the Judge felt obliged to turn again to Powers. He explained that this, too, was part of his accident gear. In case he was very badly injured, helpless, in agony, or attacked by wild beasts, with no prospect of survival, the pin would end his life quickly and painlessly.

Q: Or to silence himself under duress which, of course, was the big story.

TOUMANOFF: That aspect never came up in court, and couldn't. It would imply that Soviet interrogation might be savage. But once again, you see, he's attempting, and probably effectively, to discredit these learned commissions and undermine the process. The next learned commission was given what the commission described as "an incendiary device" designed to burn down "our homes, our factories, and our people's economy."

Q: With one airplane, which might have caught fire, but in the end-

TOUMANOFF: I'm not quoting exactly, but the general tenor was that this was to destroy the fabric of the society by flames. Again the Judge turns to Francis Gary Powers and again he rises to address the court, asks to see the device, and they hand him an object, the size of a small box of matches. He looked at it, and explained, "It is also a part of my survival equipment, a form of matches with which, if I'm down in a wilderness, to light a campfire, even with wet wood." Then Powers asked that the object be given to the interpreter so he could read and translate into Russian the instructions on the box. They turned out to be directions on how to build a campfire with wet wood. Powers then asked the interpreter to please turn the box over and describe the picture on the back. The interpreter turned the box, hesitated and looked at the judge. The judge ordered, "Do it!" And he said, "It's a picture of a campfire." Powers sat down.

Q: Out in the middle of the woods.

TOUMANOFF: And here's this extraordinary person, doing his quiet, dignified best, and succeeding, in revealing the court for the propaganda theatrical it was; in demonstrating before the journalists of the world the clumsy and cynical corruption of the Soviet judicial system along with its scholars; in defending his own nation as best he could; and deeply risking his own life in the process. So far as I can tell, the Western press missed it. Not one word of his astounding courage, integrity and loyalty under the most fearful conditions, was ever printed or broadcast. By that time the Western news media, as an entire institution, was in some sort of mass hysteria to condemn and sacrifice Francis Gary Powers for betrayal of America by "failure" to commit suicide. Scapegoating, I call it. I would ask whom and what our media was, itself, betraying by being blind or silent on his actions in court. Was it betrayal of him alone, or of our nation? Would we be better off if we felt betrayed, or if we recognized a heroic act by one of us? If he had used the pin on the ground, unhurt, would the flight not have been flown, the U-2 not

crashed, the poison gone undetected, or Soviet response been different? Would we, as a nation, prefer suicide as our model, or Powers' acts in court had they been reported?

Q: Well, you remember, I'm sure, what was being reported in the press, that it was all aimed that way. It was the story.

TOUMANOFF: Oh, yes, of course I remember. It's one of the reasons I'm skeptical about press coverage of large political events.

Q: First of all, it involved an intelligence agency. Secondly, it involved a person who was doing something so secret, so sensitive, and thirdly, our worst enemy. It had to be that way. This was the only story.

TOUMANOFF: Powers couldn't use the pin when falling by parachute. He'd have to have used it on the ground after landing, and with no fatal injuries there would have been an autopsy to determine cause of death and the poison discovered. To my way of thinking, he used his head, and did not betray either his nation or his faith. On the contrary. What he did at that trial was truly heroic, and should have been reported as such. Actually, I suppose the fact that it was never reported probably saved his life. I doubt the Soviets would have forgiven him for so discrediting, before the eyes of the world, the regime and its great show trial.

Q: The prosecutor didn't have to be so stupid, either. They could have read the box of matches first.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, or just adhered strictly to the truth, especially with their commissions and phoney conclusions. They had the plane, they had the pilot, they had all the equipment and all the documentation. They even had the President's confirmation of responsibility. Our action, its danger and its consequences were more than enough to capture the attention of the world. They didn't need the theatricals.

Q: How long was it between-

TOUMANOFF: They held Powers for a couple of months or more before the trial. They had already blown away Ike's visit and the Paris multilateral summit.

Q: Oh, yes. They needed it. They needed all that ideological support, and they just missed it.

TOUMANOFF: They also wanted time to interrogate, to get all the information they could out of Powers, and to prepare him for the trial. The fascinating thing is the psychology of that period. (Maybe I should tell you another travel incident. I'll do that next, you know, another extraordinary kind of vignette of life for a foreigner in Russia.) I mean, for all their interrogation and observation they had failed to see what kind of a human being he was. They had put him up on trial convinced that, faced with the possibility of a death verdict, he would be perfectly compliant and, when asked if he had anything to say, would confirm the preceding "evidence" by having nothing to say, or by acknowledging, "Yes, that's my route map. Yes, that's my pistol, of course, of course. Yes, that's my incendiary device. Yes, that's my poison pin." The last thing in

the world they expected was a challenge of the findings of their learned commissions.

Q: And they'd come to all the conclusions from their experience with earlier Moscow show trials of purged communist leaders.

TOUMANOFF: Who admitted to all the false accusations and confirmed those massive propaganda exercises, in the hope of saving their lives and possibly others'.

Q: They couldn't. It wasn't planned enough.

TOUMANOFF: And I was taken aback. At first I couldn't believe my eyes and ears as I watched and heard him, quietly, with respect and dignity, do what he did. And there was a strength and integrity to him that came through, so when he said to the court, "I could never think of shooting a person," it rang true.

Q: Yes, and while he had received his training, he had been well briefed, should this ever happen, and so on. There was just plain self-integrity and intelligence. Maybe they picked him for that reason.

TOUMANOFF: Well, they recruited the right guy.

Q: They did indeed.

TOUMANOFF: Also an enormously skilled pilot.

Q: Help those of us that can't remember the denouement of the story. What happened?

TOUMANOFF: To Powers?

Q: Yes.

TOUMANOFF: It's a tragic story. When he was released by the Soviets it took some time for him to recover. Then he left Government service, was divorced, and had difficulty finding employment. Meanwhile he married a psychiatrist he had worked with during his recovery. Then...

Q: He was married at the time he was released, though. Mrs. Powers withdrew?

TOUMANOFF: I don't know how it happened. Well, she was a difficult person, and in a difficult time.

Q: She had reason to be, in the sense that his U-2 service wasn't a happy lifestyle either.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, well, there were all kinds of reasons why that marriage might not survive. Anyway, they were divorced. And in due course he remarried.

Q: Because he came back relatively soon after his trial?

TOUMANOFF: He was traded for some Soviet agent we had in prison. I've forgotten the details, but it's all published. I think it was more like two or three years later, and he came back to the Agency.

Q: They didn't ask to talk to you.

TOUMANOFF: No, there was no reason for them to talk to me. I'd be very surprised if they didn't have someone at the trial. He eventually wound up in Los Angeles as a helicopter traffic reporter for some Los Angeles radio station. The fuel gauge on his helicopter was faulty and showed empty when there was still a large amount of fuel in the tank. So he would disregard the fuel gauge and keep on flying because he knew how much fuel there was left. He was a very skilled pilot and probably knew the fuel consumption rate of his aircraft. Some klutz of a mechanic fixed the fuel gauge without telling him, and so of course, he ran out of gas, crashed, and was killed.

Q: He was alone, flying alone?

TOUMANOFF: I guess so, no one else was mentioned in the press reports.

Q: I hope the press got it right this time.

TOUMANOFF: I couldn't have known any of this unless it was reported in the press. I'm sure I read it in the newspapers. This was not many years later.

Q: I'm asking this not only for more facts, but also because I was left with the impression that his reputation had not survived the U-2 episode - that he went out of government without a good reputation.

TOUMANOFF: That's right. Yes. And I think totally unfairly. He really should have been a hero. I'm sure there were those who defended him. He must have been defended by part of the press, but he was forever tarnished with that "betrayal" brush.

Q: And the trial was thought of by many as a typical Soviet setup.

TOUMANOFF: Well, it was fascinating for me because you don't often get to see a Moscow show trial. They don't have them all that often. It was fascinating to see how they staged it. This wasn't law or due process or anything like it. It was theater. Very heavy handed theater at that.

I was going to tell you about an episode which demonstrated a different psychology. It was, in essence, an arrest situation.

Every now and then one got tired of being cooped up in Moscow. So Eileen and I decided one early spring day to get in the car and drive out to the 25 kilometer mark, and then turn around and come back, which we could do without going through the tedium of obtaining Foreign

Ministry permission. So we picked a highway at random, and headed off. Not very far out of Moscow, but way beyond the limits of the city itself, we came to small church, still standing, down a dirt track. We walked down the track to the church, which was open and contained a collection of icons painted in a style I had never seen. I asked and received permission from an attendant to photograph them, took color pictures of a half dozen, about which the attendant knew nothing, except that they were old. I thought I might have documented a unique, local style. We drove on and came to a large village with a small Kremlin, a sort of a walled citadel, with some church spires showing over the wall. The sun was setting, there was snow everywhere, and this beautiful pink light colored the scene of the wall and church tops with snow on them.

Q: And you had some shots left in your camera.

TOUMANOFF: Right! So we stopped and I told Eileen I'd take some pictures and be right back. Eileen stayed in the car, and I hopped out and took a couple of shots. I then said I'd walk around to the other side of the Kremlin, maybe 50 yards, and take some more pictures from there.

Q: You were already in the kremlin.

TOUMANOFF: No, I was taking pictures of the kremlin itself from the road, which went past it along one wall. So I went ahead and around the corner of the wall, out of sight from the car. With the camera to my eye taking the second batch, I felt as though I was sort of collecting a crowd. But that was not unusual for foreigners in Russia in those days, and I went on shooting without lowering my camera. When I did, the crowd turned out to be a half dozen troopers with their rifles pointed at my stomach. They all looked very young, very nervous, but grimly determined. So I kept my hands on the camera at my chest, smiled at them, spotted the sergeant in charge and said to him, "I think you must have a problem of some sort. Tell me about it, and what can I do to help you with it?" using the polite form of "you" and in fluent Russian. Well, nobody expected that, and the sergeant had not been addressed as 'thou' probably since birth, certainly not for years in the army. The tension broke, the troopers' guns started to droop. In a quite normal, almost conversational tone he said, "I have orders to arrest you and bring you in." I replied, "Well, I'll be perfectly happy to come with you, but you can't arrest me because I'm an American diplomat - my name is Vladimir Toumanoff - and we have diplomatic immunity. But if you'll just ask one of your boys to go tell my wife, she speaks Russian, that I'm going with you, I'll be happy to come along and see if I can help solve the problem, whatever it is." By this time the sergeant and his kids, the troopers, were greatly relieved. He said yes he would, took one of his troopers aside for some orders, who then left in the direction of the car, and we set off in the opposite direction trailed by the squad. Of course the trooper didn't, so Eileen was left wondering where I'd disappeared to. We took a small path in the snow across a field. I said, "Well, how far are we going?" and he said, not very far, you can see, there's another village down the path." It was a few hundred yards away.

Q: They were friendly to you.

TOUMANOFF: Yes. I struck up a conversation with the sergeant and we were chatting about the weather and about the birds and the geese and fishing and farming, and I was telling him about

raising pheasants in New Hampshire. We had hardly gone a hundred feet when the sergeant, who was walking alongside me, looked at me and said, "You know, you don't have a hat and you're going to catch a dreadful cold. Here, wear my hat." He took off his warm, uniform hat and gave it to me, and I put it on. We walked along chatting happily, with the guys in back listening with all their ears.

Q: You didn't mention your meeting the week before with Khrushchev and the ambassador.

TOUMANOFF: No, no, no. I didn't want to pull rank on this guy. We were talking to each other as equals. You see, he had not arrested me. I was happily coming along to help solve a problem that he had. He took his hat back before we actually entered the village, and everybody sort of straightened up and pulled themselves together, and he marched briskly forward looking more military. He stopped me in the center of a small village square, saying, "You stay here," and left his little troop with me so that I wouldn't run away. He walked into a fairly good-sized hut facing the square, and I gave him about - I suppose I gave him about 15 seconds or so, and walked in after him. The troopers were so surprised they didn't try to stop me, I was walking into the command post after my friend their sergeant!

Q: And it was warmer in there.

TOUMANOFF: Well, they didn't even come in with me. They entered command posts only on orders. They were doubtless obediently staying behind me someplace in the square until ordered to move. There was a central dirt floor with rooms opening off it, and I walked in just in time to see the sergeant walk into the room on the right. Again, I gave him a few seconds to report and walked in after him. There was a desk facing the door with a young man in uniform sitting behind it, and a collection of six or eight people standing around in the room, maybe some 20 feet square. The sergeant, standing before the desk, had evidently just saluted when I walked in. I went up to the desk and asked, "Are you in command here?" Surprised, the man said, "Yes, I am." And I put my hand out, reached across the desk and shook his warmly, introducing myself by name. I said, "I am an American diplomat, Second Secretary of the United States Embassy in Moscow. I understand you have a problem of some kind. What can I do to help you?" It was not combative. It was not confrontational. I was quite sincere, and there obviously was a problem. It was not my problem. It was his problem. And I was here offering to help if I could.

Q: You didn't even talk about the fact that you were within the acceptable travel zone of Moscow.

TOUMANOFF: No, no, no. You know, I wasn't going to start asking questions about what I had done wrong, or justifying myself in advance. That would have been just the wrong foot to start. By that time the officer (he was that, although he never gave me his rank or name) had gathered himself and said, rather formally and authoritatively "I have orders to take your camera."

Q: Okay, that's understandable.

TOUMANOFF: Not only did that tell me the problem was that I had taken a picture of some prohibited object, but it was a considerable relief for me to know that it was nothing more serious. Moreover, I knew that the ultimate solution would likely be exposure of the film. But I

was reluctant to do that because I had all those pictures of what might be quite rare and unique icons on the roll. He also was relieved, there would be no language barrier between us, no panic or anger or fear, and he also knew that I was an Officer of the most important Embassy, and probably that I outranked him. So I looked at him seriously and said "Well, you know, I regret it, but I cannot give you my camera. As a diplomat I have diplomatic immunity, and that applies to my personal possessions." He replied equally seriously, not threateningly, "But I have orders to take your camera." I said, earnestly, in the tone of discussing a common problem, "I have with me my Diplomatic Identity Pass issued by your Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which includes the text of the immunity law, and as an American Diplomat accredited to your Government, I may not violate your laws." With that I showed him my Pass.

Q: The law, I guess.

TOUMANOFF: The Soviet law. I was not going to make it easy, and I wanted if possible for him to propose the obvious solution, to expose the film. I was prepared to do that if necessary, but I certainly didn't want to lose my camera if that could be avoided. Besides it was still a very civil conversation.

Q: Or lose your camera because once in their hands it likely would never be returned.

TOUMANOFF: Or lose my camera. But the camera was really sort of a test to see how far he would put up with this kind of legalism coming from me. He could easily have just ordered his men to take the camera - and that would be the last of it. Or just keep me there, knowing Eileen was sitting in the car wondering and worrying. But that would have demonstrated military disregard for Soviet law. In addition, he did not want a diplomatic incident to mar his military record. And in a way he was enjoying the novel experience of dealing with this Official American in easy Russian. He excused himself and went to a telephone on the wall. I did not hear the conversation, but when he returned he said, "Well, give me the film instead of the camera." That was good news. They were prepared to, sort of, negotiate. So I said, "The difficulty is, I can't give you the film for the same reason, but I can take it out of the camera and expose it. But please make sure that solves the problem, because I have these pictures of the icons from that little church back there and I'd hate to lose them for nothing. If it will solve the problem, I'll do it."

"All right, just a minute." and he went to a telephone. More muffled conversation. He came back and said, "Good, expose it." I did, and he said, "Okay, now it's no good to you, so give me the film."

I objected, said I thought we had agreed, and didn't understand why there was still a problem.

He said, "I need to have your film. Those are my orders." So we went back and forth about this a little bit, I was still amicable, still relaxed, although in the presence of others he was a bit more formal and military in his bearing than I, but not showing any strong emotion.

Q: He had his orders.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, he had his orders. So I finally said, "I tell you what. I'll burn it for you." I had given him a little time to propose it himself, but he didn't and couldn't. I found out later why. I was also thinking about Eileen, but assumed the trooper had told her, so she would at least know what to report if I didn't return. But I added that this time he should make sure that would end it, or we might have a much larger problem on our hands. After a much longer telephone call he returned and, to my surprise, said "Okay, burn it." They brought a tin bucket and some matches, and I started to burn the film. Of course it was safety film and would only melt slowly in globs. At that point a shadowy figure, the only one in the room in civilian clothing, whom I hadn't noticed before, remarked with pride in his voice "Our film burns just like that." and snapped his fingers.

Q: Oh, God love 'em.

TOUMANOFF: And I thought, he has just made three mistakes, and probably regrets it already (he had left the room). He has revealed to me, and to any of the others who didn't already know, that he is KGB; he has told me that Soviet espionage film burns, and may be designed to burn, rapidly; and that a possible reason for the reluctance to propose burning, and the long phone call, is that they may have a process to recover images from a film exposed to daylight.

So I melted the film glob by glob, put the empty spindle in my pocket and said, "Okay, that's it." The Officer said, "Yes, that's fine," and offered me the sergeant as guide back to the car. I turned down the offer with thanks, we shook hands with something of a grin, and I left.

Q: They had an outstanding regulation that said "no cameras."

TOUMANOFF: Well, back at the embassy telling the story I discovered that the small kremlin, churches and all, was used as some kind of military base, and obviously off limits for photography. Typically, there were no signs or notices.

In any case we parted in a friendly way, almost reluctantly.

Q: Except your wife. She wasn't happy sitting back in the car..

TOUMANOFF: Poor Eileen, she was distraught. But while I was gone, seeing her distress some little old grannies had come to the car to comfort her and tell her everything would be all right. They were delighted that she understood them and spoke some Russian, and were terribly solicitous, and I think they brought her some hot tea and a bun or something, and they stayed until they saw me coming.

The point of this long story is that in 1959 there was a deep reservoir of goodwill for America in the Russian population, even, given a chance, for spontaneous friendship between a transgressing, obviously "White" emigré Russian turned U.S. diplomat and wholly Soviet-trained, young Red Army Noncoms and Officers. I fear we've lost all that by the end of the century.

I think the next topic, the U.S./Soviet Science and Technology Exchange Agreement, still about

Moscow, is an illustration of Soviet negotiation methods. Detlev Bronk, President of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, came to Moscow in 1959 as the head of a delegation to negotiate the first scientific and technical exchange program. I was detailed to that delegation. The negotiations went reasonably well. They were not terribly difficult, but there were interests that had to be reconciled on both sides, and there were practical arrangements for implementation. Difficulties arose later in practice and with sub-agreements on particular disciplines, but this master agreement raised no grave problems.

Q: And you didn't sense being misled or tricked or anything like that. It was a scientific exchange.

TOUMANOFF: No. For one thing it became obvious from early on that the Soviet group was under imperative orders to have a successful outcome and a signed agreement before Bronk left. So they were quite cooperative, compared to their usual practice, that is. And it was certainly our intention to have the negotiations succeed. So for the most part it was just a question of arranging the details and the mechanics and the subject matter that would be included in the basic concept of science and technology, and what would or might be not included. Moreover a good deal of preparatory work had been done, and there was no great disagreement over the purpose. So we completed the substantive negotiations and marked up text on the next to last day of Bronk's visit. The Soviet side promised to prepare overnight and deliver the next morning a clean, full text in both languages for signature by Bronk and the Soviet Academy President. That last day Bronk and his delegation were scheduled to be the guests of the Soviet Academy President in visits to various Soviet academic and research centers that would participate in the exchanges, followed by a press conference to report on the negotiations. I was left behind to check both language versions of the full text. I checked the English version first and it was fine. But when I read the Russian I ran into a headlong collision.

Bronk was authorized by the Academy to negotiate an agreement text, but subject to review and approval, or change, by the U.S. Academy. In either case the text was to be returned to Moscow - changes, if any, would be negotiated thereafter.

The English version of that process stated that a signed Agreement text would be taken to Washington by Bronk and submitted for approval to the American Academy, and a text would be returned to Moscow. The Russian language, however has no definite or indefinite articles - no "a" or "an" or "the." So the Russian version read that "signed Agreement text would be taken to Washington by Bronk and submitted to American Academy for approval, and text would be returned to Moscow." In the Russian there was no room for changes, especially as "approval" in this context in the USSR, at every level except the secretive Politburo, meant just that - an automatic, enthusiastic rubber stamp.

I pointed out the resulting important difference between the two language versions and suggested we insert the word "draft" in both. The Russians objected fiercely and refused outright. It became clear to me that, although they never quite admitted it, the Soviet team was under imperative orders to produce a completed, signed, formal Agreement and, given the importance of this first scientific and technical exchange with America, the Russian text must have already been approved at the highest Party and Government levels. I left it that I would have to point out the

difference to President Bronk. They pointed out to me that he was probably in a car or they didn't quite know where he might be and they couldn't reach him, so I'd have to wait until he got back. With that in mind I asked when the delegation would return. Stone wall. Nobody knew. I finally took up a post on the grand front steps of the building intending to catch him there. While I waited they assembled a huge crowd, including an array of journalists, correspondents, cameramen, sound technicians, floodlights and a lot of husky security guys on the steps of this pavilion where we had negotiated. So I moved to the bottom of those steps, where the cavalcade of cars would pull up. Time passed. It was well after the time for the scheduled news conference, late in the afternoon, when finally the cavalcade showed up. I assumed the front car would be security and went quickly to the second car, opened the door, and there was Bronk. He looked tired and bleary. I tried to explain, saw I was not getting through, and I got the clear impression that he was not only exhausted but that he had had to drink a lot of toasts. I was still trying to catch his attention and explain about the two versions when a couple of Russians pulled him out on the far side and started to hustle him up the steps. I tried to reach him and was slowed by some very broad backed guys who surged around me. Meantime, other Russians congealed around Bronk and made a hullabaloo escorting him up the steps, saying that everybody was waiting for the press conference and that he had to be rushed through because everything was scheduled, and the lights blazed and cameras ground and correspondents with microphones pressed in asking questions while they hustled him up the stairs with me clambering along trying to catch his attention. Always there seemed to be these great hulks of guys between me and Bronk until he disappeared through the doors while I was elbowed aside. They claimed he was being taken somewhere to freshen up and he was not available to see me. The human barrier remained effective until by the time I managed to get through, the full panoply press conference was already underway with Bronk seated at a beige-covered table signing the Agreement among Soviet dignitaries, and the speeches and celebration began. It was too late. I would never be allowed to disrupt those proceedings, and I didn't want to. So the different versions remained. Their "negotiating" tactics had prevailed.

Q: Vlad, you have to drop the other shoe. Did they come back? Did the U.S. side come back with any problem?

TOUMANOFF: I never did hear the end of the story but assume no issue ever arose, certainly not one important enough to risk the Agreement, or one that couldn't be resolved otherwise.

Q: Much ado about nothing-maybe.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, but part of your task as a Foreign Service Officer, when you bump into such seemingly minor grammatical ambiguities, is either to resolve them if possible, or if not, or if the price of resolution is too high, to make sure that everybody on both sides who has authority and is responsible for the negotiations is aware of the ambiguity and whatever risk they may entail. In this case the Soviets simply manipulated us into an impossibility before the highly public signature. The risk, of course was that any attempt by the American side to make changes in the Agreement pursuant to U.S. Academy review would give the Soviets an excuse to charge us with failure strictly to abide by its terms.

Q: Unable to alert Bronk before the great signing ceremony, you did it at some other time before

the departure of the U.S. Delegation?

TOUMANOFF: Yes, I found other members of the Delegation because Bronk was to be inaccessible until he got on the airplane.

Q: Your role was fully played. Just a little bit delayed.

TOUMANOFF: Actually, I never thought so. We, including myself, should have anticipated the possibility of some problem with the two texts on the last day, and made arrangements for the Delegation, or at least Bronk and some senior members to meet privately before the signing. I learned not to place one's self in Soviet hands for all the logistics and other arrangements, and determined to prevent that whenever I could. I think perhaps Bronk learned that, too.

Q: Or perhaps he raised that with the Soviets before he left Moscow.

TOUMANOFF: He may have, or communicated with Washington. But I doubt both. As a wise old bird I suspect he had taken the measure of the Soviet desire for the Agreement, and was sure they would not make an issue of some subsequent changes. Lots of problems arose, but later in the practices of the scientific exchanges. In any case, I dropped out of the picture.

Q: One more role by a Foreign Service Officer. Now are we going to leave Moscow? What items are left?

TOUMANOFF: Well, Bill, there are a couple of more items still from Moscow, which I think might be useful or describe what life was like there and in a good many other posts and, increasingly I'm afraid, in many places where the dangers of the Foreign Service are becoming greater. Also maybe instructive of how to manage these kinds of difficulties, which I think probably everybody in the Foreign Service comes to face sooner or later somewhere. One of them concerns the KGB and the fact that wherever we went, in Moscow or out, we were followed. Every American diplomat was followed. They were sometimes very subtle about it and sometimes very, very obvious, and this was intentional. When you got into your car, for example, there would always be a Soviet counterintelligence car that followed you. Sometimes they'd follow you very, very closely and make themselves almost dangerously obvious, by tailgating. And they'd keep that up for a while and then, all of a sudden, they would stop, and seemingly disappear. If we bothered to keep an eye on our rear-view mirror, they would sometimes be the second car behind you, or the third, or vanish altogether, only to turn up some minutes later. We learned to read number plates, if they happened to carry a number plate. It became sort of a game, like children counting cows on a trip. After a while, one way or another, we came to know their practices, or ways to detect the followers, such as stopping, or taking several turns down side streets. But that game, too, could easily be overdone. Their rules were simple. Never acknowledge their presence, and give them no trouble. They had little sense of humor if you violated their rules. Basically, they wanted you to assume you would always be followed. I suspect that is the practice of counterintelligence services all over the world. Until they suspect you of real espionage, that is. Then, I suppose, they get much more secretive.

The second aspect of this is having listening devices in your housing, your phones, your car or

aimed at you outside, trying to overhear everything you said, everything that went on. Let me talk about the microphones in housing. One technique that my wife and I developed, apart from writing each other notes and burning them, which is time consuming and messy. When we wanted to communicate something that we really did not want to have overheard, we used an ordinary mailing tube. You put one end of a cardboard mailing tube to your mouth and the other end to your wife's ear (and *vice versa*) and whisper, so that no sound escaped into the room. It was quick and easy, and it worked nicely so we got quite used to it, although it was a longish tube. At one hilarious point, we found ourselves one evening, having already gone to bed, with my wife 'way over on her side of the bed and I 'way over on mine, talking to each other through this mailing tube. Well, we broke up in giggles and laughter over this new kind of pillow talk, Soviet style. It was a while before either remembered what we had been talking about. But that's a simple, and turned out to be a fun way to beat the mikes.

Q: Maybe I should make it clear that you and your wife were not exchanging classified information, but rather it was for personal reasons. Would you like to talk a little bit to the kind of information you felt you had to write out or whisper through the tube?

TOUMANOFF: Oh, all sorts of things. Our finances, accounts of conversations with Russian friends. Friends' names. Travel plans and accounts of travels. Impressions and opinions about events and personalities. Thoughts about our children and their reactions to life in Moscow. Health, state of mind. Annoyances and satisfactions. Sometimes it was just personal, about ourselves. or families at home. This is the kind of information which the KGB in those days would accumulate to look for weaknesses.

Q: That's the point, some weakness.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, is this an officer with financial troubles who might be bribable? Is this an officer we can get to through some friends? Is this an officer with sympathies for socialism? *Et cetera, et cetera.*

Q: It's data-gathering on you as a family.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, it's biographical on our family. Are the husband and wife getting along together, or are they fighting all the time? You know, can we interest this officer or his wife in some Russian romance? Are either one disaffected? How's their mental health?

Q: Is there a weakness in that family that we can exploit?

TOUMANOFF: Exactly, so it's that kind of information. Occasionally I needed to tell her about some Embassy business which would involve her, that the KGB would like to know in advance?

Q: -or a little bit of gossip.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, or a little bit of gossip, so that you tended to play it safe and communicate in some fashion which the KGB could not pick up. Days would go by without the tube, but now and then it was handy.

Q: Something that I know my wife and I very much noticed, and I'm sure you and others, too. It's just to irritate, to get us tensed up - calls in the middle of the night.

TOUMANOFF: Never had midnight calls. But yes, there was a certain element of harassment - which included sending these gigantic useless Foreign Ministry diplomatic notes on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. But I mentioned those earlier.

Q: Striped pants life under the Communist system.

TOUMANOFF: Exactly. Let me go back to this business of being followed. The other aspect of it, Bill, is that - as you probably experienced yourself - eventually, maybe after six months or ten months or a year of this, but sooner or later it gets on your nerves. You just get sick and tired of being followed all the time, especially as you are not doing anything that in any way would be hostile or in some fashion illegal or improper. There are several techniques for getting rid of or losing the people who follow you, but you do that at your peril, and under almost every conceivable circumstance I can think of, you simply resist that temptation. You do not play games. You do not even acknowledge to the followers that you're aware of the fact that you are being followed and that they are the followers. It's as though they simply do not exist. That's the-

Q: And we are so briefed because the chances are we will be hurt by or we will make errors.

TOUMANOFF: So sooner or later this following becomes an annoyance, enough on your nerves that you do something which gives them an excuse to throw you out of the country, and that's a disservice to your own country, because once you've been thrown out, the chances are you'll never be able to go back so your usefulness to your own government has suddenly been curtailed sharply for the rest of your career, especially if you're a Soviet specialist. And a good many people do get thrown out - sometimes absolutely arbitrarily with no reason whatsoever, and sometimes for mistakes that they've made - or, you know, some of these techniques of trapping people such as finding some Russian so-called friend who'll hand you a package or paper, and you are immediately pounced upon because the paper, it turns out, allegedly contains some sort of secrets.

Q: The famous one being Professor Barghorn.

TOUMANOFF: So what I'm about to tell you is really a kind of lesson in what not to do. When I was followed it was either in a car or on foot. But I had a bicycle in Moscow, and once I finally got tired of being followed. I knew a path that went across a swamp, went over a brook in the middle on a large gas or oil pipeline, and then out the other side. So I got on my bicycle, took this path, and was careful not to look back. Obviously my Soviet agent companions, who were following me in a car, could neither drive their car nor keep up with my bicycle on foot. It was a big swamp without a road in sight on the other side.

Q: Some very angry KGB people.

TOUMANOFF: Yes, I was playing games, and that's exactly what you should never do. That could have been sufficient to have me thrown out. But by that time, I had this small element of

protection from my contact with Khrushchev. The KGB would be a little reluctant to pester me or move against me. That might be at some risk to themselves, because if my action was seemingly innocent - such as this bicycle ride - they would expect that the American ambassador might complain to Khrushchev. I also calculated that they certainly had the capacity to radio ahead to some police car on the other side of the swamp to pick me up as I emerged from the path, so it was not that great a risk. But it is not recommended. Without that special protection - which in this case I was relying on, not relying with certainty but counting on as a possible deterrent, a measure of protection - I would not have done it.

Q: A timely story to end your stay in Moscow?

TOUMANOFF: That's it. That's all for Moscow.

LEWIS W. BOWDEN
Political Officer
Moscow (1958-1960)

U.S. - USSR Economic Council
Washington, DC (1974-1978)

Lewis W. Bowden was born in 1924 and raised in Oklahoma and Kansas. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University and a master's degree from Columbia University. Mr. Bowden's career with the Foreign Service included positions in Belgrade, Bern, Moscow, and Brasilia. He was interviewed by Robert J. Martins on October 31, 1991.

Q: Then you went back to Russian studies at Oberammergau.

BOWDEN: Yes. I had applied to go to this kind of Russian high school there for eight or nine months.

Q: An advanced Russian course with all the instruction being in Russian by native language speaking officers.

BOWDEN: From that point of view it was very useful. I got my Russian back after no use for a few years. So I felt perfectly at home when I finally did get to the Soviet Union the following year.

Q: You arrived in the summer of 1958, as I recall since I was about to leave when you arrived.

BOWDEN: Yes, I replaced you. That was an interesting time to arrive. You may remember that when I got there I was taken to the apartment from the airport. I phoned in the next morning to find out when I should report in and was told not to come downtown because the Embassy was surrounded by agitators and people protesting the landing of the Marines in Lebanon.

I should add that later on I found they also threw ink pots filled with ink. They went all over the rugs and walls in the Embassy apartments. This created a big clean up job later on.

Within a couple of days I managed to get into the Embassy and reported for work. I moved into your old job. Incidentally when they did a very thorough search of that building some years later they discovered microphones behind the radiator in your office and mine. They never found out if the microphones worked, but they surely were in the wall and got taken out eventually by security.

Q: No great surprise.

BOWDEN: Hardly a surprise. They were pretty cleverly hidden because the radiator was made of metal and when the detectors went around the room they got thrown off by the metal in the radiators.

I was dealing with internal matters with a guy named Bob Owens. That year from rocking throwing at the Embassy, about a year later we were all at Sekolniki Park with Vice President Nixon, who opened the first ever American exhibition in the country...and that is where he and Khrushchev got into the big argument...

Q: The kitchen debate.

BOWDEN: The kitchen debate. That was the high point of that year. Then the following year, the high point came on May 1 or 2 when we learned that the Russians had shot down one way or another the U-2 and had Francis Gary Powers, the pilot, in their custody. I spent from May until the time I left in August, tracking everything I could find in the Soviet press and radio and television about the U-2 and the background of flights over the USSR, etc. I did not attend the trial which started shortly after I left because I was at that time in the political section and the judgment had been made that someone from the consular section should appropriately go under our consular convention to be our Embassy's *amicus curiae*, friend of the court. As a matter of fact Powers was visited by our consular people and indeed somebody was present at the trial.

Q: Would you comment on this and the ups and downs of that period -- the degree to which you had contact and any opinions you might have formed regarding the attitudes of the population towards the system?

BOWDEN: The atmosphere was certainly a changing one... Through the exchanges that were being set in motion and was culminated in the exhibition probably. There was a certain loosening up under very tight controls and set of rules. It was monitored, of course, from the Soviet side, but still there was an increase in contacts of all kinds in various fields.

I don't really have any first hand experience of people expressing dissent about the system except possibly, as you were saying, when you got outside of Moscow. Access to the Embassy was absolutely controlled. It was virtually impossible to get into anybody's house. We did have access occasionally through people like Ed Stevenson, who lived outside. He was a

newspaperman who had been there for ages and had a Russian wife. It was possible to meet people at his house who were kind of in a halfway world. They had a green light to go there where there was foreknowledge that Embassy people would be there. That kind of contact was where people got their principal information about things that never appeared in the press.

I think probably this whole process of slight loosening up would probably have gone on and pursued its course if it had not been for the U-2. You remember that Eisenhower went to Geneva and Khrushchev came back from Geneva having rejected everything that was proposed in light of what had happened. So the U-2 put a definite stop for a period of time to the loosening up that had been underway.

The U-2 affair drew very strange reactions from the Russians, including Khrushchev himself. We learned, for example, as a result of the U-2 affairs, that the Soviets knew for many years that we were doing overflights. In fact, we were doing overflights in lumbering airplanes like C-54s with open doors through which people would put a camera out and take pictures. Because the Soviets did not have a coordinated radar air control they couldn't actually pin point the aircraft to do any surveillance. They would send their fighters up and look all over the Ukraine looking for these airplanes but never found them. It was frustrating as could be.

Then they revealed that they had been watching the U-2 go over for a couple of years and were unable to reach it with their anti-aircraft rockets. This was a further frustration to them.

Then when they displayed the remains of the U-2 with the photographs it was taking, all the Russians both official and regular public were astounded at the technology of this aircraft and cameras. The Russians had nothing remotely like it at the time and it simply reinforced in the Soviet mind the conviction that the West was technologically far more advanced than they were not withstanding all the propaganda and ballyhoo. So it had a certain sobering and healthy affect on a lot of the policy makers in the USSR. But they had rejected, you remember, Eisenhower's Open Skies plan. We said that if they rejected it we would do it anyway, so we opened up their skies and were studying their installations. This gave them quite a start when they finally realized the full extent of the intelligence we had available as a result of these flights.

BOWDEN: I was part of the original group that drafted the charter for the US-USSR Economic Council. It was part and parcel of the Trade Agreement and designed to provide a forum where American businessmen could find out opportunities, sales and purchases that existed in the Soviet Union and since it had equal representation from the Soviets they would be able to provide the information necessary on their economy to get trade and financial activity going.

In theory, I think it was a fine idea. Although, as you indicated, some of the fundamental assumptions never actually materialized. Like the MFN, Most Favored Nation status for the USSR, which probably would have stimulated some more exports from the USSR. It is never clear if you run things like this out mathematically how much difference it would have made. We would have had a chance to find out if the Soviet Union hadn't fallen apart recently.

In any event, things never really got off the ground. There were a lot of meetings, in fact there are still meetings of this Council. A lot of very important people have been associated with it -- Don Kendell, was chairman for a long time. What was done is not very clear. I mean in terms of things that are not done other wise. But I think it was a good idea at the time to really try to get things moving between us in an economic sense.

I have to comment that this is a concept that we had since the early 1930s. One of the reasons for reestablishing relations with Russia by President Roosevelt in 1933, was to stimulate trade and economic energy between the two countries. We had moved pretty clearly into the depression period and it was thought that the USSR would be a purchaser of things manufactured and grown in the United States, and this would help to pull us out of the depression. This is clear from letters that President Roosevelt wrote at the time. And this never materialized because the Soviet economy was going more on all the time due to the policies adopted by the government. As far as I know there was nothing but a steady decline from 1928 to 1948. I have been told the trade turnover between our two countries, if you take the grain element out...the Soviets buy grain when they are not able to produce enough to satisfy domestic needs.

Q: This was a period on the political side where Stalin, going back to the 30s, regarded the Soviet Union being besieged on all sides by a hostile world. Economic aspects flowed out of the political picture as well.

BOWDEN: It did not want to be dependent on any foreign economic source because that would be a source of weakness which could be exploited by your enemies.

So we had this in the early 1930s and again in the 70s. It periodically rears its head. It really leads you to the question if you look at the two economies and trade patterns, are we natural trading partners or isn't that just some kind of a myth that has grown among us and is not very likely ever to be realized. I think that is probably the case. The natural partners of Russia may very well be in Europe and Asia and not the United States. But now it is very difficult to tell, sitting here today.

Q: The Soviet Union hasn't sorted out enough to tell much of anything. Lets go back now to your entering Treasury.

BOWDEN: The exact name of this thing was the US-Saudi Commission on Technical Cooperation. It was an Executive Agreement negotiated between us and the Saudis. Treasury, the State Department, the Embassy and the Ministry of Finance out there were all involved in this. In effect what it led to was a kind of AID program for the transfer of technology from the United States to Saudi Arabia in a number of fields...agriculture, manual training, computer technology, you name it, for which they would foot the bill. They were even willing to fund all the positions in the Treasury Department related to the coordinating role, which was my role basically. But we had 12 or 13 other US Government agencies involved in this program together with a number of private businesses. As the program grew it was our policy to try to enlist the private sector to the extent possible, where it clearly had the resources to do the job rather than put an agency of the US Government into the act which in turn would probably have had to engage private resources in any event.

This program grew from nothing...when I arrived it was nothing but a piece of paper, there was no staff, no program or anything else...by the end of the four years, at the time I left, there were 19 or 20 projects worth about a billion dollars. We had all told probably between 350 and 400 people in Saudi Arabia in various locations doing these projects and here in Washington about 100 people as back up, making sure that the resources got sent and that our people were served and dealing with the private companies, etc.

So it was a big program, an interesting thing. In fact I feel it was the most creative thing I ever did in the Foreign Service. It certainly didn't do me any good in terms of the Foreign Service because, if you look back on it I left the State Department in 1970 and by 1978 nobody remembers that I belonged to the State Department. I had not gone back to the State Department since leaving in the summer of 1970. There is obviously a lesson there, out of sight, out of mind.

There was an election in 1976 and President Carter came in with his new crew and the position that I occupied at the Treasury Department was officially a political level position. Politics had nothing to do with my being there. It was absolutely an accident. I was the guy they knew and thought could do the job and pulled me in as I was also available. But when the new Administration came in, my boss, and I think in general at Treasury the new regime looked upon me as a Republican political appointment, regardless of all my protestations, that was the way it was seen.

So it quickly became apparent that I had no future in that Administration because I felt I was ready to go on to bigger and better things. In fact anything that anybody wanted to assign me to of a non-technical nature I felt quite confident I could handle. I thought I had demonstrated that. But that was not to be because I was persona non grata within the Treasury Department to the Administration. So I looked down the road and said I guess the only thing I can do is go out and get a job in the private sector, which is what I did.

I retired out of the Treasury at the end of 1978 and was very pleased to have my retirement ceremony party in the cash room at Treasury, which is one of the most beautiful rooms in the entire city. It is now used exclusively for official state banquets by the Secretary of the Treasury. It was remodeled and brought into absolutely superb shape when Jim Baker was Secretary of Treasury. He spent a lot of money putting the Treasury put back into beautiful shape and it certainly shows up today. Now nobody would be able to use it for a retirement ceremony.

I have no regrets...it was destiny to make the things fall that way. I don't blame anybody. I can understand, I guess, why the new Democratic Administration would not accept the fact that I was a Foreign Service Officer.

Q: After your retirement you have continued to have an interest in Soviet Affairs and I understand you work closely with the Atlantic Council for one thing. If you have any comments on that, that is fine, but otherwise perhaps you might want to look back on the 47 years you have been connected with the Soviet Union in one way or another and make any comments you might

care to make on overall, generalized observations of where we have come and insights into continuing factors in Soviet society.

BOWDEN: Let me try to put both ends of this together -- beginning in 1945 and now bringing us right up to the present time where I am involved in the Atlantic Council in an ongoing dialogue with the Russians, mainly from think tanks from Moscow, but also from the Russian Parliament, the Foreign Office, the General Staff, etc. So it is a pretty broad range of people we have been talking to. Our talks cover the great spectrum of outstanding world problems. My last three or four years have been involved in visiting the Soviet Union several times and having many, many Russians here.

I think this tends to bring back to me and confirm a number of the early impressions I had as a naval officer and that is that the formation of what we call Russian society and it applies to a lot of the people who have been intimately associated with the Russians for many centuries, has taken place over a period of maybe 800 to a thousand years and that certain concepts and values are very deeply built into the Russian mind which were not erased under communism, are still there as a tribal memory, and will assert themselves in the future, as they are doing now, in ways that are really quite unpredictable.

The principal aspect, I think, that is of importance is the concept of society as a collective and not simply as a kind of free floating [group of] individuals. Russians, in this long historical period, have always belonged to some kind of community or collective and it is very difficult for them to look at themselves as a lonely and isolated settler in the United States going to North Dakota...

What I was just saying translates into modern terms I think as a very deep and abiding conviction that what we call the welfare state or welfare state of society, is considered a very proper state as far as the Russian mind is concerned. We are already seeing this. In effect, you might say that people want to have their cake and eat it too. They also don't want to pay for very much more. So something is bound to give along the way here and we really won't know where it comes out for a long time.

There is another aspect where the Russian soul rebels against its containment in this collective and community and launches off sometimes into very strange directions. You find examples of this in Dostoevski, and in all great Russian literature. But in general I think the delineation of future society will bear the marks of this other collectivist aspect very strongly in one way or another.

Q: There is sort of a tension you might say between anarchical ideas and hyper- individualism on the one hand and the need for a collective, part of a bigger whole, desire for an authority to keep this anarchical tendency within bounds on the other. Is that a fair comment?

BOWDEN: Yes, that is a fair comment. You find these days that when you talk to the Russians in general, the thing that they are deathly afraid of is the thing they call chaos. They don't really know what chaos really is, but it means something out there without a structure. In other words, suddenly you are absolutely a free agent, you are free to fail, free to starve, free to die, free to

make a million, free to murder other people, and they recoil from this concept in a very strong way. What this can further translate into is agreement to a kind of regime or government or administration which is not fundamentally very democratic. I don't think that is going to bother a lot of Russians that I know. They are going to put a higher premium on other things than the right to choose and reject leaders and policies, etc.

Maybe all this reflects is the fact that to really acquire a working democratic system requires a very long period of human history as it has for us...let's say coming from at least the 13th century up to the present time.

I guess the only other comment I would like to make is that I see today what is happening in the Soviet Union and really in much of Europe and the rest of the world as a period of immense turbulence. The equivalent to the 1918-1919 period when much of the world appeared to be fragmenting, flying apart in all directions and people were desperately searching for some way to try to hold parts of it together or make new arrangements, configurations. And that is true to a greater extent now, perhaps, than it was in the 1918-19 period. It certainly is going to be a much different world than the essentially bipolar world that we lived in for more than 50 years.

Where the Russians and all these other people in the Eurasian heartland are going to come out and find their alliances, connections and natural allegiances and trade patterns is, I think, at this point absolutely unpredictable.

ARTHUR A. HARTMAN
Intelligence Officer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1958)

Ambassador Arthur Hartman was born in New York, New York in 1926. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in France, Vietnam, and the United Kingdom (England), and an ambassadorship to the Soviet Union. This interview was conducted by Bill Miller on May 31, 1989.

Q: Were you aware of the Soviet sensitivity to all of this? How much did the Soviet factor come into the planning of the German rearmament?

HARTMAN: Oh it was, not in the sense of the sensitivity - it was a response to a challenge. I mean the feeling; I can remember the clearly the feeling in 1950 when Korea was invaded. All of us I think had the feeling, "Well Europe is next!" If Stalin, we had absolutely no doubt that the North Koreans were ordered in by Stalin. That was the common assumption and you know it hasn't much been challenged since but we know a little bit more about North Koreans now, maybe there was a little more complication than just that. It didn't seem to us that if the Soviets had wanted to stop it that they made very much of an effort to stop. It seemed to us to be a major challenge and so there was a; and again you had tremendous leadership in Europe at that time. It was the time of Adenauer, of Schuman, of DeGasperi, of Spaak in Belgium, of Beck in

Luxembourg; I mean even the small countries have great leaders. These people just worked tirelessly to put this thing together, they felt very much under the gun and there was a real unity. There were a lot of stickers on the wall, "Go home this one, go home that one" but basically the, I think the overwhelming majority of people in Europe responded out of fear - it was fear genuine fear.

In universities this year, a very common document that is examined and studied rather hard is NSC-68. And as you may recall, that portrayed the Soviets as determined to go to war sometime in the fifties; perhaps the early fifties. Therefore, we had to rearm, and of course NATO was one response. The definite conclusion of that document and those who wrote it was that we were in a life and death struggle with this formidable power that had once been an ally. You had many of the figures that we now have on the world scene on opposite sides of the question; for example, George Kennan and Paul Nitze. George Kennan was saying that they had no intention of doing that, however it was necessary to bring Europe together.

The author of the containment policy felt in his later writings anyway that his view had been taken out of context. What he was really talking about was a way to bring the European powers back together to restore their morale, their economic viability, and their political integrity; he did not see the Soviets as likely to attack, and then he leaves the scene. I think he was very much a gadfly in that period. I think the dominant view, and this is before Dulles' arrival, this is in the time of Acheson - the late forties. This view was definitely that there was a military and security challenge, that some of the understandings that people thought had been made of restraint for the post-war period; that is in the Yalta agreements and Potsdam and so forth, that there indeed would be free elections. The hope was that the Soviet Union wouldn't insist on a virtual occupation of Eastern Europe, that while many people in the United States wanted an even more forceful putting down of Germany; as the reconstruction period started, there were some thoughts that you couldn't rule out reunification. As long as you kept Germany divided, Europe was going to be divided and there was going to be a source of tension. The French were at least of that view if I may say, the French rather liked the idea I think. They never said it because they didn't want to antagonize the Germans, but basically they were happy that Germany was divided.

No, I think that most people felt this way at this time, and this was before the Korean invasion. With the Korean invasion, there was a tremendous effect there. Looking back at what happened in Greece where people felt that this was an effort by the Soviets to arm a group in Greece to take over the country, and Azerbaijan. In other words, that looking again at Communist policy in the post war period, people felt that the ideology was taking over; that they were going to lead revolutionary groups, that they were going to arm, they were going to feed them, and that there was danger in Europe. There was a feeling that unless this reconstruction of the Western Europe economies, which were after all the strongest economies in the world after the United States, took place in a Democratic atmosphere that there was a real danger that the Communist parties could take over. Some of these were virtual handmaidens of Stalin, they were Stalinist in their orientation, perhaps even more than some of the statements of Soviet government policy. You had a history in a place like France after the war, with a tremendous rivalry between the Maquis resistance groups that were governed by the Communists and the others. In fact, probably the Communists had a better war record along with many others in France, than some of the more conservative elements that had been hooked up with the Vichy government and even more

collaborationist. So in France there was a split in the society and we came in with our aid programs basically helping those people who were fighting to keep the Communists from gaining control. I think the leadership of that whole period, and you have to remember that the Christian Democratic movement played a very major role, and Catholics particularly played a very major role in the three man countries.

For example, that is in Italy where the Christian Democrats were in power the whole time, where France was heavily influenced by this emergence after the war of the MRP movement, the Catholic movement that produced Schuman and others in the leadership; and Adenauer all of whom had this desire to kind of bring things together and it was almost going back to Charlemagne. Charlemagne, it's no mystery today I think that the major prize given to a European for his work in unifying Europe is the Charlemagne prize. There was a rejection of that and the formalism of the Church, and indeed the role of the Church during the war. These were people who were reformers out of the Church and who felt their Catholicism very strongly, but wanted to put it to political effect with these higher goals of unifying Europe and breaking down national barriers - but very anti-communist. They felt that Communism was a real challenge.

Q: Was it Stalinism or something else?

HARTMAN: No, Communism was really equated with Stalinism and there was a lot of reason for this. After all if you looked at what was going on in the Soviet Union at that time and the suppressions that were taking place in Eastern Europe. Add in things like the Doctors' plot that came along as Stalin really produced some of his greatest excesses, not the greatest but at least noticeable excesses in that period. He closed down the openness that was beginning to be shown because people were cooperating during the war. The openness absolutely ended and the behavior of their people in these four power meetings that were taking place all during these periods. One of the things we've sort of forgotten are the sort of rigorous kind of schedule required of the four power meetings. It seems a little strange to us today that the greats of the world would be Foster Dulles and I don't know, I can't remember who was the French Foreign Minister at that time, it was again one of the great Catholic - the man who was always drunk, what was his name Bidaud and from Germany a variety of leaders and Anthony Eden before he became Prime Minister was the Foreign Minister.

The people, the four powers without the Germans when you are talking about the settlement in Europe with Molotov at first, then later - much later with Gromyko, that was the structure. Today we think of the big power summit and it's the United States and the Soviet Union. In those days meetings in Paris in the old Palais Rose, I can remember Acheson came there and they met for a month talking about these problems. So that kind of structure has changed a lot, but the main feeling that all of us had and that was general in Europe was this fear, and it was fear of direct invasion. That fear was credible and that's why people took seriously the rearmament effort. A momentum of these moves really didn't change very much. There was no sort of outside, there were trips that people took, Malenkov - I can't remember now what the sequence of time was but there were these trips around before Khrushchev took power and they began to show themselves more in the world. I think to the Europeans generally it was not a very appealing process. There were a lot of other things that went on, there were these youth conferences and that scared the leadership. They get these people over there and the reports would come back from the young

people who went exactly what was going on, they took over these meetings and sort of beat a lot of propaganda into them. For a while we used to try and send people in fact as it turned out we subsidized a few youth groups from the CIA and elsewhere. Some of our political leaders came through that process and were people who had actually attended these meetings and sort of cut their teeth in politics arguing in those sessions. It was a period when, it's easy to look back on it and kind of rewrite history, but there was a genuine feeling of fear and with some reason. There was a tremendous amount of military force on the other side, a tremendous putting down of any outcroppings of individual liberty or rioting that might have taken place, students expressing their views in any of the Eastern European countries and nothing going on in the Soviet Union until there was a kind of a thaw after Khrushchev.

When he actually took over there was a little thaw at least in the intellectual sense a little like what you have today which I hesitate to say is also reversible. He found it useful at that time to allow that to happen.

GIFFORD D. MALONE
Intelligence Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1958-1961)

Russian Language Training
Oberammergau, Germany (1963-1964)

Administrative Officer
Moscow (1964-1966)

Soviet Affairs Desk, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1966-1969)

Gifford Malone was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1930. He received his bachelor's degree from Princeton University and his master's from Columbia University. He served in the US army from 1953-1956. His career with the Foreign Service included assignments in Poland and the Soviet Union. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December of 1991.

Q: What was your impression about the state of the intelligence community in the State Department and the Soviet Union at the time? What were the tools you used and what was the attitude?

MALONE: The tools we used as intelligence research was always mainly published sources. Of course we had access to what CIA was producing, at least some of it. We had reporting from Moscow and all that, but we were all reading the Soviet press and it was a kind of Kremlinology. Those things all combined into the ultimate product. INR was a good deal bigger in those days than it is now, and the number of people engaged in Soviet Affairs in INR were more numerous than later was the case.

They were trying in those days, and I think with good reason, to assign some people to the Soviet section who had just come back from Moscow to give a fresh slant on things. I think it was a pretty good group and I had the impression that in those days INR was doing pretty well. Later, due partly to budgetary reasons, and partly because the Department decided it was unnecessary, it considerably reduced the size of INR all together, including the Soviet section.

Q: What was the interplay with the Desk?

MALONE: There was a fair amount of interplay then, although it is a little hard to compare. I later served on the Desk and at that stage we had a great deal of interplay with INR. We talked with them every day. It may have been a little less when I was serving there myself, although I am not sure of that. My general impression was that there was a good deal of communication. In other words, what we were doing was relevant to what they were doing and they wanted to know what we were thinking and how we analyzed things.

Q: To give a feel for this. Okay you are reading Pravda, Izvestia, etc. and looking at the various reports coming out, what sort of things would you do that would be of use to American foreign policy at that time?

MALONE: Basically what I was doing, remember I was at the most junior level, was producing written reports about various subjects. I was in military affairs so I read among other things the military press. A lot of it was keeping track of who was in charge of what and producing very factual reports of that sort. I wouldn't say, at least what I was doing, could be called deep, deep think pieces. There was some of that that went on in INR. INR contributed to the National Intelligence Estimates, and met with CIA people when these things were being put together. But it was mostly very factual stuff.

Q: What was your feel when you got together with your CIA colleagues on this? Were they looking at it in a different way? And also the military?

MALONE: Let me say first, I didn't get together with CIA colleagues very often. The only times that I remember was when you were trying to get an agreed position on a National Intelligence Estimate concerning the Soviet Union. In those days CIA would have a draft, INR would have a draft and we would try to produce something on which everyone could agree. I don't want to suggest that there were any dramatic disagreements, there weren't. But I was just looking at a small slice of it.

Q: What was the National Intelligence Estimate?

MALONE: The National Intelligence Estimate was a broad government wide estimate, in this case about the Soviet Union...there were sections to these estimates and then there were updates and revisions. It was an effort to achieve a government wide view on what was happening in the Soviet Union. There has been a lot of talk in later years about disagreements within the government on these things. I didn't sense that in those days, remember this is the late 1950s, that there was a lot of that. If there was it certainly didn't come to my attention. But people

would have been talking about it had there been. Later, I think, there were some fairly serious disagreements. I know certainly later in my career I became aware that there tended always to be disagreements between the CIA and often joined by State on the one hand, and Defense Intelligence Agency on the other. But that wasn't evident to me in these early days.

Q: To put this in context, we are talking 1991, in the last year or so we have seen essentially the end of the Cold War and complete disintegration of the Soviet Union. We don't even know what to call it today, except the ex-Soviet Union. At that time when you were in INR, how did it look to the United States? Was it a threat? How did we feel about it?

MALONE: We looked upon it as a threat, which I think was an accurate view. We looked upon it as a country that was very hard to get information about. After all it was a closed society. We tried to understand to what degree there was dissent in the Soviet Union. We were not very successful at that, although from time to time you would get some inkling of a labor unrest here or there, that sort of thing. Basically we were just trying to understand this very different society, this very controlled society, which we all felt quite sincerely was a threat to the United States and the West in general.

Q: Then you went for more Russian training, even though you had a lot of previous study. Why was that?

MALONE: I applied to go to Oberammergau, what was then called Detachment R to which the State Department normally sent two or three people. I applied really to insure my ticket to Moscow. I felt if they accepted me for Oberammergau, then I would automatically go, and that proved to be the case. As a matter of fact when I got there I found that being back in the Russian language was very helpful because my Russian had sort of gotten all mixed up with Polish by that time. Just linguistically it was very useful.

The school was actually a very useful experience. It was not primarily a language school. We had, I think, only one hour a day of language instruction. You were suppose to know Russian by the time you got there. It was an area study program taught by émigrés from the Soviet Union. So all the classes were in Russian and we wrote our exams in Russian. Although not all the subjects were particularly well taught, you certainly got a very different slant than you would have gotten from an American professor, for example.

One striking example of that was in the field of Soviet law. They had a course at Oberammergau taught by a Russian who had been on Prosecutor Vishinsky's staff.

Q: This would be the great trials of the military during the late 1930s.

MALONE: This guy had been on his staff when Vishinsky was Prosecutor General of the USSR. I forget his exact title. I had previously taken a course on Soviet law with Professor John Hassard of Columbia University and I can tell you that the viewpoint of this man at Oberammergau about Soviet law was very different than that of John Hassard. It certainly gave me insights. This man's

view was totally cynical but I learned a great deal about the subject in a very different way.

We had a couple of people on the faculty who had been military intelligence officers. Some of the courses were purely on military subjects and most of us from the State Department didn't take those. But it was a good course. Another very good thing about it was it included a trip to the Soviet Union. About a week after I arrived in the summer of 1963 for that course, we departed on a trip in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union by bus from Oberammergau. We went first to Poland which didn't interest me particularly, but then on by bus into the Soviet Union and driving essentially the same route that Napoleon had taken all the way to Moscow, stopping at Smolensk, Minsk and other places. We spent a month in the Soviet Union traveling around all over the place. It was really a very useful experience.

Q: I am surprised the Soviets let you do it.

MALONE: It was an on again, off again thing. Some years they allowed the group to come, some years they didn't. We, of course, speculated about this and concluded that the reason they did was because they felt they would get a lot of biographic intelligence about us by listening to us. And they probably did. But I think the trade-off was well worth it because it was a wonderful introduction to visit many parts of the Soviet Union and to be speaking Russian and to see what the place where I was going to be serving was really like.

So the next year when I went to the Soviet Union I was speaking Russian well by this time and all this background of actually having been there, I was really able to hit the ground running.

Q: You were there from 1964-66. What were you doing initially when you went to the Soviet Union?

MALONE: In those days the policy at the Embassy was to take people of my grade, by then I was FSO-5, and try to give them different kinds of experiences. That normally meant a tour one year in one part of the Embassy and for a year in another part. My first year was spent as assistant administrator. I was the American member of the Administrative staff who spoke Russian. The rest didn't ...the GSO, the Admin Officer, etc.

One of the most important parts of that job was being liaison with the various elements of the Soviet bureaucracy with whom we dealt. Customs, the large organization that serviced the diplomatic corps...all of that was controlled and centralized in the Soviet Union. They had an organization that was subordinate to the Foreign Ministry, whose job it was to take care of all administrative needs of the diplomatic corps. It was partly designed to enable the various foreign embassies in Moscow to get things done because if they had to do it on their own they never would have managed it. And it was also an element of control. We couldn't rent an apartment without going through that organization. We couldn't hire a chauffeur, we couldn't do anything.

As it turned out it was a wonderful practical experience for me because I would go over there practically every day negotiating with them on one thing or another all in Russian. It gave me an insight into Soviet life that I never would have gotten if I had been in any other job.

Q: I was just thinking that if you looked at the political job which is supposed to be the glamour job, you really don't have that type of contact at all.

MALONE: I had constant contact, daily contact. I didn't realize at the time how valuable it was. It was only later that I really understood that. I knew it was valuable linguistically because I had to speak Russian all the time, but beyond that it really gave me a knowledge of Soviet society that I just wouldn't have gotten. One of the things that I discovered later in negotiating with the Soviets about various things was that they behaved exactly the same way at the higher diplomatic level as they had when I was negotiating for a chauffeur, or to get an apartment remodeled.

Q: What was the Soviet negotiating style that you found at this time?

MALONE: Very hard bargaining requiring on one's part great patience. If they were going to come around they would do so at the end of the process. Also recognizing what kind of country you represented made an enormous difference. We represented a great power and there was no question that therefore we got more out of the Soviets in the administrative field than let us say some poor African ambassador who didn't have any leverage at all. We had leverage. We didn't have as much then as the State Department developed in later years when they developed some kind of an apparatus to take care of the diplomatic corps, making it difficult for the Soviets to do some of the things they had normally done in our own free society.

I found, too, that you could also deal with them as people. If there wasn't some kind of political impediment, they could be reasonably decent and carry on as though everything was really okay. I also discovered that they were shameless liars. I think it was just a different attitude towards truth. I found that even at the level I dealt with they wouldn't hesitate to tell the most outrageous lies, which they knew I understood was a lie, but was part of the whole process. It is very hard to articulate all the ways in which it helped one understand the Soviets, but it clearly did.

Q: What was your impression of the Embassy? This was at the height of the Cold War with a little bit of thawing with the Khrushchev period...he was about to go or had gone by that time.

MALONE: Khrushchev? Yes, I was there when he left.

Q: We will cover that in a minute. But how did you find the Embassy? This was the period when our Embassy in Moscow was still considered the first team. Did you feel that?

MALONE: I felt it was very professional. The Ambassador, who was Foy Kohler when I was there was very good. Most of the people on the staff were people who knew something about Soviet affairs. All the more senior people had been there before. The percentage of Americans who spoke the language was very high. Yes, I felt it was a very competent group. There was very high morale. We all felt we were doing something important being there. I had very positive feelings about it.

Q: What was your impression of Foy Kohler?

MALONE: My impression of him was of a very practical, sensible man who was down to earth, understood the Russians pretty well, and was easy to deal with. I would say just thoroughly competent. He had a good team. Walter Stoessel was his DCM. Mac Toon was his Political Counselor. All these people were good.

Q: Did you find there were security problems the same as in Poland?

MALONE: Much more so. You lived a very controlled life. You knew that they were listening in to you. Sometimes it was very crude. One day in the apartment that we lived in, an apartment house almost exclusively lived in by foreigners, some one went up into the attic which for some reason was unlocked. There were all these tape machines going.

Another time my wife had the experience, which happened once or twice to other people, of talking on the phone and then picking it up to make another call and hearing her conversation being played back. So you knew perfectly well that they were listening to you all of the time. If you really wanted to say something to one's own family that you didn't want the Russians to hear you would go out and take a walk or write a note. We were careful at the Embassy too as to where we said what. But it was needed.

The controls were very evident every time you traveled. I couldn't go into a railroad station and buy a ticket. They would spot me as a foreigner right away and they wouldn't sell me one. You could only go through the *Intourist* organization. So all of that was controlled. Various parts of the Soviet Union, of course, were closed. I mean large parts really, but that still left a lot we could go to. But then the supposedly open areas were sometimes closed for temporary reasons. You couldn't go beyond 25 kilometers of Moscow without submitting a Note to the Foreign Ministry saying that you intended to travel to Leningrad, let's say. If they didn't respond within two days you assumed that was all right. Of course they also had control over you because your tickets were purchased through a central organization. But sometimes they would declare Leningrad, for example, temporarily closed. Particularly if a Naval Attaché wanted to go up there at a particular time and look around the dock. This sort of thing happened. Sometimes you could go some place only by air but not by train, or vice versa. There were always restrictions.

I think everyone had occasions when they knew somebody was trying to set them up...some KGB operative. We knew a number of Soviet citizens and we would have them to our apartment for meals, but you never could be sure whether they were KGB or not. There were some that you were quite sure were and some we were quite sure were not. And then there was a sort of middle element that you never knew. But even there it was all controlled.

A number of people we knew were writers, translators, etc. The only way to get them to come...you could invite them but you would also have to send them an invitation through the Writers Union. The Writers Union had in it a foreign desk which, of course, was manned by the KGB and they would tell these people whether they could go or not. So even on that level things were controlled.

Q: Did you find that dealing with the Embassy's local Soviet staff that you could get a feel for the society?

MALONE: Yes, there too.

Q: I am speaking about my experience in Yugoslavia. One could say that they are all spying on you, but on the other hand in the day to day working with them you often get something that you wouldn't get if it were an all American staff.

MALONE: That is right. Because I was in the Administrative Section my first year, I dealt with the local staff all the time. The local clerical people, the mechanics, the laborers, chauffeurs. Yes, I think I developed very good relations with most of them. There were a couple of incidents in which you became particularly aware of the pressures they were under.

I remember one chauffeur suddenly didn't come to work any more. This would happen from time to time. A couple of months later I saw him out back in the courtyard. He was driving for another diplomatic mission. I said, "I see you are driving for them." He said, "I wanted to work for you but they told me I couldn't anymore." I don't remember his exact words, but it was clear that he wasn't giving them enough information.

And there were other local employees that from time to time would tell me things like that. They had divided loyalties. They basically liked working for the Americans. They liked Americans, I think...most of them did. We liked them. But they were under control and surely would not have been able to work there if they were not willing to report on various things that were going on. It was a strange relationship.

Q: How did the coup against Khrushchev play out in the Embassy when he was kicked out?

MALONE: One of the amusing things about it was...of course nobody foresaw it at all. There was a local journalist by the name of Victor Louis who lived in Moscow. He was the alleged correspondent for a London newspaper but of Russian background and was regarded by everyone as being a KGB agent. He used to feed people information from time to time. I suppose to establish his own credentials. He came by one day and told the Administrative Officer that Khrushchev was out. Now this is a very odd person to tell this to. The Administrative Officer moments later said to me, "Khrushchev is out." I asked how he know that and he said that Victor Louis told him. He went upstairs and told Mac Toon, who was the Political Counselor. Mac said, "That is nonsense, nonsense!" But of course within a few hours we knew that Khrushchev had been removed.

It was interesting to be there when that happened because there was no visible sign at all. All the pictures came down, of course. But if you went out and mingled with the crowds, etc., nobody was talking about it. They were probably thinking about it, but visibly it was as though it had happened on the moon. Here was one of the most important people in the world suddenly gone and nobody was talking about it.

One of my colleagues went out the following day to one of the local magazine bookstores which they had all around the city and where pictures of leaders were always on sale. He asked about a picture of Nikita Sergeyeovich and the woman said, "No, and there won't be any."

Of course it was actually a very important event and over time it became evident that there would be changes because Khrushchev was gone, but that wasn't immediately evident then.

Q: Were there any "popular" manifestations of hostilities towards the United States during this time?

MALONE: Yes. This was during the Vietnam War. We had a couple of demonstrations at the American Embassy that were connected with that. Petitions would come in as well. They were all organized, of course. We were under instructions to receive the petitions in the Consular Section, so people who were bringing petitions against the United States with respect to the Vietnam War were directed there. Of course, these tended to come in batches. Once there would be lots of petitions and then months and months would go by and there would be nothing.

One of my friends who was in the Consular Section, he was head of the section, was receiving these petitions and he said to one of these bearers of these petitions one day, "You know it is interesting that they all seem to come at the same time." And the Russian said, "We are an organized people."

We had three major demonstrations against the American Embassy, which, of course, are organized by local authorities. One of them had to do with Africa and I forget what touched that off. It was African students there. The police would be obviously alerted before these things happened and would start setting up blockades and the mounted police would come in.

The first such demonstration was not as well organized by the Soviets as the later two and there was a great deal of breaking of windows for which ultimately they paid for after months of negotiations.

Another one was by the Chinese in Moscow primarily. There were, let's say, 3,000 Chinese students studying in Moscow then and they organized a demonstration against the American Embassy for which the Soviets were very well prepared. They not only had the mounted police, but this was in the winter and the streets are very broad in Moscow and the street on which the American Embassy is located is probably eight or ten lanes wide. The Soviets had put in front of the Embassy, bumper to bumper, city trucks used to haul snow away to create a barrier. The demonstrators were supposed to go down the other side of that barrier from the Embassy. But in this case the demonstration got out of hand and the people poured over the trucks and were throwing things, of course, at Embassy windows. Some with slingshots were firing ball bearings and fighting with the police, as it turned out. The Chinese and the Russians didn't like each other very much. That was quite a melee.

But there were these kinds of things and constant criticism about the Vietnam War.

On the other hand, that didn't seem to have any particular effect on the other relationships that were going on. The Soviets were always able to keep these things in compartments. It did affect me personally. For example, I would have to go in and start negotiating with the authorities about getting all these windows prepared. But the tone was just the same as it always had been.

They claimed that they had no responsibility and that we had to understand that these people were all fired up, etc. There was an ambivalence there.

Q: You were reporting on the Soviet economy. Later this became a tremendous bone of contention in the last year that we thought the Soviets had a much better economy and greater strength than it turned out was true. The economy was the real Achilles' heel in the Soviet system. At that time how did you see it and how did you report it?

MALONE: We were all misled. I think all Americans were misled about the strength of the economy. To put it another way, we didn't realize what a fragile system it was. It seemed to be highly controlled with things under control. At the time I was there, there was a lot of talk about economic reform. That is what we were particularly following. There were some fairly prominent Soviet economists who were writing articles in the economic journals about this. It was an effort to make the economy a little more decentralized and to try to introduce very modified market principles into the economy. And as this happened, there was a government commission working on it. There was some expectation that they might do something reasonably radical. Not restore private property or anything like that.

The man who was associated with this was the Prime Minister, Kosygin. It was in his name that the reforms were finally reported out. They were considerably watered down over what some of these, I supposed you could call liberal economists had been advocating, but nevertheless seemed to amount to some kind of change in the economy. But it was very soon after that that Kosygin, himself, lost authority and actually none of the reforms ever amounted to anything. But we were caught up in it because it was going on and we were reporting on it and trying to understand.

Q: You mentioned being caught up in it and I just wonder, you go to Europe which had gone through a devastating war and yet 20 odd years after the war the place is booming and then you go to Eastern Europe and immediately you are in another world where everything was hard. For the American or any other observer to say that it was just different there and not really look and say, "God if they can't deliver food and the stuff is shoddy and all this, what is going on?"

MALONE: Obviously there was an ambivalence in our own thinking about it. It is true we were aware of all of these shortages, of the very primitive nature of the economy compared to the United States. No question about that. I think where we perhaps overestimated was perhaps on the military side. We felt they were better than they were...I am not sure of that, but we may have. Although we didn't realize they were devoting even quite as large a percentage of GNP to the military as we now know they did, we knew it was huge. We knew in certain elements of the scientific field they were devoting resources and as observers on the scene we knew that they were a talented people and if they chose in this huge unwieldy economy to focus their efforts on certain key things like the military and science -- putting up a sputnik or whatever -- that they could do it.

But at the same time you couldn't help but see in comparison with any Western country that the standard of living was low; that consumer goods were very poor; that people had to wait two, three, four years on a waiting list to get a car, which wouldn't be very good when they finally did

get it; that the road system was very poorly developed; that Aeroflot, although covering a large area and maintaining a large network, was pretty primitive by Western standards...traveling by Aeroflot was not fun.

So all of these things came in to you and you tried to put it all together and I think where we all sort of came out was...Yes, in some respects this is some kind of a third country, but it is immensely strong in certain key areas and somehow they are making this command economy do the kind of job we see being done in terms of what was being produced, etc. I don't think many of us thought there was a great deal of room for improvement in this system. We were interested in the economic reforms because it was going on, but I don't think any of us thought that if this actually takes place it is going to make a radical difference, and clearly it didn't.

Of course you were also struck by the enormous difference in the Soviet Union between what was available in Moscow, which was a favored city, and what was available in smaller places. That is one of the reasons that the Embassy made a great point having people get out and travel to see how it was out in the provinces because it was very different in many cases. Now you have a situation in the Soviet Union where people from Moscow are going out to the small places to buy things because they can't get them in Moscow.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the Communist Party hierarchy was really somewhat removed from the regular people?

MALONE: Yes, as far as we knew. One of the things that the hierarchy was pretty good at was sort of hiding its privileges. Everybody knew that *they*, the people meant the rulers, lived better than the other people, etc. But they didn't flaunt it. There were special stores that were never seen by the ordinary Soviet citizen. The ordinary Soviet citizen would see the big black limousines racing down the middle of the street in Moscow, but they never got to see the dachas that these people had outside. I think although they knew that these people must live pretty well, they didn't realize how different it was.

We got a little taste of it because we as diplomats were favored to the extent that we could go to the one foreign currency store for foreigners where there were things available for hard currency that were not available to the ordinary citizen. But we could not tell to what extent the rulers were separated psychologically...did or did not understand what ordinary people were thinking. There was no way of doing that.

Q: Okay, we will close now and pick up next time on your return from Washington. Today is March 6, 1992 and this is a continuation of an interview with Gifford D. Malone. Giff we finished the period you were in Moscow from 1964-66. So let's start there. You then came back to Washington to the State Department where you worked from 1966-71. Were you on the Soviet Desk?

MALONE: I worked from 1966-69 on the Soviet Desk. Then I worked in the Operations Center for two years.

Q: Why don't we talk about the Soviet Desk. This was in the height of the Cold War. What was the Soviet Desk?

MALONE: The Soviet Desk was in the Office of Soviet Union Affairs in the Bureau of European Affairs. It was, I think, the largest office in the Bureau at that time. I can't remember how many people we had, but we were divided into three sections -- Bilateral Relations, Multilateral Relations and Economics. I worked in the Bilateral Relations section where all of the five or six officers were concerned with our relations with the Soviet Union on specific matters. We had our duties and portfolios divided up.

Q: Who was in charge in the Department of overall Soviet Affairs?

MALONE: Well, in those days, the Department didn't have as many layers as it does now, and far fewer Deputy Assistant Secretaries. In the Bureau of European Affairs you had two Deputy Assistant Secretaries, one of whom was responsible for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. That was Walter Stoessel. At the time I came into SOV, which is what the Soviet Desk was called, Mac Toon was the Country Director. He was in charge of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs. In those days you did not have a lot of people concerning themselves with Soviet policy above the Bureau. In other words, when Mac Toon wanted to talk with the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, who was Foy Kohler, about Soviet Affairs, he simply called him on the phone. As a matter of fact I would say the person in the Department of State at that time who was primarily responsible for Soviet affairs and probably played the most important role was the Country Director, Mac Toon. That wouldn't be true today and hasn't been true for a good many years.

Q: In this period of 1966-69, from your vantage point in Washington what were the most consuming elements of the American-Soviet relationship?

MALONE: Well, you recall it was a period not long after Khrushchev had been put aside by his colleagues in the Kremlin and Brezhnev had come in. It was a time when the Soviet leadership was consolidating its position. It was the period of the Vietnam War so that was a point of major discord between the Soviets and the United States. Although it was not as serious a point of discord as you might have thought by reading the Soviet press. In other words, Pravda and Izvestia were filled with denunciations of the United States every day, but normal diplomatic relations went on. I wouldn't say that US-Soviet relations were particularly damaged by that, but it was always there in the background.

What we were trying to do really was to sort of continue to try to open things up a little in the Soviet Union. For example, during the period I was in SOV we were negotiating a consular agreement with the Soviets. We didn't have a consular agreement. That took a lot of doing. Negotiations with the Soviets always take a lot of time, but setting some rules for what happens to Americans who are tossed in jail in the Soviet Union, etc. was felt to be a first step. We regarded it as something useful and important.

Interestingly enough, it is hard to believe it these days, there was a lot of opposition in the United

States to signing that treaty or any treaty with the Soviet Union. I used to go out on speaking tours quite a lot in those days and people would say, "How can you sign a treaty with the Soviets? How can you trust them?" I would say, "Well, you can't always trust them, but in this case you have an agreement where there are obligations on both sides and if one side doesn't live up to it, the other side knows it instantly and can do something about it or take retaliatory actions." So that was something that we would do.

Q: Did you as a professional who had served in the Soviet Union have any concern on your part that by our pounding the drums of anti-Sovietness and all that we may have been impeding our ability to deal with this superpower because we had painted everything so black that it was difficult to convince the elements of the American public that we could deal with these people?

MALONE: I don't think so. Some of that may be true. It is very hard obviously for people who are not professional diplomats and not thinking about foreign affairs to recognize that you can deal with an unfriendly country which really is a threat to you. It is possible at the same time to have more or less normal diplomatic relations in some other ways.

Some of the feeling on the part of the public is due to what you suggest. But by and large the Soviet record had been so terrible from the end of the Second World War on that it was simply hard for people to understand how you could also go ahead and sign these agreements with them. In that sense, although I don't think you could accuse a single person in SOV of being a dove, we probably seemed to some of these people in the American community as being soft on the Soviets.

One group that would not have agreed with that at that time were a lot of the Vietnam War protesters who...it was sort of an automatic carryover from their opposition to the war...began to think that the North Koreans and North Vietnamese are okay...hard to believe but they said that...and therefore everything we have been told about the Soviets is too. So it was really the beginning of the revisionist history in the United States starting with very young people.

Q: You were getting it really from the hardline right and from what we call the more extreme left.

MALONE: We were but not so much as later. That was just in its infancy. But we were trying to follow a reasonable course. I think anyone who has ever served in Moscow would agree that if you did not...Americans had travel restrictions and that sort of thing. And when one of our people would not be able to travel to some city that had been declared open, as frequently happened in the Soviet Union, we would automatically bar some Soviet diplomat here from going some place. And, of course, the American public found that ridiculous and hard to understand.

The Soviet Embassy played that for all it was worth. Let's say a university in an area that we had closed in retaliation for areas they had closed would invite some member of the Soviet Embassy to come and speak. He would agree to come and at the last minute call up and say that he couldn't come because the State Department wouldn't let him. That was hard to beat.

But while we were doing that we were conducting negotiations with the Soviets on other kinds of treaties. Obviously there were some kind of arms discussions going on [static].

I was involved, for example, in civil aviation. We had no civil aviation agreement with the Soviet Union. Therefore we had no direct flights between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Q: Did you find that you spent a lot of time working on the Soviet form of negotiating, which I am told is holding on very long and hard and sort of giving their concessions at the last minute whereas the American way is to sort of make concession along the way? Both come out about the same, but did you find the two styles didn't mesh and it was a problem?

MALONE: ...We in SOV understood the Soviets pretty well. Most of us there had experience in Moscow. Some of the more senior people had served there a couple of times. We understood this about the Soviets. It really wasn't for us a problem. It was a problem for some of the other people in the State Department who had not previously negotiated with the Soviets. That was one of the reasons why whenever negotiations went on with another agency there would be someone there from SOV advising the American negotiator how to deal with these people. It wasn't very difficult, they caught on very quickly.

Q: What was the basic advise you would give?

MALONE: The basic advise was that the Soviets would hang tough, would start out with an extreme position which they didn't expect to have accepted, that you have to be firm all the way through and if there are going to be many concessions made they tend to be made at such a point when the Soviets are totally convinced that they are not going to get anything unless they give.

Now, obviously, the way that takes place varies with the subject matter. To give you an example, fisheries. In those days, we held negotiations with the Soviets on Atlantic fisheries. We did not have a 200 mile fishing zone in those days as we have now. We had a 3 mile territorial limit. The Soviets would come right up to nearly that limit in their great fleet of fishing vessels and factory ships. They would take enormous quantities of fish. It was already clear that the stocks were going down. Well, of course, we would have these negotiations because the Soviets wanted concessions too. They realized by bargaining they might get something, they might be better off too. But the first step would be the United States saying this is what is happening to the fishing stocks. The Soviets would deny that any such thing was happening to the fishing stocks. So you would have to get over that hurdle first and that would take quite a while. Those negotiations always ended more or less favorably for both sides, because they were perfectly straight forward practical kinds of things that had literally nothing to do with ideology. Talking about fish is fairly basic.

Q: How about the consular agreement?

MALONE: The consular agreement was eventually signed. That was more difficult on the American side because you not only had to convince Americans and therefore members of Congress, you had to convince J. Edgar Hoover, Chief of the FBI, who testified before Congress

that what we proposed would make his job much more difficult. But those things were eventually settled and the consular agreement was signed and as far as I know since that date has been mostly adhered to.

Q: You were there on the Soviet Desk during the last years of the Johnson Administration.

MALONE: That is right.

Q: Where you there when the Nixon Administration came in or had you moved to the Secretariat?

MALONE: Let's see.

Q: He came in in 1969.

MALONE: I was there at the very beginning of the Nixon Administration, but I moved to the Secretariat in the spring of 1969. I was involved at the end of the Johnson Administration in helping to write the history of the foreign policy of the Johnson Administration. After Lyndon Johnson decided he would leave, that he would not seek another term, he decided to have the history of the Johnson Administration produced in every Department. So the State Department organized itself for that. A small group was formed in the Department in which I became, for three months or so, one of the three editors. I produced first the history of the Johnson Administration in Soviet Relations and they decided that that was a good piece of work and they would promote me. So I took time off for about three months from SOV to do that.

Q: How did you feel about an exercise like this? Were you pretty much conscious that this was almost a political exercise or did you feel that this was an honest attempt on the part of the principals who were looking at this to make an addition to history?

MALONE: Well, I felt as far as the State Department product was concern that it was an honest attempt. I was never aware of any political pressure to make things look good or anything of that sort. That may or may not have been true in other Departments, I don't know. As far as I am aware there was never any effort on the Department to change anything that anybody had written that didn't quite conform. Basically these histories were not revelations. They were, I suppose you could say, more or less official histories. This is what happened in US foreign policy during this particular period. We didn't and weren't equipped to go much below the surface and to discuss personalities and that sort of thing. It was pretty much a written record of what had happened in those four years. It was fairly straight forward.

Q: How did you feel about the rise of Brezhnev? With the departure of Khrushchev how did you feel the Soviet Union was turning internally and in dealing with the United States?

MALONE: As I think I told you in our last discussion, at the time Khrushchev was removed there wasn't any visible change. Not only was there no visible change in Moscow with regards to reactions of the ordinary citizens as far as we could tell, there weren't any visible changes at that time in US-Soviet relations. I don't think that in that period, in the latter part of the 1960s, we

were aware of serious changes in the Soviet Union going on as the result of the Brezhnev ascension.

Looking backwards and with a greater span of time to look at, you could see a kind of loosening up, and this is all relative, that had begun under Khrushchev was gradually chopped off little by little. Things for the artist in the Soviet Union, for people who wanted to speak a little more freely than was allowed... those things got worse. That was happening and we could see some of the visible signs of it, but I don't think there was much change in US-Soviet relations.

In some ways I think many of us felt that if it were not for the Vietnam War going on, to which the Soviets had to give at least lip service for their allies, the North Vietnamese, that we might have made more progress in reaching agreement on various issues. But it is now clear, if you look at the whole Brezhnev period, that there was a change, at least internally, from Khrushchev days. In the early Brezhnev period before Brezhnev had consolidated his position, there was an effort at economic reform in the Soviet Union which ultimately failed because the Soviets just couldn't take that step. That too, I think, was due mainly to Brezhnev and the people around him who were basically a very conservative lot. I don't mean to suggest that there would have been a radical economic reform by today's standards, but even in its modest form it was very quickly watered down and in the end didn't amount to anything.

WALTER B. SMITH, II
U.S.-USSR Exchanges Program Officer
Moscow (1959)

Publications Procurement/Political Officer
Moscow (1965-1967)

Intelligence Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1969-1970)

Walter B. Smith, II was born in Providence, Rhode Island on December 10, 1929. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1951-1953. Mr. Smith's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Germany, Israel, Poland, and the Soviet Union. He was interviewed in 1988 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

SMITH: ...My first assignment, because I had studied the Russian language, was to what was, in effect, the U.S.-Soviet Exchanges Staff, handling scientific, cultural, and academic exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union. The exchange program was only a year or two old at that time. Details of these exchanges were negotiated by the Director of the Staff with a Minister in the Soviet Embassy in Washington on a weekly basis. I was the note-taker for these meetings. I had been in the Foreign Service for a grand total of three months when I started doing this. It was very heady stuff. Also, there was a Special Assistant to the Secretary, Ambassador "Wild Bill" Lacy, who was in charge of so-called "East-West Contacts." He would

meet with “Smiling Mike” Menshikov, then Soviet Ambassador to the United States, from time to time. And Ambassador Lacy used me as his note-taker. So this was very exciting, indeed. Scarcely a year after I entered the Foreign Service, USIA [United States Information Agency] and the Department of Commerce were setting up what was to be the American National Exhibition in Moscow. They suddenly realized that they could not handle it all. They sent an SOS to the Department of State, and three young, bushy-tailed Foreign Service officers, having some knowledge of Russian, myself included, were sent to Moscow in the summer of 1959.

That was heady stuff, too. I had never been there before.

Q: Before we get to that, how did we view the exchange program? Wasn't it a major concern of ours that we'd be sending real exchange people, and they'd be sending over KGB agents?

SMITH: That is exactly what it was. There was enormous, well-intended, but naive interest in the United States in the exchange program. The main role of our little staff, among other things, was to obtain some kind of reciprocity in return for giving the Soviets a free intelligence and propaganda ride inside the United States. We tried to make sure that Americans could be exposed, to some extent, to the public inside the Soviet Union. Another and not so unimportant role was to play “Dutch Boy with Finger in the Dyke” with their favorite points of attack, trying to keep Americans -- radio stations in Minnesota, if you will -- from falling prey to alleged “people to people” ploys, which were part of the Soviet system. The Soviets were forever trying to “end run” the U.S. federal government and set up so-called exchange arrangements directly with well-intended but rather ill-informed American groups. With absolutely no authority we did head off at the pass a lot of these initiatives. That is what the exchange operation was from the Washington end.

Q: Was the concern that these so-called unofficial or “end run” types of exchange...

SMITH: We would have no reciprocity. If they were not negotiated directly between the two governments, the Soviets could get more or less what they wanted in the United States and they would not give us any chance to try and convey the American point of view to the Soviet people. The only way we got to travel inside the Soviet Union and to have some contact with public groups, other than through strictly and tightly controlled channels, was by negotiating very hard, when the Soviets wanted to do something in the United States.

Q: Then you went to Russia, the Soviet Union...

SMITH: Just for three months, in the summer of 1959. But it was quite an eye opener. My initial, two-year tour with the exchanges staff was running out. I had, of course, hoped that I would be assigned, if not to Moscow, then to some other, so-called “Iron Curtain” post. However, that was not the way it worked. In those days newly appointed officers not only received consular assignments at the beginning of their Foreign Service careers but usually were assigned to some very large consular operation. I was no exception. I was sent to Frankfurt-am-Main as a citizenship officer during my first year. There were three vice consuls whose sole function in life at that time was to register the births of American citizen children.

Q: You were in Moscow from when to when?

SMITH: 1965 to 1967.

Q: What were you doing there?

SMITH: For the first six months I was in charge of publications procurement, for which I had, during home leave in the summer of 1965, a rather interesting orientation, primarily run by CIA. CIA had an enormous interest in this program. It was legitimate espionage -- that is what it was. In the course of those six months I traveled 15,000 km inside the Soviet Union, because the bookstores in Moscow -- especially in Moscow, but also in Leningrad -- would run out of key books which we needed to buy in bulk. We would buy as many as 30 or 40 copies of newly published books. You did not just order the books. You physically took possession of them. We had a system for this, which had been worked out with some imagination. We carried cartons with us. What is that wonderful tape that is totally unbreakable? To the absolute amazement of Soviet bookstore personnel, we would buy the books on the spot and load them into our cartons and push them on one of those rollers. We would hire a taxi for the whole day, and by the end of the day the taxi would be bulging at the seams with cartons and cartons of books.

We went to the provinces to get books which were totally unavailable in Moscow, almost immediately after publication. The more obscure the city, the better the chances that we would be able to buy these books. We were not just buying for the American intelligence community. We were also buying for the Library of Congress, public libraries, and some universities with Russian and Soviet affairs programs. So it was not just to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the intelligence "gurus" that we were engaged in this activity. It was exhausting.

In Moscow we did not have our German "nanny," who refused to come with us. We had a very good Danish nanny, and my wife went with me on every one of those trips. She had enormous powers of observation. While I was beating my brains out going into bookstores, she was learning about the history and the cultural life of the given city we visited -- in all of the republics of the Soviet Union. We never got to Siberia. That is the one part of the Soviet Union which we did not visit. On one occasion we were flying from Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, back to Moscow. Because our flight had been overbooked, we were routed over the Aral Sea, the one that is almost completely dried up as a result of Soviet ecological malfeasance. It was broad daylight. First of all, no Westerner was supposed to fly over that sea. Secondly, if a Westerner had to go anywhere near the area, it was supposed to be only on a night flight. But it was daylight. My wife looked down and saw the Soviet nuclear testing site, located right next to that inland sea. I also looked and realized what it was, and I said, "Please try to remember what you are seeing." She had an almost photographic memory. On arrival in Moscow, many hours later, we went directly to the Chancery. She sat down and drew a map of what she had seen, which was a "mini coup" for the intelligence people.

So any Foreign Service officer who had a chance to travel in the Soviet Union -- and the heaviest traveler of all was the publications procurement officer -- had a number of "coincidental"

requests from the intelligence people. We cooperated with that sort of activity because the opportunities were so precious and rare to collect...

Q: Why did the Soviets let you get away with this?

SMITH: Letting us buy books was the price that they paid to be able to travel around the United States, buying books in the United States. They were already overwhelmed with information about the United States, but somehow they thought that they needed more. Therefore, I gather that they thought that their book buying operation was as important to them as ours was to us. In terms of the availability of the information, our operation was infinitely more important for our purposes than theirs could possibly have been to them. Theirs was also economic and technological espionage, not just political and military. They did not have much that we did not know how to do better, but it was important to them, and, therefore, they allowed us to do this.

At the end of six months I was assigned to the Political Section to follow Soviet relations with Western Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East -- all three combined. Subsequently, the Embassy peeled these off and had separate individuals doing it. There was one person handling African relations because the Bureau of African Affairs in the Department of State at the time had a lot of money and was quite new, because independent Africa was new. The Bureau of African Affairs funded its own "slot," so to speak, in the Political Section [in the Embassy in Moscow]. There was one person handling East Asia, who was usually a "China hand." There was one person handling Soviet relations with Eastern Europe. I think that he belonged to "another agency" [i. e., CIA], which stands to reason. Then everything else was piled together on my platter, which made my job very, very interesting, because I maintained contact with Latin American, West European, and Middle Eastern diplomats in Moscow. At the time the Middle Eastern crisis was heating up. This was the summer and fall of 1966. The 1967 War was coming...

Q: Yes, in June, 1967...

SMITH: The Soviets were meddling and behaving very irresponsibly and, because we duly reported this and Washington already sensed this, a great deal of misguided U.S. suspicion built up, in my judgment, about the unreliability of the Soviets in any respect, as far as the Arab-Israeli conflict was concerned. That June war in 1967 "scared the pants" off the Soviets. People do not realize how close that war came to turning into World War III. It was a very, very tense time.

That war is a very interesting thing, in my opinion, in terms of the evolution of U.S.-Soviet relations, because our "little friend," Israel, clobbered what looked to be the large and powerful armed forces of neighboring Arab states, which, with the exception of Jordan, were totally armed by the Soviet Union. So U.S. made arms smashed Soviet made arms, with a tremendous difference in odds, in terms of sheer numbers. But, in fact, the Soviets played it well. We were declared *persona non grata* in every single Arab capital except Saudi Arabia and a couple of other countries. We had a tough time regaining the confidence of the Arabs because they chose to blame us for the Israeli success.

Q: There was also the widely believed view [in the Arab countries] that American planes had attacked the Egyptian Air Force.

SMITH: That is right. Even Jordan made accusations of that kind. It made it much easier for the Arabs to live with their humiliating defeat, if they could attribute it to a super power, and not to their little, hated neighbor. So we had a tough row to hoe after that. And between the two Middle Eastern wars, I got so interested in following Soviet activities in the Middle East that, within a year, I had shifted out of Soviet affairs and into the Middle East.

Q: Tell me, can you give me any examples of how the Soviets reacted to the Middle Eastern crisis when you were there -- in terms of what you were seeing?

SMITH: Subsequently, when I was assigned to INR, I read all of the EXDIS [Exclusive Distribution] and a good deal of the NODIS [No Distribution Outside a limited list] telegraphic correspondence, covering our contacts, both planned and by chance, with Soviet officials worldwide, but particularly in Washington and Moscow. My reading of the situation was that the Soviets were so scared that they really meant it when they said, "Let us collaborate to try to contain this situation." It is my opinion that all through the summer and fall of 1967, when the UN Security Council was having a terrible time hammering out a resolution on the Arab-Israeli problem to achieve some degree of stability there, the Soviets, while certainly not doing our work for us, and, in fact, occasionally disrupting what we were trying to do, were nevertheless behaving relatively responsibly. The issue of what the negotiating history was of Resolution 242, which, as you know, was adopted in November, 1967, became critical in the U.S.-Israeli dialogue.

Many years later -- in fact, in 1977 and 1978 -- Secretary of State Cyrus Vance asked me to do a paper on the negotiating history of Resolution 242. Fortunately, the NODIS telegrams could still be found. I reviewed once again the exchanges between ourselves and the British and French, but especially between ourselves and the Russians, as to the meaning of that resolution -- and also our exchanges with the Israelis on the same subject. There was no question but that the resolution meant virtually total Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories [West Bank of the Jordan, Gaza, and the Golan Heights]. It certainly meant withdrawal on all fronts. Obviously, Secretary Vance was bolstered by this, because he "hung in there," as capped by Camp David, and that is what we were cranking up for at the time.

Pardon the historical digression, but you asked me how the Soviets were behaving. I think that the war of June 1967 was a watershed in terms of relatively responsible Soviet behavior in the Middle East.

Q: Were you getting demonstrations in front of the Embassy in Moscow and things like that?

SMITH: Oh, yes, they could crank up one of those on a moment's notice, and they did. I remember vividly that one of the staged demonstrations we had was related to Vietnam. Yes, the Soviets would put on wonderful, real scary shows in front of the American Embassy with, maybe, 50,000 or more people, over Vietnam at that time. There were plenty of other things beside the Middle East to "churn the waters" between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Q: You were saying that the KGB sort of assigned people to be your “friends,” or something like that. How did this work and was this of any advantage to us?

SMITH: I think so because, as I said before, with great misgivings the security officers at the Embassy in Moscow lived with the fact that we were exchanging evenings in each other’s homes. Two couples who ostensibly did not know each other -- they probably knew of each other; we never mentioned one to the other -- were our interlocutors or social points of contact. One couple was much more impressive, brighter, and more attractive than the other -- but never mind. My wife and I had gotten to know the “more attractive” couple quite well during the summer of 1959, when there were so many Westerners in Moscow that the KGB just totally lost its ability to monitor the situation. At that time these people were students and came frequently, for the sake of English practice, to the U.S. exhibition in Moscow. The woman did not speak any English, but the man did. We went to their apartment...

Q: This was when you were at the Exhibition?

SMITH: That is right. We went to their apartment once. Also, when his parents were away he took us to his parents’ apartment which, by Soviet standards, was quite elegant. The KGB somehow had gotten wind of this and put the “squeeze” on this guy. Well, guess what, we looked him up when we came back in 1965, figuring that he would make it very clear whether this were dangerous or awkward for him. He had already been allowed to go to France several times because his hobby was automobile racing. I have forgotten the race in southern France, but...

Q: Le Mans or something like that.

SMITH: Yes, he was one of several, but very few Soviet participants in that race. So the KGB and he had made their peace long ago. In any case, he was a bright fellow. Of course, he tried very hard to say nothing to me or even share opinions with me that would be useful from my point of view. But being bright and loquacious, he could not help it. I think that Uncle Sam got a lot more out of these visits back and forth than the KGB did. I would simply report the man’s views and opinions -- that was all. There were so few such contacts. It is hard for anybody living today to imagine what a thorough job the KGB did in cutting off normal, informal, human contacts between our representatives in Moscow and the Soviet public. So each and every fragment of semi-relaxed, human contact was potentially quite valuable in terms of insights -- that is all.

Q: Who was the Ambassador then?

SMITH: We had two. The first one was Foy Kohler. The second was Llewellyn K. “Tommy” Thompson.

Q: Could you talk a little about your impression of those two men?

SMITH: Foy Kohler was a scrappy, vigorous little man -- a very small guy. He was quite popular at the Embassy in Moscow. Thompson was sent back to Moscow after Kohler left the post. He

had been the Ambassador before Kohler. Thompson was a very shy, reserved man. He had spent more time working on Soviet affairs than Foy Kohler had. I do not think he wanted to be there at all. We got to know his wife, who is a delightful person, fairly well. I do not know what else I can tell you about their tours there. I was sufficiently junior that I did not see all that much of them, though I saw them on a personal basis, particularly the Thompsons, again because they were old friends of my in-laws [Mr. and Mrs. Ted Achilles].

That relationship made me very nervous, I should mention, during the first eight years of my Foreign Service career because I did not want anyone among my peers ever to think that anything I achieved in the Foreign Service could possibly have been in part because of this family connection. And I do not think that it was. But it did give me a leg up on others as a learning experience in the sense that in my 20's and 30's I was meeting with very senior people on an informal, relaxed basis. Sometimes it would just be Thompson and his wife, and my wife and myself, for supper at Spaso House. This gave me a sense of the thinking and style of senior people in the Foreign Service, which could only be beneficial.

Q: How would you characterize morale of the Embassy in Moscow at that time? The morale of our Embassy in Moscow seems to wax and wane.

SMITH: I do not think that the morale of our Embassy in Moscow was ever a serious problem, though I could be wrong, until the late 1970's and the early 1980's. I attribute that deterioration of morale in Moscow to a slippage in the interest of the Foreign Service in Soviet affairs. I do not know what that was all about, either, because the Soviets continued to be our main contestant for world influence. When I came into the Service -- I do not know whether you share this opinion -- I found that there were very good people who fought like panthers to get involved in Soviet affairs. I considered myself extremely lucky to be in Moscow.

Q: This was the elite there of one type. There were several such groups, but I would...

SMITH: It was one of the choice activities for people in the political field at the time. It was one of the more interesting areas to be in, and the culmination of work in Soviet affairs was to get yourself assigned to Moscow. So I do not think that there was a person there who was not glad to be there. Administrative people were glad to be there. Some of them were trained in the Russian language and some not, at that time. I think that morale in Moscow was high because it was such a plum to get to go there. Life was difficult at the Embassy, but everyone was well forewarned about that, and so no one could be surprised about the U.S. self-imposed rules, not to mention the success of the KGB in interfering with any kind of normal relationships. I think that the morale problem came later and I think it came up because people were not falling all over themselves to get assigned to Moscow. Some people went there rather reluctantly. Then the tough conditions -- there was no psychic reward for the tough conditions for those people.

Q: So you left there in...

SMITH: 1967. Before we leave Moscow, could I return to one thing that I remember that is of no great consequence, but you asked me what my personal reading was of Soviet behavior in the Middle East? I said that the Soviets really changed before and after that war the Arab-Israeli War

of 1967. Probably for many other reasons they wanted to collaborate with the United States in at least one important region of the world. It was impossible to do this in East Asia because of Vietnam, and so the Middle East was a candidate as an experiment on the part of the Soviet Union in trying to establish themselves as a legitimate interlocutor with the United States. The Soviets had great ambitions -- really from World War II on -- to play a respectable role in the world, if we would let them. So Middle East diplomacy after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War became their chosen area to try to "cozy up" to us and to gain prestige. In any case there were reasons why the Soviets were behaving reasonably responsibly, in my judgment.

I became sufficiently concerned about the prevalent view in our government, based on pre-1967 War Soviet activities in the Middle East, that the Soviets were continuing to be totally ruthless and untrustworthy, that I stayed up nights, writing a paper based on unclassified materials, namely, Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS] transcriptions, of Middle Eastern broadcasts in the two months leading up to the 1967 War. I tried to show that a good deal of what was assumed to be Soviet mischief was, in fact, an effort on the part of the Arabs, including our friends, not only the radical Arabs, but including the Saudis, the Jordanians, and other conservative Arab regimes, to get the super powers involved in that problem. The Soviets, obviously, did not have anything to do with it, in the case of the Saudis and Jordanians. The Soviets did not even have an embassy in Saudi Arabia, as you know, until very recently. I wrote this paper to show that we were going overboard in our inclination to blame all kinds of problems in the Middle East on Soviet mischief. The outgoing chief of the Political Section in the Embassy in Moscow -- Gene Boster -- suppressed it. He was a man whom I liked very much, but he was afraid of his shadow and he was not going to "buck" Washington, even though he may very well have been persuaded that this view was right.

In came David Klein, about a week before I left the post Moscow. Now that I think of it, it was not Gene Boster -- I am being unfair. It was Alex Akalovsky, who was acting chief of the Political Section...

Q: And a very famous translator...

SMITH: That is right. He was an astute observer. Obviously, despite his language skills -- he wrote English well -- he was one of the most nervous bureaucrats. I liked Alex. He was my immediate boss throughout my tour in the Political Section. Then he became acting chief of the Political Section when Boster left. It took a month to write this report after the June 1967 War. Akalovsky would not allow the report to move forward.

David Klein arrived about four days before I left Moscow. I became a very good, amazingly good friend of Klein's. He was a controversial figure and a strong-willed individual who made his reputation, I think, in his next tour as, in effect, chief of the Political Section in West Berlin [USBER]. There was nothing in East Berlin then. I think that Klein finally sent the report to Washington. Anyhow, I thought that that was worth mentioning on two accounts: one, suppression of reporting, which does not happen any more, at least in theory; and, secondly, it reinforces my point that the June 1967 War really was a watershed in Soviet behavior in the Middle East.

Q: Well, then, what happened to you after you left Moscow?

SMITH: I was assigned to INR for two years to the Soviet part of INR under Helmut Sonnenfeldt, who was running it then. He was an interesting character. I was given the Middle Eastern portfolio in the Soviet part of INR.

As you may recall, the Soviets kept trying to engage us throughout 1968 in major power talks about the Arab-Israeli problem. This is what the Arabs wanted them to do, to spare them having to negotiate with Israel. They wanted the Soviets to work out a deal with the Americans and to bring in the British and French if necessary. We resisted this, but the Soviets kept inching closer to the Israeli position in these highly confidential discussions. I was called in on New Year's Eve 1968 by Sonnenfeldt and sent to Roy Atherton, then Director of Arab-Israeli Affairs in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs -- NEA. Atherton was already Joe Sisco's right hand man. Joe Sisco was shifting from the position of Assistant Secretary of State for UN Affairs to the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. The Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. had come in once again on or about December 29, 1968, with still another position paper on the Arab-Israeli problem and had delivered it to the Under Secretary of State. I was sent by Sonnenfeldt to be of assistance to Atherton in analyzing what the Soviets were up to.

That fired my interest. Atherton was able to gain access to the NODIS telegram file. Over the next three months I went furiously through every recorded conversation between senior U.S. and Soviet officials and also second hand reports from our people of Soviet discussions with Western officials. Generally, my objective was to tabulate the evolving Soviet position on the substance of the Arab-Israeli points of contention. I distinctly sensed a progression between 1967 and the beginning of 1969. I wrote this paper, listing all the Arab-Israeli points of contention and showing an evolution of Soviet classified posturing in our direction. I also did a tabulation of published Soviet positions on these issues to show how much daylight there was between their diplomatic stance and their public, propaganda stance.

Sisco suddenly was called in because the Soviet Ambassador -- Dobrynin -- came [to the Department of State]. Out of this flowed what were called the Sisco-Dobrynin talks on the Middle East. These began in March 1969. Sisco was given the "green light" from Secretary of State William Rogers to start, on a tentative basis, secret talks with Dobrynin on the Middle East. The Israelis did not know about them, and SOV [Office of Soviet Affairs in the Department of State] did not even know about them, at first. Sisco wanted an assessment, at the outset of these talks, of the Soviet position. And guess what? Intuitively, I had done just what he needed. Sisco yanked me out of INR, and I worked for Sisco intensively for the following eight months, together with Roy Atherton, as one of the three participants in the Sisco-Dobrynin talks on the Middle East. For a relatively junior officer -- I was, I guess, 39 years old -- this was a heady experience. We went to Moscow and met with Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister, for two weeks because the Soviets, for reasons of "*amour propre*" [self esteem] had to be able to say that the talks were also taking place in Moscow and not only in Washington. We stayed in Spaso House. Jacob Beam was our Ambassador to the Soviet Union -- this was in the summer of 1969, my last visit to Moscow, I am sorry to say. But staying in Spaso House was fun, too, per se. That was one of the most important moments in my Foreign Service career.

Q: Before we get to what you were seeing going on, may we go quickly back to INR? Sonnenfeldt was your immediate superior. He's a figure that keeps cropping up in foreign policy matters.

SMITH: He is a senior personage today.

Q: How did you read him at the time? How did he operate at that time?

SMITH: Sonnenfeldt was a very smooth operator. He is an astute, political animal. I do not think that he believed for an instant in my view that the Soviets were behaving relatively responsibly and that it behooved the United States to hear them out and see what kind of relationship we could work out with them. I think that he was instinctively very suspicious of the Soviets then and, until not too many years ago, continued to be rather a "hard liner." He saw that I had a commodity which was in demand, as far as the Secretary of State was concerned, and he pushed me to a fare-thee-well. That is how I got into the Sisco-Atherton operation. Sonnenfeldt pushed me in their direction. I think he must have felt that, from a political point of view, it was going to be very helpful to him. Actually, the minute I "belonged" to Sisco, I did not "belong" to Sonnenfeldt any more, although on paper I did for about six months. Then Sisco eventually had me assigned to NEA.

Q: From your point of view, what did you see in those secret Soviet-American talks on the Middle East? What were the major points and how did they develop?

SMITH: In light of the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict since then, the points at issue seem ludicrous, but, based on the history of the question up to that time, they were not so funny. The Soviets were twisting the arm of the Egyptians, in particular. The Soviets cleared their position with the Egyptians each step of the way. We gave the Israelis only a general idea of what we were up to. We did not clear our position with the Israelis. I guess we thought that that would create too big a row. We were going to have a showdown with the Israelis when and if we ever got to the point of what we considered a balanced or tentative arrangement with the Soviets. We knew, from intelligence that I cannot go into -- incontrovertible intelligence -- that the Soviets were twisting the Egyptians' arm. Since I still had an INR "portfolio," I was able to have access to certain rarified intelligence. It was just fascinating to me to see what the Soviets were doing. They were moving very slowly, playing "hard ball" with the Egyptians -- but they were moving. And so were we.

Then the "deep penetration raids" began after the first U.S. "Phantom" jets [F-4 fighters] arrived in Israel, in September 1969. To our dismay the Israelis began using these planes to do "dare-devil" things across the Suez Canal. By October 1969 they were bombing targets around Cairo, if you remember.

Q: The "war of attrition..."

SMITH: Yes, indeed, and the windows were rattling in the American School in Cairo. We complained to the Israelis, and they said, "Move your school." They were not about to stop bombing Cairo for our convenience. I guess, in retrospect, that I can understand that, but it sounded a little arrogant at the time.

After that the Soviets introduced Soviet pilots because the Egyptians were being humiliated. Gradually, Soviet planes began pushing the Israeli air campaign back. The United States was so upset by this, in late 1969, that we broke off the U.S.-Soviet talks. We knew that this was something that meant more to them than it did to us, at least potentially. So, I suppose, we figured that this was a way of showing them how angry we were at what they were doing in Egypt. You can hardly blame them for what they were doing in Egypt. If you reverse the situation -- if the Soviets had been the “sponsor” of Israel and we had been the “sponsor” of Egypt -- you know perfectly well that there would have been U.S. pilots in there. So it was really the pot calling the kettle black, I thought. It was foolish of us to break off the talks. The Soviets resisted doing anything to help the Egyptians until Nasser blew the whistle on them. Nasser died in September, 1970!

There was an interplay between the situation on the ground in the area, which the Israelis really provoked, and our ability to continue any kind of dialogue with the Soviets. So, of course, anything the Soviets had to say, starting in 1970, was suspect, and instead of making any further effort with the Soviets, we launched what became known as the “Jarring Initiative,” which the Israelis made sure would fail, and which did by March or April 1970. At that point Joe Sisco, who had an extraordinarily fertile imagination, dreamt up the so-called “Proximity Talks.” He tried to get an Israeli and Egyptian to sit on different floors in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. He was going to run back and forth [between them]. The effort to organize the “Proximity Talks” continued through 1970 and 1971 and gradually sputtered out after the change of administrations in 1972, with Henry Kissinger’s arrival on the scene as Secretary of State.

HANS N. TUCH
Cultural and Press Attaché, USIS
Moscow (1958-1961)

Deputy Director for USSR and Eastern Europe, USIS
Washington, DC (1961-1965)

Hans N. Tuch was born in Germany in 1924. He received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Kansas City and a master’s degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1945. Mr. Tuch’s career in the Foreign Service included positions in the Soviet Union, Germany, and Brazil. The following excerpts are from Mr. Tuch’s interviews with Benis Frank, Cliff Groce, and G. Lewis Schmidt conducted in 1988.

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

TUCH: Right. Then the Soviets, frankly, just wouldn’t give me a visa because I was a USIA officer, so the resolution of that particular problem was that I resigned from USIA, I applied and

was appointed by the Department of State, and I was made a State Department officer, and I got my visa to the Soviet Union. I arrived there in July.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That evening, there was a press reception that the Union of Journalists were sponsoring for May 1st, and because of our improving relationship up to that time, I had been invited to that

reception for the first time ever. Of course, I got to the reception, I was surrounded by very, very angry Soviet journalists, and all kinds of, "How can you do this? You are ruining the relationship and spying," etc., etc.

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

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

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

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

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

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

TUCH: I don't know.

Q: You didn't know about it?

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

Q: Good gracious! CIA?

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

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

TUCH: No.

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

TUCH: No. Sandy.

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

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

Q: Was Leo Du Lac there at the time?

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

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

TUCH: I count the agricultural attaché as part of the 14 substantive officers. But we had, for instance, an ambassador, we had a deputy chief of mission, minister of the embassy. We had no counselors. We had one first secretary, politico-economic, sort of almost like the British system, a chancery head. He was a chancery head. And the rest of us were second secretaries. We were all working stiffs -- the political section, the economic section, agricultural section, and the publications procurement officer, one officer who bought books for the whole U.S. Government, who just did nothing but go around Moscow buying books at bookstores. I helped him, because he helped me. His name was Harry Barnes, who's now ambassador to Chile. He and I did share the cultural and press relations work. It was too much to do for one person, so he helped me, and I helped him buy books. But at any rate, it was a very tight, very small, very collegial type of embassy in those days. Everybody knew everybody, and everybody worked for the ambassador and the deputy chief of mission, who was sort of the executive officer, by the name of "Dick" Richard Davis. Not Davies, but Davis.

It was, from my point of view, an ideal situation working for an ambassador who recognized -- and here we come back to the public diplomacy angle -- who recognized that in a situation in which we functioned, the cultural and press relations work was the most substantive activity that an embassy could do. Obviously, we read the papers and reported on political areas, economic

developments, agriculture developments, but he saw that the only people who really got out to talk to people were the people who did public affairs work. There was, at that time, only one -- myself.

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

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

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

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

professionally, probably one of the most interesting assignments one could have, the roughness or the really bad part of the assignment was more on the wife and the children than it was on the officer, because the officer had the interesting political developments to contend with, whereas the wife only had the hardships to contend with.

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

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

Q: There was no compound as there is today?

TUCH: Well, before I got there, everybody who was assigned to the embassy had lived in the embassy building, which was located on the Tchaikovsky Ring, and was a 12-story building where our offices and apartments were located. But before I came to the embassy, about two years before I came to the embassy, there was some expansion, and people were assigned apartments by the Soviet Government in other areas. Where we were assigned to was a huge compound with about 800 apartments, which had been built as a diplomatic compound for diplomatic families of all nations, East and West. At that time, for instance, a large wing was occupied by the Chinese, still, because the relationship was still fairly decent at that time. We lived in an apartment in there, which, by Soviet standards, was, I guess, fairly good. We had three bedrooms, and it was spacious, but by American standards -- well, the anecdote that I'd like to relate, we arrived on an evening, we were taken up to our apartment, and we walked in. The first thing I looked for was the front door, because I thought I'd been taken up through the back door, you know, where there was a freight elevator and so forth. [Laughter] Of course, we had been taken through the front door, which looked like that kind of an apartment. It was fairly primitive by American standards, but it had been supplied by us, by the embassy, with an American refrigerator, American stove. We had brought washing machine and dryer with us, which were put out into the hallway, because there was no other place to put it.

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

Q: He was FSO?

TUCH: No, he wasn't FSO. He rose very high and very rapidly in the Foreign Service and at one time became the Under Secretary of State for Administrative Affairs. You do know him -- Idar Rimestad. So he kind of focused the animosity that was not directly to the Soviets on himself, deservedly so. But at any rate, we lived in this apartment.

Q: We have heroes and villains in these interviews.

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

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

Q: What period of year was this?

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

Q: Still cold.

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

At any rate, that's when these 30 or 40 embassy families, who were the core of our -- you know, we were all very close and friends, we revolted. We asked for a meeting with the ambassador, and we said, "We're going to send our families out because the hygienic conditions are such that

unless we have refrigerators and unless we have our own stoves, we just can't afford to leave our families here, and we're going to send our families to Vienna or Berlin or to Germany to live, because we just could not do this."

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

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

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

One of the things we were authorized to do before we came to the Soviet Union, we were allowed to bring with us 4,000 pounds of food or household products. In those days, it was really a very interesting phenomenon, because all of us, obviously, we went and purchased 4,000

pounds of whatever we thought was most important for us to keep around. We, for instance, brought 250 pounds of coffee with us, because we figured that would last us for two years. We were very adamant we wanted our coffee. My wife was very adamant that she was going to bring soap products and cleaning products with us, so in her case, the 4,000 pounds, a large amount was coffee and cleaning products. The hell with the rest of it. But the fact is that when you compared notes among your embassy colleagues, everybody brought 4,000 pounds of something. In those days, whatever you brought 4,000 pounds worth cost 1,000 bucks. This was sort of standard that it was roughly \$1,000 to \$1,200 that you spent on those 4,000 pounds of food or household products. Anyway, we brought these 4,000 pounds of products, but you had absolutely no place to put them, because you had no storage space. So what you did is you built shelves in your hallway and in your bedrooms, and you had your products on those shelves, wooden shelves. As you walked into the apartment, you had these shelves on which all your products were located. Then, of course, you didn't have a balcony or any place, unless your dryer was working, which it very often wasn't, so you had to hang all your laundry in your apartment also. So you know, your apartment was both a place to live, but also for your utilities, your laundry to hang on.

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

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

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

Q: Is this because of your administrative officer?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q: Did he ever serve in Germany?

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

Q: Was he before Glenn Wolf came?

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

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

TUCH: Oh, yes.

Q: In every institution.

TUCH: Sure, sure.

Q: What about children, schooling and medical?

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

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

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

TUCH: Yes.

Q: Or were they volunteer?

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

Q: We will continue on with answering the question that was asked you about the mothers who

were the teachers' aides.

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

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

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

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

TUCH: Yes. Right. And there were some who had a reputation. I won't name them, but everybody knows them now. I mean, most of them are dead by now, but they existed, and you knew them and you knew before you got to the post that this was going to be one of your problems. But on the other hand, you also had the situation that when you joined the Foreign Service, I think you made the commitment as a husband and wife, and it was more or less, as I said, a different era of our social history, that your wife was expected to participate and not be paid for it, but to participate in her husband's career as an adjunct. Let's face it. Now, I don't think this is necessarily good, but this was the situation, and it has changed completely since that

time. The wives were rated. But, for instance, in Moscow, where the situation was tough for the wives, for the families, they participated and they were, on the other hand, given the credit, and they were appreciated by, in this case, Ambassador Thompson and Jane Thompson, who said, "We could not function here as an embassy without the wives participating fully." It was recognized and appreciated. Not much was said about it or done about it, but I am sure that in every efficiency report written in Moscow by the ambassador or by the DCM, the wives were given full credit for their participation. They knew they were being rated, and they were given full credit for it. It was a team effort. They were being harassed by the Soviets as the officers were, too.

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

At any rate, what I did want to mention, in getting back to the substantive part, I mentioned the roller coaster affair, which made it interesting for me, about our relationship. The other thing was that in 1958, in January, before I got to Moscow, we had signed our first cultural and scientific exchange agreement with the Soviet Union, and that opened up the whole area of what I would call cultural and informational relationship with the Soviet Union, whereby we published the magazine *Amerika* which was distributed in the Soviet Union. That is an entire chapter. We had our first performing arts groups coming with the New York Philharmonic and "My Fair Lady" and Michigan University Concert Band, and we had our first exchanges of cultural personalities, composers, painters, and writers. I can name them, who they were, who participated. We had, first of all, our first major exhibition, the American National Exhibition in Moscow, and the Soviet National Exhibition in New York, which took place in '59.

You really completely occupied yourself, so much so that everybody in Washington and in Moscow -- the ambassador and Mr. Allen and the State Department -- agreed that one cultural affairs and press officer could not do the job. I was supposed to get an assistant. Everybody signed off on this, and it was always very complicated because housing was so tight, and if a new officer was to be added to the embassy, it was a very major bureaucratic process through which you went before this position was approved. Well, it was approved. I was to get an assistant. At

the last moment, the decision was made in Washington that what we really needed in Moscow at this stage was a high-ranking cultural counselor to administer this huge new cultural affairs program. Of course, I was too low grade for that position, so a cultural counselor at a very high grade was assigned, and I became the assistant. So the moral of the story is, "Never ask for an assistant, because you may be it." I became the assistant to the cultural counselor for the next two years of my assignment.

Q: Who was this?

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

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

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

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

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

I said, "They did what?"

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

I said, "What is cupping?"

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

Q: Like leeches.

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

Q: Modern Soviet medical.

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

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

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

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

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

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

They said, "Would you do this?"

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

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

regular, whether it's Soviet building technology or whether it's Soviet medicine or whether it's the how the infantry operates in the Soviet Union, it's at a very, very primitive level.

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

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

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

TUCH: Yes. Never milk. We lived on powdered milk. The children -- powdered milk was it. Eggs, we did try to find on the Soviet economy, and they were expensive, but you know, whatever you could. Again, if you had a shipment coming in from Berlin, a food shipment, if you did go to the Berlin U.S. Army commissary and somebody went out and bought for the embassy and made arrangements, say, 6,000 pounds of food to bring it in, sure, maybe we would take 100 cartons of eggs on that particular shipment, but that was iffy, because eggs don't travel very well. Sometimes, you know, you'd buy frozen food, and you'd have to escort it as a courier from Berlin to Warsaw to Brest -- it was Brest Litovsk -- where the Soviet border, where the passenger train, they changed the wheels because the gauge is different. But on the baggage cars where the food was on, they actually had to transfer from one baggage car to the next. I had the singular experience of being an escort for a food shipment from Berlin, 6,000 pounds of food that I had brought from Berlin to Warsaw to Brest. The train was three hours late, and they changed the wheels on the passenger cars, but they refused to transfer the shipment from one baggage car to the other, and I was on the platform arguing with them that I wasn't going to leave without the food. He says, "Well, if you don't want to leave without the food, you're going to stay right here in Brest, because here goes your train."

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

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

department store.

Q: You went by train?

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

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

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

Q: They did not bake it there?

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

Q: Yes, please.

TUCH: My favorite Soviet joke about the rumor that got around at this particular Leningrad food store that caviar was going to be sold there one day. So of course, during the night before, the line formed, and it was two blocks long by the time the manager arrived to open the store in the morning. He looked at the line, and he got up and said, "Citizens, this line is much too long. We're never going to have enough caviar to accommodate all of you people here, so I might as well make an arbitrary decision. I'm going to decide right now that all the Jews in the line might as well go home. I'm not going to sell you any caviar." So the line got about half shorter; all the Jewish people left. And he came out two hours later, and he says, "Gee, the line is still much too long. I'm not going to have that much caviar available. So only members of the Communist Party are going to get caviar. Everybody else go home." And to make this story shorter, after a half hour he came out and says, by this time, "Comrades, I'm still not going to have enough caviar to go along, so only people who fought in the Great Patriotic War and were present at the

Siege of Leningrad are going to be able to get caviar.” So the line got shorter again. And he came out and says, “Only members of the Central Committee who fought in the Great Patriotic War and participated in the siege of Leningrad are going to get any caviar today.” And by that time it had been reduced to five people. And he said, “Okay, you five people, you come on in.” He took them into the store, and he took them into his office, and he sat them down and he says, “With you five comrades, I can be absolutely frank. We never had any caviar. We don’t have any caviar today, and we will never have any caviar in the future.”

Whereupon one says, “You see, the Jews won again. They could go home first.”

TUCH: That’s great.

Q: ... I think the only thing I want to do now is to ask you first whether there’s anything you want to say about your Moscow experience that you feel you didn’t say before, because the first part of it was covered almost entirely by your personal experiences, and less of the actual program. Is there anything that you want to say about your experience in the Soviet program before we go on to the other parts of your career?

TUCH: Well, I’m not quite sure how much we covered in that interview, it’s such a long time ago. However, the one thing that one might just mention briefly, is that in regard to the work that we did, was that we signed our first U.S.-Soviet cultural agreement in January 1958. I appeared in Moscow in July ‘58 just when the first implementation of that agreement took place.

We were suddenly, and for the first time since World War II, involved in what I would call a real USIS program, except that it was not called a USIS program. It was called a Press and Cultural Program, because at that time at least, the Soviets did not recognize USIA as an organization. I myself, in order to be given a visa to work in Moscow, had to resign from USIA. I returned to State and was assigned to the embassy as a State Department second secretary. However, I was charged with conducting what normally a public affairs officer would do.

For the first year I was alone trying to manage or trying to coordinate the implementation of this new exchange program, which involved exchanges of graduate students, pre-doctoral or post-doctoral students; second, the preparation of our major American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959; third, a number of performing art events, the first one of which was the tour of the New York Philharmonic in the fall of 1959; and the visits of a number of distinguished American composers delegations, and artists’ delegation, several performing artists, and a writers’ delegation. I was the only officer charged with these responsibilities. I had, however, the help and cooperation of a number of other embassy officers, who enjoyed doing this kind of work because we were the only ones who got out of the embassy. We were the only ones who were, so to speak, communicating with the Soviet public, although very much restricted.

During that time it was determined that I needed help, that I needed another officer to assist me, and I was told that I was going to get an assistant. However, as things in the Foreign Service often happen, at the last moment it was decided that what that new program really needed was a high ranking, prestigious officer, and so a new cultural counselor was appointed, Lee Brady, and I became his assistant. Which proves the old adage, “Never ask for an assistant because you may

be it.”

At any rate, from the fall of 1959 we were then two officers, Lee Brady and myself. I was the number two, and we divided up our responsibilities in that he took the more intellectual exchanges, and I took the performing arts and handled the press in the embassy, was the press attaché.

The program was very much enlarged during those first two years, ‘59-’60. We had a tremendous number of activities, the biggest, of course, the American National Exhibition in the fall of ‘59. A number of other USIA officers were involved with that, Jack Masey was the head of design. Actually, Abbott Washburn, the Deputy Director of USIA, was coordinator in Washington of the whole thing under George Allen, who was the USIA Director. George Allen came to the opening accompanying Vice President Nixon.

Then, we had the big affair with Vice President Nixon and the interaction with Khrushchev, the famous “Kitchen Debate,” the trip out to Siberia with the vice president, and all the activities surrounding his visit. At the same time with the National Exhibit, the tour of the New York Philharmonic with Leonard Bernstein.

Our program suddenly became very large. Many activities. Now this was during the so-called “spirit of Camp David,” where there was a slow rapprochement between the Soviets and us, for the first time, an easing of our relationship. That continued: the Soviets also had an exhibit in New York, and there were many Soviet performing arts groups, among them the Bolshoi Ballet and the Moiseyev dance ensemble coming to the United States. There was a plethora of exchange activities.

Q: You didn’t find that the “Kitchen Debate” put any damper on that warming of relationships?

TUCH: No. It just became, I would say, a symptom of that relationship in that we were always at each other, but in a way that we could manage the relationship much more easily than we had before.

Now this came to an immediate and very abrupt stop on May 1, 1960, when the U-2 with Gary Powers was shot down, and our relations sank back into the cellar. They canceled President Eisenhower’s trip to the Soviet Union; Khrushchev made some very antagonistic and very unfriendly statements about him and about the United States, and our relationship became worse -- what had previously become a more normal relationship wasn’t very good.

However, our exchange activities continued even during this new period of tension. That tension was increased because of Khrushchev’s aggressive statements about Berlin at that time. However, the exchanges continued under our first agreement, and in 1960, after the Gary Powers incident, after the U-2 incident, was renegotiated in Moscow, and renewed for another two years.

Now gradually the exchanges continued, the relationship moved upward again, culminating in the election of President Kennedy and some movements by the Soviets vis-a-vis the new president, indicating that they wanted to have better relationship again. The first thing that

happened after his election, the day before the inauguration, was the release of two other pilots who had been shot down, the RB-47 pilots who had been held prisoner by the Soviets. They released them on the day after the inauguration.

Again, our relationship, almost like a roller coaster, moved upward again until the Bay of Pigs invasion in April '61, and then the first meeting between Khrushchev and Kennedy in July 1961 in Vienna, at which Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson was present. When he came back from that visit, he told us how genuinely shocked President Kennedy had been at that meeting with the crudeness, antagonism, and unfriendliness expressed by Chairman Khrushchev, vis-a-vis Kennedy, vis-a-vis the United States. So our relationship again sank deeper. It really did not revive again until after the Cuban missile incident in October 1962.

I left Moscow at the end of July 1961, was assigned to Washington. Ed Murrow was Director of USIA, and I was assigned to a new organizational unit in USIA, namely the Assistant Director of USIA for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which he created. I became the deputy director of that office, Lee Brady was the director. For the next four years the two of us worked very closely with and for Ed Murrow, and Ed insisted that his assistant directors spend a good part of their time in the area for which they were responsible. So during the next four years, between 1961 and 1965, I spent quite a bit of time each year both in the Soviet Union and in the countries of Eastern Europe for which we were responsible.

Q: I'd like to go back and ask just a couple of questions about the Moscow time before we go on further with this inter- view. Do I understand that the Soviets probably knew about the overflights of the U-2 or did they? They must have known or they wouldn't have been able to shoot it down. Had they known for some time, as far as you can determine?

TUCH: Well, I really don't know all the facts, but we suspected that they knew about the overflights, but could not do anything about them because they were flying so high and they just couldn't reach them. It wasn't until the U-2 was shot down, that was their first success in this. I suspect that they knew but, they couldn't reach them.

Q: The other question I wanted to ask you, and I think in your earlier interview you mentioned getting out on the streets and making contact with a number of Soviet citizens and, there- fore, being able to report to some extent to the embassy what was going on, and what might be thought by some of the locals. To what extent was that possible? Were you able to contact many people, and would they talk, or was this limited to a very restricted set of circumstances when you were mainly able to pick up information, say, in certain instances when you went to receptions of the type you just described or on train trips in the USSR?

TUCH: It was very restricted. We were very circumscribed. We were never left alone without the KGB "goons," as we called them, following us and being with us at every moment of the day and night when we went out. Even when you went to theater or to the opera, the ballet, they would always be with you.

The only exception to that -- it's not really an exception -- but the only opportunity that we had to talk to people at some length was on trips. That is why we tried to make a lot of train trips out of Moscow. We always had to ask permission 48 hours in advance if we wanted to go beyond a 25-kilometer radius of Moscow. And then very often, I would say at least half the time, they refused us permission to go on these trips. So on a regular schedule we asked for permission to go on trips, and traveled rather widely within the Soviet Union in areas which were open to travel by foreign diplomats. I would say more than half of the country was closed to travel by us and, in addition to that, often when we wanted to go to a certain place we would be told that the area had been "temporarily closed" to travel by foreign diplomats.

At any rate, we did travel, and we traveled very often by train because we felt that on long train trips -- you know, some of them take two, three, four, five days -- you were in a compartment with other Soviet citizens; you were closed in with them, and you really had to have contact with them, conversations, and even though there may be a KGB agent on the train with you he normally was not in your compartment.

Q: That's interesting.

TUCH: He was not in the compartment with you, or quite often on the train we wouldn't have anybody. We would be followed to the train and then be picked up again at the station where we got off. This happened frequently. So on train trips, you sometimes had the possibility to have very extensive, long conversations over a two-and three-day period, which would start usually, I would say, on insignificant subjects. But Soviet citizens were tremendously interested in anything that an American had to say to them, and they immediately, when they found out you were an American, surrounded you and asked you questions about your living standards, about your life, about your customs and various things. Over a period of time you could also find out what they were interested in.

The thing that amazed us constantly is that in spite of the, at that time, forty years of vicious propaganda against Americans, that we were spies, that we were trying to overthrow the Soviet Union, that in spite of this pervasive anti-American propaganda, the people were very, very friendly towards us. Many of them expressed this friendliness by saying, "We were allies in World War II, and we must get onto the same level of a relationship again. We must be friends."

The interesting thing was that the basis of this friendship goes back before World War II, that many people referred to the friendliness, the cooperation of the Americans back in the early 1920s when Herbert Hoover ran a food aid program for the country and helped the newly established Soviet Union overcome its hunger problems.

Q: This was true even though American troops had joined those that were invading the Soviet Union in support of the White Russians at that time?

TUCH: Absolutely. It was amazing to us that this was constantly being brought up. The gratitude that they felt towards Americans for saving them from starvation.

Q: Did you find any cases in which they gave critiques of their own country; were they

criticizing at any point? Of course, I don't imagine you tried to probe for that, but did they voluntarily express any dissatisfactions?

TUCH: No. Usually not. What they would say, and this was, I think, a unique thing in the Soviet Union at that time -- unique from other countries under communist rule: In the Soviet Union you still had a great number of people, mostly simple people, who were convinced that communism for them was the paradise of the future; that they may live in misery now and that they may not have the good things in life in the way of shelter, and food, and clothing, but their children will, and their grand-children will. So they were still, were, what I would call, "believers" and had a rather simplistic idea that communism was going to bring them all the things that the previous hundreds of years had not brought them in Russia.

That was the difference I felt that whenever I left the Soviet Union and went anywhere else in communist Eastern Europe, that in these other countries you had no ideologically convinced communists anymore. You had members of communist parties who felt that communism was giving them the good life and it was their ticket to a better life, but they were not ideologically convinced. In the Soviet Union at that time you still had that.

Q: Did you encounter any of the ethnic differences such as have surfaced many times now, and especially recently? The reason that I ask this is that in my very limited contact with people from the Soviet Union, on a couple of occasions I have made the mistake of saying, "Well, our Russian friend . . ." And had a Ukrainian or a Georgian say, "I am not a Russian. I am Ukrainian, or Georgian"

TUCH: Many Soviet citizens felt very proud of their ethnic heritage, especially when you went down to a place like Georgia or Armenia. It was less pronounced in places like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, but I'm sure it existed though it was not expressed to us. In Georgia, very much so. It was very, very distinctive whenever we went to the Baltics; Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. During my first year, the three Baltic states were still off limits; they were opened during my tour of duty there. A colleague of mine and I were the first ones to go to Riga, to Latvia, and we spent three or four days there. We found a tremendous amount and intensity of nationalism, nationalist pride and a great deal of antagonism towards their Russian masters. In the Baltics it was very clear; it was very pronounced anti-Soviet, anti-Russian. In Georgia it was less anti-Russian, but very pro-Georgian nationalism. They felt that they were different. They were not Russians, they were Georgians, as you just said. But at that time of course, you did not have any of the ethnic manifestations which have erupted during the last year.

Q: At what point was the motion picture exchange arrangement worked out?

TUCH: You shouldn't have asked that question. {Laughter} The first exchange agreement had a provision saying that there would be a subsequent agreement on the showing of American and Soviet films that would be negotiated separately. Indeed, in October 1959 an American delegation came to Moscow headed by the then President of the American Motion Picture Association, Eric Johnston. The deputy of the American delegation was Turner Shelton who at that time was head of the motion picture division in USIA. Turner Shelton was a colorful, Hollywood type. One of my memories of this particular negotiation was the first morning when

the American delegation walked into the Minister of Culture where the Soviet delegation was assembled, waiting. And the American delegation walked in and Eric Johnston, Turner Shelton, several bag carriers, interpreters, secretaries, behind them, all of them wearing dark sunglasses, a la Hollywood, as they walked into this very dark room. The Soviets just looked at them as though this is Hollywood personified. {Laughter}

The negotiation was not a particularly good one. It did result in an agreement but the agreement was not going to work very well. For one thing, the Soviets were interested in having their picture shown in the United States. Their films at that time just were not commercially marketable. They were terrible and they just would not sell in the United States. No exhibitor wanted to show them. They wanted the American government to see to it that they were shown, but the American Government has no great influence with American motion picture exhibitors.

On the other hand, our films, whatever film we showed, was going to be popular in the Soviet Union. The last American films that had been shown in the Soviet Union, I think in 1944, was "Sun Valley Serenade," the Glenn Miller band. I think Sonia Henie was in that film. The other one was a Deanna Durbin film, I think it was called "A Thousand Men and a Girl," or something like that. But Deanna Durbin was the big American film star in the Soviet Union, and this is 1959.

One of the first new American films that was to be shown in the Soviet Union was "Roman Holiday" with Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck. I remember that without telling us anything about it, they put on this film in the Olympic Sports Palace. For three days they showed eight showings a day in English, without subtitles and without dubbing. They filled the sports hall eight times a day, it held nine thousand people, and they showed it for three days. There was never a seat to be had in those showings, and they were able to use the admission fees for those three days of showing to dub the film before they distributed it all over the Soviet Union.

Q: I see.

TUCH: At any rate, our films then were also not shown very widely and in a restricted fashion because their films weren't showing in the United States and we were constantly haggling over what films were to be exchanged.

Messrs. Johnston and Shelton felt that the U. S. Government ought to make the determination of what American films should be shown in the Soviet Union. Eric Johnston had a certain amount of control and influence over the Motion Picture Association of America and its members. So he could control them, but he could not control those film producers who wanted to show their films independently and make deals with the Soviet Union. Often those were films which were not particularly complimentary to, say, our own society, which were critical of our system. On the other hand the Soviets wanted to get particularly those films to the Soviet Union to show, "Here are the Americans, look they themselves are showing how bad things are in the United States." So it was not a very successful operation because Johnston and Turner Shelton could not control what films the Soviets were going to import from the U.S. So they were finally interested in not having this exchange of commercial films continued.

Q: Well, how was the agreement set up? Was there a specified number of films that could be shown in any given period of time, or how was it that it was possible for the U. S. side to be sure that all their films were distributed rather widely, or that only films fairly complimentary to America would be available in the USSR?

TUCH: I don't have specific numbers, but I think it was six or eight films which were going to be exchanged over the two years of the agreement. They were going to be dubbed and shown widely in the Soviet Union. The first problem came about when the Soviets learned they could not show their films in this country because nobody wanted to show them. Therefore, they were reluctant to show our films. At the same time, once the door was open to film exchanges, it became very difficult for the American Government to tell American producers, "You cannot make deals separately with the Soviet Union." How could we restrict them? We had no control over them, so the Soviets took advantage of that and started dealing with independent American film makers to show films that our government would have preferred not to have shown.

Q: Did the Soviets still count those films as part of the quota that had been established?

TUCH: I don't recall. The exchange became a shambles. It was never really settled. Then the Soviets started having film festivals every two years in Moscow and invited the United States. We participated and showed films which were normally not very good films because they were the only films that the State Department would agree to show. For instance, I remember the first one was "Sunrise at Campobello." That's not a very good film!

Q: I remember that.

TUCH: Yet, this was our official entry into the Soviet film festival, and we were embarrassed to have that kind of a film shown, but this is what the U. S. Government proposed and produced. U.S. film delegations came to these festivals, and I remember the first time there was a delegation of a number of producers and directors; there were no film stars, if I remember correctly. We were introduced to the public before the American film was shown on the stage, and as we lined up and our names were called -- I was a member of the delegation that's why I was on the stage. There was polite applause as our names were called, and suddenly one member of our delegation whom none of us had ever really heard of before -- I don't recall his name right now -- was introduced and a roar of applause went up.

Q: It was an actor?

TUCH: No, he had been involved in the production of "Sun Valley Serenade" 15 years before, and everybody in the Soviet Union remembered him; nobody in this country knew him. {Laughter} The delegation the second year included Edward G. Robinson, Gary Cooper with his wife and daughter (Maria, the wife of Byron Janis now) and a number of directors. This was a bigger show at that time because these were known personalities. That was a good delegation because Edward G. Robinson and Gary Cooper were interesting people.

Q: Was there subsequently a later film exchange agreement worked out, or did the thing continue on the basis of the initial one?

TUCH: There was never, to the best of my recollection, another formal negotiation of the agreement. The film exchange was incorporated in the renegotiation of the other big agreement, and it said something to the effect that our exchanges of films will continue on the basis of our previous agreement.

Q: I see. I'm not going to repeat them here, but the stories were legion about Turner Shelton's experience in the Soviet Union, including his initial arrival at the airport and his insistence that Soviet Customs officials could not examine his baggage, but that's another story.

TUCH: We could have a tape just on that subject alone. Should I go back briefly now, I think we've exhausted the Soviet Union.

During those four years as the area deputy director and then as the area director for the Soviet Union-Eastern Europe, we renegotiated the U.S.-Soviet exchange agreement. The first renegotiation took place in 1960 while I was still in Moscow; the second one in 1962 in Washington, and then again in Moscow in 1964. Now the State Department was still heading the negotiation process. In 1960 it was Ambassador Thompson, who was head of the U.S. delegation; in 1962 it was Ambassador Bohlen, and in 1964 -- for the moment I can't remember who it was. I was no longer involved in '64, but in '62, I participated in the renegotiating of the agreement under Chip Bohlen, and our program expanded greatly.

We had a number of traveling exhibits in the Soviet Union every year; exhibits which the Soviets really did not want, but we made it clear, we wanted these exhibits very much because it permitted us for first time to get into the hinterland of the Soviet Union, to the provincial cities. Not only did we have our exhibits there, but the really important element was that we had Russian speaking American guides.

Q: It opened a new possibility, I gather, for talking to the Soviet citizens, because you couldn't do otherwise.

TUCH: Absolutely. These guides were able to communicate as Americans in the Russian language with Soviet citizens all over the Soviet Union. The Soviets did not like the exchange of exhibits because they did not see much value in their exhibits in the United States, and frankly, they didn't have much of an impact here. But we thought this was a good thing for the United States and we insisted on it, and we even threatened that if they would not permit us to have the exhibit exchange we would curtail other exchanges which they were particularly interested in, namely the exchanges in graduate students.

Also, I must say that the years I spent in Washington working for Ed Murrow, were for me very productive years, simply because I had the feeling that Ed Murrow understood what we were trying to do in the Soviet Union and not only supported it, but spearheaded it. He furthered it in every respect, getting the right people to go to the Soviet Union.

I remember on one occasion when he persuaded Danny Kaye to go to the Soviet Union on behalf of USIA and do his communications job. What I'm trying to say is that Ed was personally very

much involved in the programming and in the efforts to communicate with the Soviet Union.

Now, on one occasion he took a direct hand in it and that was, I think, in September or October 1961, shortly after I had come back from the Soviet Union when the Soviets started nuclear testing again. He was so personally incensed at this that he wrote a commentary for the Voice of America himself and ordered all transmitters -- we were still being jammed at that time -- and he ordered all transmitters that were available to the Voice of America to be massed for that particular commentary to be broad-cast. It was a very tough commentary but he had written it himself and he had broadcast it. That was an interesting phenomenon because while he did this, he went to a National Security Council meeting and advised the President, President Kennedy, not to take a retaliatory hard line against this. In other words, he cautioned the administration to be deliberate in their reply. He knew what he was doing. He himself broadcast this commentary, yet he cautioned the administration to be calm and deliberate in their reply on this.

Q: I know that one of the bases on which we sold Ed Murrow the idea and he supported it very extensively, was that he felt the present administration and the European area were so involved with programming for western Europe that they weren't giving an adequate amount of attention to the kind of material that was going into the Soviet Union. He felt that there were other approaches that could be taken but were not going to be taken if we didn't have a separate organization. Consequently, I'm not surprised that he involved himself so deeply in the programming and planning for what went in there, because that was the main basis for setting up this separate organization.

TUCH: Right. One of the things that he was interested in was what we were broadcasting on the Voice of America into the Soviet Union. He was instrumental at the time in changing our whole attitude and tone in our broadcast. He wanted to have an American with experience in the Soviet Union, an American officer who spoke Russian with recent experience to be the head of the VOA Soviet division.

Q: How did that grab Barmine?

TUCH: Well, that was the issue. Alexander Barmine -- General Barmine, as he liked to be called -- had been the head of the Russian division of the Voice of America, I think, almost ever since it started in the late '40s. He was a very hard line anti-communist who had left the Soviet Union in the late '30s when he defected. He had been the charge of the Soviet Embassy in Athens and was about to be purged in the Great Purge, Stalin's purge, and he defected and came to the United States. He was a very conservative, I would say, almost reactionary, military type who just brooked no interference with what he thought should be broadcast to the Soviet Union. However, he was very well-known and highly regarded on the hill, Congress.

Yet, Ed Murrow felt that a change of direction was in order and needed to be taken. So he worked out a system whereby Terry Catherman, who had succeeded me in Moscow, when he came back in 1964, took over the Russian division of the Voice of America. But what could be done with Alexander Barmine?

So an arrangement was devised whereby Alex Barmine was "promoted" to be my special

assistant. I was the area director and he was to be my Soviet advisor in the area. We brought him uptown and he was treated courteously; he was given a nice office right next to my office and from time to time Ed Murrow greeted him and talked to him briefly and made Alex Barmine feel good. He did not feel that he had been demoted. I remember on one occasion when I was invited to the Soviet Embassy for a reception, I said to Alex, "You've got to come along with me. You're the Soviet expert in this and you come along with me, and I'll see to it that you get an invitation." They indeed sent him an invitation. He was at first very reluctant to go into the Soviet Embassy, but finally agreed.

We went to the Soviet Embassy and, lo and behold, he became the center of attraction to all the military types, Soviet military types at the Soviet Embassy who had remembered this famous General Barmine of the 1930s. He enjoyed it. Then, on the way out he told me the story about his defection from his embassy, the Soviet Embassy in Athens, when he walked out knowing that if he had not walked out of that embassy at the moment he did, he would have been arrested and possibly shot.

Q: You said Barmine had been with the Voice since the late '40s, actually, he had started even earlier than that. Perhaps as early as the mid-'40s, I don't know just what year he defected, but I know he started with the Voice when they were still in New York.

TUCH: Yes, indeed, because he defected in 1938, I remember that. This was during the purge. He was a protégé of Marshal Tukhashevskii, who was one of the marshals who was purged, and when he heard that Marshal Tukhashevskii had been arrested, he realized his time had come and defected to Paris.

He came to the United States, I think, very soon there- after. The Voice did not start until 1942 and it was located in New York. I'm not sure exactly when we started broadcasting in Russian to the Soviet Union. I think it was probably 1948, '49, but the date of that we can check with Cliff Groce.

Q: It's not significant, anyway.

TUCH: At any rate, these four years in working with the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, making frequent trips there. I remember one particular trip in October 1962. I wanted to get back to the Soviet Union and I wanted to travel, and I felt that one of the best ways that I could do that without much attention being directed towards me by the KGB, was to accompany the New York City Ballet as the USIA-State Department escort officer. So I went with them and we went to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi in Georgia, and Baku the capital of Azerbaijan. We were in Leningrad right in the middle of the Cuban missile crisis. It turned out afterwards, I didn't know it at the time, that I was actually the only American diplomat who was outside of Moscow during that time. They did not permit anybody else to leave Moscow, but I was with the ballet and they didn't stop me.

I was in Leningrad during the worst part of the missile crisis, being, however, absolutely oblivious of what was going on. I didn't know anything until the embassy called me, and they very circumspect asked me, "How are things going in Leningrad?"

I said, "Fine. Ballet's having a big success, cheers and applause every night."

"What is the atmosphere like?" I was asked.

"Oh, it's fine, great, we had no problems."

They said, "Have you been listening to the Voice of America? Have you been listening to the radio?"

I had a radio with me and I said, "No, I haven't been listening. The batteries are dead and I haven't really been able to listen to the Voice of America. Besides, I've been very busy with the ballet."

They said, "You listen to the Voice of America." So that night I made a point of listening and I found out what was going on. Of course, by that time the crisis was over, it had passed.

Q: Had any information filtered out?

TUCH: No. No, people in Leningrad, to the best of my knowledge, were absolutely unaware of what was going on. That compared to the American reaction of the missile crisis -- I had a letter from my wife about two weeks later, written right at the worst point of the crisis, and she was obviously very concerned about me and didn't know what was going to be happening to me. But I was completely unaware of it, which is also one of the interesting experiences.

Q: Are there any other things you'd like to say in this retrospect on your four years with the Eastern European area, or should we go on now and talk a little bit again about Bulgaria?

TUCH: The interesting thing, and I think the significant thing during those four years was that we ought to differentiate our relationship between the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union. We started to look at openings that we could have in Eastern Europe in our program exchanges, public diplomacy program, also in our VOA broadcasts. How could we differentiate and adjust our programs to actual realities of the relationship and what could we accomplish?

It became possible for us, for instance, to have academic exchanges with Poland, other exchanges with Poland without an agreement. On the one hand, with Romania and with Czechoslovakia, not with East Germany and, at that time, not with Bulgaria, and with Hungary, we began having agreements. Not necessarily formal agreements, but arrangements for exchanges whereby we negotiated certain exchanges without having a formal agreement as we had with the Soviet Union, in order to conduct programs that we felt were mutually beneficial to our efforts in Eastern Europe.

We did begin some really interesting and fruitful exchanges, exhibits, academic exchanges, magazines in the Eastern European countries. Always, of course, different from what we were doing in Yugoslavia because we did not feel that Yugoslavia was part of that Soviet-bloc mentality.

Q: Was Yugoslavia under your jurisdiction?

TUCH: No. Yugoslavia was always part of the Western European area. in my view that was correct, at that time.

Q: Incidentally, you know there was a lot of opposition among the area directors to setting up the East European area. I was the one that recommended it to Ed Murrow, and he supported me. I think the only other person who supported me was the Latin American area, and the rest of them had varying degrees from direct opposition to doubts about it. But Ed was very strongly determined to set it up for a time.

TUCH: Well, Bill Cody, who was the European area director, of course, opposed it. His little empire was being cut in half. If I remember correctly, so was Walter Roberts, who was his deputy. But with your help, Ed felt strongly that there was so much concentration of USIA's efforts vis-a-vis the communist world of Eastern Europe at that time, and it was so different from what we were doing in Western Europe that he insisted that the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe should be set up as a separate area directorate.

Lee left in 1964 to be PAO in Paris, and then I succeeded him. By that time -- Freudian slip. Who was the director at that time?

Q: Carl Rowan?

TUCH: Oh. By that time, Carl Rowan had succeeded Ed Murrow as the director. Even though I was supposed to go to Warsaw as PAO, he would not let Lee Brady and me both depart at the same time. So I succeeded Lee Brady for a year, and I was then supposed to go to Warsaw in 1965. Dick Davies came in to succeed me as the area director, but at the last moment -- and this is sort of an interesting little side light of the history of USIA vis-a-vis the relationship with the State Department -- at the last moment, about three weeks before I was scheduled to leave for Warsaw, the State Department and USIA came to an agreement to exchange officers at a higher level.

SAMUEL G. WISE, JR.
Bureau of Intelligence & Research
Washington, DC (1959-1961)

Samuel G. Wise, Jr. was born in Illinois on May 11, 1928. He received his BA from the University of Virginia in 1951 and his MIA from Columbia University in 1953. He served in the US Marine Corps from 1946 to 1948. His career has included positions in Italy, Russia, and Czechoslovakia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: At Oberammergau, were they pushing the Army side, or were they really preparing you for the Soviet Union? How did you feel about that?

WISE: I thought it was a pretty well-rounded program. They had the military side, but there were some optional courses, so you didn't have to take all the military courses if that wasn't your focus. They had history - some of the things were repetition of what I had learned earlier, but they were all done quite well. They were taught almost exclusively by people from the former Soviet Union and a lot of the teaching was done in Russian, so you really had to dig in. I thought it was a pretty well-rounded program. After the time came at Oberammergau for my next assignment, I, of course, wanted to go to Moscow. But, as somebody in the Soviet Office told me several years later, "Well, in those days, we couldn't assign you to Moscow if you hadn't been to Moscow." So, I didn't get assigned. I was disappointed, but I did get assigned right after Oberammergau, to Moscow for three months as a Protocol and Escort Officer. Three of us were assigned to the U.S. National Exhibition in 1959. This, you may remember, was the Exhibition's first big American presence in the Soviet Union. This is where the Kitchen Debate took place between Khrushchev and Nixon. My very clear recollection of that is when Nixon came out of the room as the loser in the Kitchen Debate, but a winner as far as how he got it portrayed back here in this country. That was a very intense, interesting, out of job experience for a Foreign Service Officer.

Q: What was the exhibit about and what were you doing?

WISE: We had all kinds of activities, trying to demonstrate how we did things in the United States. One exhibit was of machines that made certain cups. There was one done by a USIA guy that explained how we did things in a social, economic, political way. There were Sears and Roebuck catalogues, demonstrations of goods. The Soviets didn't have much of those, so it was a tremendous success. But I'm sure the Soviet leadership was very nervous about this whole thing, but they agreed, in a period of detente, to do it. I remember the lines of visitors: if they saw a line, they'd get in it. I remember asking someone at the end of it, "What are you standing in line for?" He said, "I don't know - there must be something good up there!"

Q: Where was the exhibit taking place?

WISE: It was taking place in a place called [Sakomakay Park], a little bit on the outskirts of Moscow. I was staying in the Ukraine Hotel and then going back out. I remember I went up from Oberammergau in the summer for this thing. The three months were beginning in August, I think. My job as a Protocol and Escort Officer was, technically, at the beginning, meeting American VIPs who came out to see this thing. So, we were shuffling back and forth to the airport. Another fellow named Walter Bedell-Smith, who's since passed away, was another one of the Officers. But, eventually, we got involved in the management and running of the exhibit, which was an unforeseen development, which I thoroughly enjoyed. We worked with different parts of it. We kept up with things: crowd control, all sorts of things. The overall manager just called on us to do it, and so we did it. We enjoyed it.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet Union? You'd been studying it at various places and now, here you were seeing it.

WISE: It's always hard to describe the place. It has a tremendous fascination. I was glad to at last be there, to use the language. I was struck how run down most of it looked. There were signs all over: "In Repair" on practically all the buildings. Except for the Kremlin and a few showcase places that were kept up, the place looked like a very run down city. The people generally seemed very approachable and seemed to like Americans. The officials, on the other hand, I thought were very officious and difficult to deal with. However they felt personally, they approached us in a very official manner. You couldn't get near any of them. You couldn't get near even the people on a casual basis. Say, if you ran into somebody and got to chatting and, afterwards, said, "Why don't we go out and have dinner or something together," they would generally refuse because they knew they were being observed by the Secret Police and that they would be questioned afterwards about their contact with me or any American. They generally didn't want the hassle.

Q: You came back to INR in 1969...

WISE: No, this would be in the late fifties. I came back to INR in 1959.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

WISE: 1959-1961, at which time I was assigned to Moscow.

Q: What were you doing in INR?

WISE: We had a small unit called "Research on the Soviet Union." The initials were RSB, as I recall. There were five of us. We followed Soviet foreign policy initiatives and actions. One of us would follow the Soviet Union in India or the Soviet Union in China, the Far East, the Soviet Union in South America... There was that kind of division in the office.

Q: What was your particular bailiwick?

WISE: I had the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. I watched the relations of the center of the Communist world with its satellite.

Q: What was your impression of how the Soviet Union stood with these countries, with the Eastern European countries?

WISE: It's clear that it was a relationship of master to slave or master to servant, that these other countries were just meant to service the Soviet Union, the Motherland, and to provide a buffer with the Western world. We generally felt that there was a great unwillingness on the part of the population. But they had the effective puppet leaders in all of these countries, who couldn't do much more than the bidding in Moscow.

Q: Prior to your coming to that job, there had been the Hungarian revolt of the fall of '56. And there had been the East German ones in '53 or '54 in Berlin, and then there had been something

in Poland, too. There was obviously unrest, but did we see this as a potential for a problem, or that the Soviets had it pretty much in hand.

WISE: I think we felt that they had it in control. In more optimistic moments, we let our hearts run away with our minds and think that this was the basis for some real change. But, realistically, the cards were all in Moscow's hands. At that time, things were very controlled.

Q: How was INR used, as far as you were concerned? Did you feel that it was being used by the Soviet Desk, or that you operated in a vacuum?

WISE: Probably more the latter. I would have to say that that assignment was probably the least satisfactory for me in the Foreign Service. I had a strong feeling about what I felt was the futility of the work because I didn't think it was being used to any appreciable degree. The main salient product that we produced was an early morning briefing memorandum for the Director of INR, who took it to the Secretary. Basically, we were getting stuff in from different parts of the world, which I didn't find very different from what was in the newspaper.

Q: Did you get any feel for the CIA and what it was doing?

WISE: Not at that time. I knew that they were doing things, too, but most of my contacts then and since then have led me to the view that in most cases, their information is fairly routine and humdrum, too. There are obviously some things that they've gotten a jump on. But an awful lot of things that are treated very high and classified as sensitive, I don't find that way at all.

KEMPTON B. JENKINS
Political Officer
Moscow (1960-1962)

Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1962-1964)

Kempton B. Jenkins was born in Florida in 1926. As part of a military family, he moved often while growing up. He attended the Navy Officer's Training Program at Bowling Green University in Ohio and did graduate work at George Washington University and Harvard University. Mr. Jenkins served in the U.S. Army from 1944-1946. His Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, Thailand, Venezuela, the Soviet Union, and Washington, DC. Mr. Jenkins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 23, 1995.

JENKINS: We arrived, as I recall, August of 1960. It was a shock. From the air Moscow looks beautiful. There had already been some light snow, oddly enough...maybe it was September because I remember clearly there was some snow on the fields, not much. But all the pines and the birches from the air looked beautiful. When you arrived at the airport, Sheremetyevo, the international airport, it was three buildings. It was and still is tacky. You hit the ground, and all

of a sudden you realize that “this place needs new management!” Everything was run down, the two years that I lived in the Soviet Union and frequent visits thereafter, it has always been one of the strongest impressions -- God, this place is so badly maintained. (I have not been back since Yeltsin took over.)

Q: I've been reading some travel books, but also some travel books of the 19th century and there does seem to be a certain thread that runs through it. That the Russians maintain that they're European, but...

JENKINS: ...really are different.

Q: ...really are different and one of the things is that they don't do a lot of things very well.

JENKINS: That's right. The society has never provided incentives to maintain things. Whereas all of western societies at various times, there have been such incentive. I must admit that right now in the District we're lacking those incentives, and the District is beginning to look very run down. Garbage on the streets this morning, for example, because there was no pick-up yesterday, and so on. But in the Soviet Union there had never been incentives. So you had these beautiful architectural gems which could fit very nicely into an expensive Georgetown neighborhood, but the woodwork had never been painted, and everything was either rotting or peeling. The average dwelling built for one family, would have four families in it. When I was there, there was a statistic which I thought captured it very well: there were 18 adults for every toilet in the Soviet Union. And the toilets frequently were no more than holes in the floor (which takes you to Asia). And I never really learned how to squat over one of those holes comfortably, so I had a lot of problems.

Q: I served in the Balkans, and they were called Turkish bombsights.

JENKINS: That's right, exactly. But arriving there right from the beginning we ran into the other aspect of Soviet and Russian society, it's an incredible bureaucracy. It wasn't evil, sort of secret police control, it was just these people had about eight people doing everything that could be done by one. So consequently there are eight times as many forms to fill out. We came in on diplomatic passports obviously, went into the diplomatic lounge where we were met by embassy staff. All that went reasonably smoothly. But we had our Airedale with us. Well, the Russians had never seen an Airedale in the first place. So when we arrived at the airport, they didn't know what to do. They decided he had to go through customs, but we didn't have a customs declaration, and they didn't have a form for a living dog. So we went back and forth. The agricultural department got into it, etc., and we finally got clearance. But I would say it was a three hour process, with a lot of moments in those three hours when it looked like they would not allow the dog to enter the Soviet Union. Since this was our pet Airedale and he had been with us for 12 years, there was no way we were not going to take that dog with us.

Well, we finally got in, and then went down to the Hotel Ukraine where our temporary quarters were, where we subsequently had to live for six weeks. It was very difficult, the conditions were not good. As we arrived, we walked into the desk, with the Airedale on the leash, and our three boys, and put our passports down. They confirmed, yes, they do have a reservation for us, a suite

of two rooms back-to-back. And then the woman looks up and said, "Of course, we do not allow dogs in the hotel." This was a real challenge, and I must say probably in my entire diplomatic career, I handled this more diplomatically than anything I ever faced. A bolt of lightning came to me, and I decided, okay, this is the land of non-sequiturs, here we go. I told the woman profusely, "I am so impressed. Do you know on the entire European continent, the Soviet Union is apparently the only country where dogs are not allowed in hotels. You are so progressive, that's so sensitive to sanitary considerations," and I had to go into that, "I really take my hat off to you." And she nodded and smiled and said, "That's right. No dogs allowed in the hotel." We picked up our passports and the keys and the dog, and went right up to our room. She never said a word. And as we came back out about two hours later to take the dog for a walk along the Moscow River, she looked up and wagged her finger, and said, "Remember no dogs." And I said, "Yes, I do remember. I can't wait to write to tell my friends." And she beamed and nodded. For six weeks every day she would say, "No dogs." And I'd say, "Absolutely."

Q: How about the concierge?

JENKINS: No problem with her, she didn't give a damn. She was asleep most of the time anyhow. But that was a hell of an experience. Then we had one other little flare-up in that period. We were walking the dog, and I didn't normally keep him on a leash because he was very well trained. We were right along the edge of the river, and there was about a three foot drop down into the river, and occasionally there would be stairs going down where boats could tie up. Well, all of a sudden the dog saw a fish, and he jumped in. The Moskva River is a filthy place, covered with an oil slick. I eventually got him back out again, up one of those little stair platforms. We took him back into the hotel and tried to wipe him off with newspapers, and this was a little tricky. The woman at the desk didn't happen to be looking. We got him up in the room and had to call the embassy doctor to help us get the oil off his coat. There were three days of constant bathing, and not a happy Airedale.

Q: You arrived there maybe September 1960. This is the end of the Eisenhower period. I guess the U-2, and the summit had just blown up.

JENKINS: That had been about eight months earlier.

Q: But Khrushchev was in...

JENKINS: Khrushchev was in. The relationship was extremely confrontational. The Berlin crisis was in full flower. While shortly after we got there, and I don't remember the exact dates and I have to get back and get this I suppose, we did the ill-fated Bay of Pigs landing.

Q: That would have been during the Kennedy time.

JENKINS: That's right, a little later.

Q: ...February-March of '61.

JENKINS: That's right, and it was a huge embarrassment. We had a lot of things happen in the

two years in Moscow which were very exciting.

Q: In the first place, what was your job?

JENKINS: I was in the political section. The political section was divided into two parts, internal and external. Dick Davies ran the internal, and he was busy analyzing the Politburo, and the domestic problems, etc., and the first signs of unease and unhappiness, dissension in the literary circles among the intelligentsia. Khrushchev had started to loosen up internal controls. He gave his famous speech at the Party Congress. The thaw had begun domestically. Internationally, Khrushchev became more of a gambler, convinced that we really didn't have the willpower to use our military physical power and that therefore he could muscle us and expand their borders. They became very aggressive in many ways, not only in the Cuban situation, but also in Africa. They founded Lumumba University while I was there and they brought in a couple thousand young Africans for four years of study and training. Ideally, they were supposed to go back as committed Soviet agents, but most of them were so turned off by the experience they went back as anti-communists.

Q: I dealt with Bulgarians around this time and the Yugoslavians, the Africans in Bulgaria did not like to be called black monkeys.

JENKINS: I can't imagine why.

Q: ...for some reason by the general population, and they up and left.

JENKINS: Well, Lumumba was more or less the same experience. We had a number of...I'd say hundreds of Lumumba students turn up at the USIS reading room because being non-Soviets they could push their way into the Cultural Center. We ended up pouring out Time magazines, and America magazines to them, and they would take them back to the Lumumba building, campus-dormitory, and then from there they'd spread them all over the place. So it became really a running sore for the KGB and the Soviet control mechanism. These people would talk to us and tell us what was happening, what was being taught. We did a number of despatches on this program, and our basic assessment was that the Soviets in opening Lumumba University did us a great favor, and greatly undermined their own effectiveness, by bringing these people face-to-face with Soviet reality which was very unattractive.

I was in the external section working with Culver Gleysteen and Frank Meehan. And when Frank left to go to Berlin (back to my old job), Spike Dubs replaced him. So once again the Hamburg cadre of Meehan, Dubs and Jenkins were all together, this time in Moscow.

Q: First, let's talk about the ambassador. Who he was, and how he operated.

JENKINS: The ambassador was Llewellyn Thompson, who is in my judgment, the finest career officer I ever had associated with. He was not a strong personality like Chip Bohlen had been, he was shy and retiring, but absolutely a splendid and decent man. He had a sensitivity to political realities, and the Soviet Union, a very good dialogue with Khrushchev and his entire Politburo. And he had terrific insights.

Russia was very interested in being accepted in the world cultural scene as legitimate, which she really wasn't. But we played on that, and we arranged for playwrights to come from the United States under the exchanges program which they tolerated because they wanted their scientists to get in and steal whatever they could in terms of technology. In exchange for that we sent people who had political influence into the Soviet Union. We worked with the FBI to trust these Soviet scientists contained them basically. But in exchange for that we did have a fairly successful flow of important Americans visiting Moscow. Benny Goodman came to Moscow while I was there with his band. For three nights they had concerts. The first night the audience was all invited apparatchiks, and they all sat there stolidly, while Benny put on a magnificent performance. The second night a lot of the intelligentsia and the younger people came and they went crazy, absolutely crazy. It was a huge success. Another event we had was the Michigan University marching band, where they played the Michigan fight song, etc. That was put on at Lushniki sports palace where there are seats for 10,000 people. The audience was packed with military people in uniform. They were trying to limit the impact...well, the Michigan band is so great, that these guys in uniform went wild. They were all standing up on their chairs, and cheering and applauding. The band was a huge success. The appetite for things western, especially American, was so dramatically revealed in things like this that every time there would be a crack, we'd push something through it. I subsequently was in charge of USIA's programs for five years for that part of the world, and had a chance to cash in on the experience that I had in Moscow.

Khrushchev allowed this opening. In Stalin's time, none of that would be permitted. He was afraid of western influence. Khrushchev seemed to realize that the influence was coming and that he had to try to get ahead of the power curve. He permitted things on a controlled basis which we were able to do.

Q: How did we feel about the Virgin Territories?

JENKINS: The New Lands, the Virgin Territory. All of our agricultural experts, and we had two very good Ag Attachés in the embassy who spent all of their time on the road looking at crops, etc., said this was a disaster in the making, and we predicted that.

Q: We went through that same thing in 1917.

JENKINS: Precisely, it's the dust bowl. They were creating a dust bowl.

Q: Were we telling them?

JENKINS: Well, the information was certainly there. When they traveled it was obvious. Soviet agricultural policy was a disaster from 1920 on. It was always driven by politics, not productivity. Collectivization was not designed to make more efficient farms, it was designed to remove the political independence that farmers had, and the leverage they had on the regime. If they didn't deliver their crops, the country went hungry. So they had to somehow get away from that, and they did it by collectivizing. They broke the farmers. Everything they did in the agriculture area was designed to increase productivity, but politics always came first. And for Khrushchev the Virgin Lands was a new campaign. It was a way to be a popular president. He

wanted desperately to be genuinely popular, and he was switching from rule by terror, to what he thought was going to be rule by popular acclaim. He was dead serious about it, he failed, but it wasn't for lack of trying. In his efforts to do this, he opened up the Soviet Union quite a bit to western influence.

To get back to Matlock, he eventually ended up in the political section, and then, of course, he went back to Moscow as DCM, and then he went back again as ambassador. I think all together he spent some 11 years in the Soviet Union. And in the Gorbachev era, when Jack was ambassador, was DCM and then ambassador, he was so good, he knew so much about them, that he eventually became almost an informal member of their cabinet. He met with Gorbachev regularly. He would attend meetings of the Central Committee to speak on things. He was able to have a tremendous influence. I think history is going to record the incredible accomplishments of Matlock, who is the latest in a series of outstanding career ambassadors in Moscow. They're all steeped in Soviet affairs, three-timers usually by the time they got to be ambassadors, they all went through an education program, like I did at Harvard, they all arrived with the Russian language. It was absolutely a superb performance by the United States, and we dwarfed other embassies there in terms of our competence.

Q: Did you find as an embassy, you were the people they came to from other embassies?

JENKINS: Yes, all the time. It wasn't only our power, it was our knowledge. There were a few areas where we were deficient, the Japanese, for example, had a fisheries attaché, but we didn't have anybody in fisheries. But they came to us for our agricultural attachés. The French had a stronger cultural section than we did in terms of the number of people, diversity of contacts, etc. But in everything else, we were the best informed.

Of course we had an extremely close working relationship with our allied counterparts. I was the Berlin man in the embassy. Maybe I should talk about that first.

Q: Why don't we talk about the whole Berlin thing.

JENKINS: Okay. Arriving there it became my responsibility to interpret what I could see in the papers, by attending lectures, and traveling. I might interject that we had "a travel program." I was the travel officer in the political section, among my other duties, and we deliberately laid out territories, or areas, of the Soviet Union we wanted somebody to cover. The Defense Department attachés were on the road all the time for their own reasons, but we shared maps. If we wanted to go to Frunze, and Alma Ata, which I did, and the Defense attachés had not been able to get certain information about the kinds of factories which were present, etc., for their purposes, we would share requirements. And they would come back and give us things like programs from cultural events where we could see who was actually appearing. And we would pay calls on the local editors in the newspapers in these outlying republics, and we'd call on the republic foreign minister, who of course was a sham, but he was thrilled when we showed up. That was the event of the year. So we would get something out of that every time. I would say three-fourths of the Soviet Union was off-limits, even though on the official map it was all open. You had to apply for authority, *propusk* to go there. Then the Soviets would reply and say, "Sorry, there are no hotel rooms this week," which meant it was a closed area. They didn't want to admit that that

much of the Soviet Union was closed. We had similar controls back here which I ran when I came back to the Soviet desk in the State Department subsequently.

But having arrived in Moscow, I immediately picked up on the Berlin subject -- read all the articles, and the magazine articles, and I met the person at the foreign ministry who was dealing with it, and his boss, who was the deputy foreign minister for Western Europe. He had three people under him, and I got to know all of them -- one of them quite well, even socially. And I was getting all the reports from Berlin, and from Washington, and the intelligence community about what was happening in Berlin. This was just before the wall went up. I was convinced when I left Berlin, because the flood of refugees was becoming so strong through West Berlin, that the Soviets would have to cut it off somehow. And I predicted in a telegram from Berlin, which I had a lot of trouble getting out from Moscow, because my immediate superior, Culver Gleysteen, felt that as a "junior officer," a new boy in Moscow, and that I shouldn't be dealing with such high policy matters, I should focus on interpreting what was in the newspapers. But I had my own views about that, and having been in Berlin, and right in the middle of it at a fairly high level for two years, I was convinced that I was right, and I wrote this message predicting that the Soviets would seal off Berlin. Actually I thought they would put the fence around all of Berlin, keeping our access to East Berlin open and thereby preserving the city's quadripartite status. What they did, of course, was put the wall right through the middle. Two weeks before they built the wall Hal Sonnenfeldt, who was in the Department at that time, had come out to Moscow on a visit, I shared my message with Hal, and he took it back. I never did get it out in its initial form from the embassy because Culver sat on it. I didn't feel that I could go directly to "Tommy" properly. Confronted with a bureaucratic block like that, I probably should have gone to the Ambassador. But anyhow, the message got out, I got it back through Hal. And lo and behold it happened. At that point our relationship with the Soviets became extremely tense.

Q: Kennedy was in when this...

JENKINS: That's right.

Q: Before we move to that, did you...

JENKINS: I was in Moscow when the election occurred, and I watched the debates between Nixon and Kennedy in the snack bar at the back of the embassy building. We had our western colleagues and journalists in to watch this. We got the tapes, we didn't see the TV live, but it was taped and flown out to us. And we shared that, and we were all pretty excited about Kennedy.

Q: What was your reading about the Kennedy administration, and the Russians?

JENKINS: Well, we in Moscow initially, were all thrilled, and the Russians were scared to death because Kennedy was a political sex symbol all over the world. They couldn't cope with that. This was a popularity. Eisenhower had been disliked by a lot of people, he was regarded as too old, too cautious. He was a military man, so in Third World countries he was looked upon as sort of an American imperialistic symbol. When Kennedy came in that was dissolved. And all of a sudden the United States became the image and symbol of young, vibrant, creative peace loving, tough, all the right words. And in Moscow the Russians all felt this way. The people would come

up to us in the streets, and say, “Voroshe.” It was very satisfying. John Glenn went into space at that time, and that was a plus, and again all the westerners, and the Russians, applauded us. Nobody among the Russian people really wanted us to fail, because we were what they wanted to become.

However, we began to run into the arrogance of the Kennedy White House early on. It was difficult. Tommy was extremely impressive and careful, and he nurtured his ties, and played his hand very carefully. He was very secretive, he didn't broadcast like Kennan did -- his telegrams for everybody to see and to show off. He really wrote telegrams for Kennedy and for Dean Rusk alone. I think our impression of the Kennedy administration at first was very hopeful. We had felt that Dulles and Eisenhower, and Chris Herter, the former governor of Massachusetts, were weak on Berlin, didn't seem to grasp that it was our will that was being contested. It was essential, just as in dealing with any playground bully, that when you're tested, you have to stand up the first time, or you're just going to spend all your time rolling over. It was that simple. It was never fully taken at face value by the Eisenhower administration. When Kennedy came in we were very hopeful that this would change. Here was a PT boat hero, young, and vigorous. Dean Rusk was solid, and a wonderful man. But Kennedy's White House, like Clinton's, was full of arrogant friends who all were convinced they knew better than anybody. Dickie Goodwin, Schlesinger, the historian, John Kenneth Galbraith, were absolutely convinced that they were intellectually far superior to these drones in the Foreign Service and in the embassy, etc.

This attitude prevailed. So we became very nervous. We were competing for Kennedy's mind, we thought. Things like Jack Matlock's airgrams about dissent among the intelligentsia, were very important. Kennedy read those, and Jack received a personal commendation from Kennedy for them. Tommy was very trusted. Kennedy trusted him, so Tommy was able to dampen down a lot of the mischief that Bobby Kennedy and all of his cohorts were promoting. And Bobby Kennedy was a big part of the foreign policy process in the Kennedy administration, including in my judgment, putting our troops into combat in Vietnam instead of remaining “advisers.”

Q: You're talking about Vietnam.

JENKINS: Yes. But as we went on into this Berlin confrontation, it became more and more serious. We faced the Khrushchev ultimatum. The Soviets began creating incidents in the air corridors which had been sacrosanct up until then. I remember once Sir Christopher Steele, the British ambassador, flew from Bonn to Berlin in the corridor, and two MiGs came in and actually brushed the wings of his plane. That was a huge confrontation, and it was one of the occasions when our collaboration with our allies was so close.

In the French embassy, Jacques Andreani, the present ambassador; in the German embassy, Jorg Kastl, who is now retired; and in the British embassy, John Tretwell, and I were a four-power working group on Berlin in Moscow. We were all of one mind, and we shared everything in reporting. We ran over everything in the telegrams with one another, and then cross-reported. That was very valuable because we all had somewhat distinct access to different kinds of Soviets. We would meet once a week at least, just to meet, but frequently we'd meet every day depending on what was going on.

Q: Just one little detail. Bugging was always...how would you meet?

JENKINS: Each one of our embassies had a secure room, which is a plastic room built within the room where you meet. It's up on plastic stilts, and has clear plastic walls -- they're plastic bricks, little squares and they're all bolted together with plastic. We had a conference room, a table with chairs around it, and we had a sound machine.

Q: A sound-making machine with sound around the outside.

JENKINS: Yes, it wasn't very comfortable, and the temperature was never really very good, but we assumed that anywhere else the Soviets could hear us. So we would meet usually in our bubble, but sometimes in the British bubble and a couple of times in the German and the French bubbles. Our bubbles were all very similar. We would meet and analyze events, and decide what we were going to report, and we'd tell each other what we were going to report. And then we'd go back and report to our respective ambassadors, and keep them informed. The ambassadors would also meet frequently as a group, sometimes with us, sometimes without. In the Steele aircraft incident, to illustrate how closely we worked together, it was decided that we had to do a protest immediately. When Steele's plane was buzzed and brushed, we couldn't wait for our four capitals to coordinate a message and send it back to us. It required an immediate protest in the strongest language. So Tommy and Sir Frank Roberts, the British ambassador, and the French and German ambassadors, all agreed. I took it upon myself to write the first draft with my three colleagues sitting around the table with me. Then they suggested changes and we ended up with a 2-page demarche, which we had drafted together. So without waiting for approval, we flashed these back to our capitals, and the ambassadors went in simultaneously with these protests. We informed Washington instead of requesting permission. It was very tough language, "we will take appropriate steps, including the use of force if necessary, and if you want to bring our relations to a crisis point where world peace is threatened, this is a good way to do it." The message was delivered, the Soviets took note of it, there was never another incident again. The only reaction out of our capitals came from the British. Lord Hume was then Foreign Minister. He wrote and commended the drafters of the demarche for an outstanding job demonstrating initiative, etc., in the finest tradition of the British service, etc. So Sir Frank and John Tretwell shared Lord Hume's message with Tommy. That was a very satisfying and exciting thing to be part of.

Q: At that time what was Khrushchev and his...

JENKINS: What were they up to? They were testing us, convinced that we didn't have the willpower. They were pushing and slicing constantly, we called it salami slicing, to see how far they could get. The goal was to eventually force us out of Berlin. They seemed convinced that we would pick up our marbles and go home, because it was too scary to continue the confrontation. And if that had happened, in my judgment, the psychological impact in Europe would have been decisive. And I think instead of the Cold War going our way, it would have at least temporarily gone their way.

Q: You mentioned when you were in Berlin that you did not find support back in Washington.

JENKINS: It was still the case under Kennedy. There was great intellectual unrest about this. Rusk was not that strong at the White House, Mac Bundy constantly agonized over things, he was more interested in the intellectual process than he was in the substance. The sense of history which Kissinger reflected so well (and Acheson in his time), was missing. Rusk had a sense of history, but it was all Asian oriented. I thought Dean Rusk was a magnificent human being, but obviously he was basically mistaken about our role in Asia, and the Vietnam war.

Q: Did you have that feeling at the embassy of unease?

JENKINS: Yes, we did. We were not comfortable. We did not have the sense that the policy was firm. We were constantly fighting for Kennedy's mind. We had great confidence in Tommy, and we knew that Tommy was very effective in his dialogue with Kennedy, and even with Bundy. But we also knew that around them were the Dickie Goodwins of the world. Goodwin was the Stephanopoulos of the Kennedy White House. He even had the woolly head hair-do which was not yet fashionable. They were arrogant...

Q: Stephanopoulos for the record is William Clinton's chief of communications...

JENKINS: Policy adviser. All of these men had come out of the campaign. Pierre Salinger was part of this but he wasn't a serious policy player. They were cocky as hell, and convinced that we were a bunch of drones, and that we couldn't be trusted, and if they could only get Khrushchev off in a room with Kennedy for an hour, why, it would all work out. Which, of course, they eventually did in Vienna and it didn't work out at all. What we said was true. Khrushchev came in, stepped on his foot, kneaded him in the balls to look at his reaction. And the reaction was weak, and therefore Khrushchev ratcheted up his initiative.

Q: What were you getting out of this? Kennedy went to Austria after a very successful PR trip to France, particularly because Jackie was...

JENKINS: ...because Jackie was such a hit, that's right.

Q: The Kennedy meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna was an important part of the Berlin crisis. What were you getting in this respect?

JENKINS: We felt it was the golden opportunity for him to be charming, to have Jackie charm Khrushchev, etc., and then have Kennedy come in and say, "Now look, I want to say this perfectly straight. Get your bloody hands off Berlin or we'll destroy you." But he never did. He was constantly talking about, we've got to find a way out, what can we do to reassure you, we don't want you to distrust our motives, we're not aggressive. He played right into Khrushchev's impression, and Tommy was upset. He didn't articulate that to us because he was just too professional for that. But we knew he wasn't happy with the way it went, and we indeed saw further deterioration in the confrontation as a result of that meeting.

But in the key period, in the winter of 1961 and '62, I believe the confrontation in Berlin, the ultimatum having been raised, came down to "access." So Khrushchev switched his target, and he insisted that we accept East German control of the access, which had been part of their focus

from the beginning. Remember Dulles originally had this idea that we would accept East Germans as “agents of Moscow,” and legally our position would be unimpaired, he felt that way. Well, this was not a legal issue, it was a psychological confrontation. And Kennedy continued to futz around the issue. But the Russians got so aggressive finally that we had to have a series of special negotiations on Berlin access. Thompson and Gromyko, and Semyonov on the Russian side. I went with Tommy. I was “the Berlin man” in our embassy. We had these long cables come out from the Department with instructions. I would boil them down and interpret them for Tommy. They were replete with details. And, of course, I had lived in Berlin so I would get the instructions, and I’d work out a talking points paper for Tommy, and then the two of us would go in and meet Gromyko. We had five meetings. They were all very high profile, reported in the New York Times on the front page. (My picture was on the front page of the New York Times with Tommy.)

The first meeting we held agreed to have these consultations on Berlin access (which already made us nervous because we didn’t want to consult on something which was “a right”). But that’s what Kennedy insisted on. As we arrived at the first meeting Gromyko received us in his outer office and escorted us into his little sitting room. Gromyko was extremely friendly. “Tommy, how’s Jane? How are your little girls? Is everything going well, I hope it’s not too uncomfortable. It is a difficult time for us, but it has always been a great pleasure for me to work with you professionally because you are so professional.” He turned to me, and this was all in Russian even though Gromyko spoke beautiful English, and we chatted a little bit, and he complimented me on my Russian, and asked where I lived, where was my apartment, etc. Semyonov was also friendly. They had a translator, Victor, who had been Khrushchev’s translator and subsequently became Gorbachev’s translator, he attended every meeting.

Q: A gentlemen with a bald head and a mustache?

JENKINS: No, Victor was a young man with wavy hair. He had gone to school in Washington as a boy, and had very good English.

We sat down and agreed that we would have another meeting the next week, and then we tabled our position, and they tabled theirs, we both agreed we’d study the positions and report back to our government. And we left. It was a very pleasant meeting, about 45 minutes.

The second meeting took place about a week later. We had long instructions from Washington about what to present, etc. We walked in and Gromyko was absolutely a changed personality. He was cold, hostile, unfriendly, abruptly told us to sit down, and then launched into a 45 minute tirade about American irresponsibility and aggression, and lack of legal basis for being in Berlin at all, and how we’re going to do this, and we’re going to do that. And at one point he said, “You know, you’ve got to recognize that if you allow Berlin to become the flashpoint for a war, we will incinerate New York City in 24 hours.” That’s pretty heavy stuff. Tommy is sitting there on the couch, and I’m sitting on the couch next to him -- Tommy was a chain smoker (eventually he died of lung cancer), and he’s smoking quietly. Gromyko stopped. He gave this oration in a fairly high pitched voice, it was not a casual conversation. He was pounding on the coffee table. And Tommy just kept smoking, and there was silence. About 30 seconds went by, Tommy never said a word. Gromyko said, “Well, Mr. Ambassador?” And Tommy very quietly stubbed out his

cigarette, and looked up at Gromyko, and said, “Oh, are you through Mr. Minister?” It was a beautiful deflation. And of all the things I witnessed, that was the coolest diplomatic performance I ever saw. I was sitting there, my blood pressure was going up, of course, I didn’t open my mouth but I was taking notes. In these meetings I was the scribe, everything that they said, or that we said in response, I wrote down as best I could. And because it was first spoken in Russian, and I could understand the Russian, and then repeated in English, I was able to do it because I’d catch three-fourths of it, or half of it the first time, and fill it in the second round. And when we spoke, the same thing happened. Tommy spoke slowly and deliberately, but if I missed anything I got it in a Russian translation from Sukhodrov.

Tommy sat there and waited and then said this, Gromyko’s face fell. He was clearly embarrassed. And then Tommy very quietly, in about two paragraphs, said, “I deeply regret that you have been required to put on this performance, which I regard as irresponsible, undiplomatic, and certainly below your high level of diplomatic and professional behavior. You know, and I know you do, and I’m sure Mr. Khrushchev appreciates this, that if we ever get into the beginning of a nuclear exchange, that no doubt you can damage an American city or two, but you also know that the entire Soviet Union will become a rubble heap within 24 hours. It’s your choice of time frame, it will take a lot less than that.” And he stood up, and we left. Gromyko’s mouth was open. It was a dramatic performance.

After each meeting, we would return to the residence and Tommy and I would sit down and review my notes. He was writing also on a pad, his interpretation of what was happening, and then I would review his notes. And I would make suggestions, and he would incorporate some of them, which was very heady stuff for a young diplomat, and then he would correct some of the things that I had done, or add an interpretative phrase. I would take the notes and go back to the embassy with a driver, which was about a mile away where we had two secretaries standing by. We’d go into the bubble, and they would type up my verbatim account of the discussion, and Tommy’s interpretation. This would take maybe an hour, and then I would take those two papers, get back in the car and go back to Spaso. This time we’d have a drink together, and Tommy would review them, and say, fine. He’d make a few changes here and there, I’d get back in the car, back to the embassy, and they’d go off Flash/Eyes Only for the President and the Secretary of State. We sent six pairs of telegrams like that in this time. It was very exciting.

And one time, after the third meeting, and I’ll go back to those meetings in a minute, I came down and there was no car at Spaso. I called the embassy and I couldn’t get an answer, so there was no transportation. So, I took these two drafts in my pocket and I walked the one mile from Spaso knowing...at first I was really nervous thinking, what the hell should I do and I decided, damn it, they’ll follow me closely and I’m probably going to be safer making this walk than any time in my life. It was very cold, this was in February, the snow was scrunching under my shoes, and I was invigorated and began thinking, God, this is great drama, and I’m in the middle of it and what a lucky fellow I am, and I’m making a contribution. I got to the embassy and we typed it up, then I got in my car and came back and we sent it out. But it was that one time, I never saw anybody, a little shadow here and there, but I know as I walked those blocks that within a half a block there were probably three or four people surrounding me with a security cocoon.

Q: What was the impression of the speech of Gromyko? When you report this back, you’re not

catching the body language, and expressions.

JENKINS: Oh, we did. In Tommy's interpretive telegram he referred to that, and he characterized Gromyko's performance as theatrical, dramatic, "staged," and I think, as I recall -- I'd have to get my notes out -- that it was another deliberate probe of our will. A deliberate attempt to intimidate.

Q: But the important thing is that the professional diplomat was able to diffuse this issue before reporting back and scaring the bejesus out of the Kennedy team.

JENKINS: The language that Gromyko delivered was reported verbatim practically. Tommy's interpretation was also reported. Now, some people in Washington would dismiss Tommy's interpretation and be paralyzed by the threat. The President, I believe, because he had developed this confidence in Tommy, and many other people, anybody who was witting and on top of it, realized that Tommy was the best interpreter that the United States had, and that his words were extremely weighty. I think that we helped stiffen the American spine by our interpretative comments. The reaction in policy terms in Washington is reassuring in that regard. But we knew that there were people back there saying, what are we doing in Berlin? We've got to get out of Berlin, this is crazy. We're jeopardizing the United States' security by this. Why are we there? This is a beachhead, we shouldn't be there. Let's withdraw. There are a lot of people going that way, and they were on both sides of the political aisle. You know, this bully is threatening me, we've got to stand up and whip him. So we always felt this was always in the balance, and the Russians clearly felt that way. They wouldn't have gone through all this if they'd known for sure it was going to be counterproductive.

Q: I must say, I think almost always in the profession, never felt that World War III was going to start over Asia or some other place like that. If it's ever going to happen, it was going to be over Berlin.

JENKINS: Well, it's interesting. Those of us who had been in Berlin, especially me, I guess some people didn't agree with me perhaps, always felt that World War III could start by miscalculation anywhere, but especially in Berlin. But that in terms of a calculated military engagement, there was no risk at all. Our real danger was to make sure that the Soviets didn't misinterpret our anguish, intellectual approach, and massaging as weakness. But they did frequently, as we saw. Khrushchev in Vienna misinterpreted Kennedy's performance as weakness. It was just his intellectual approach to things: they can't be black and white. But in Berlin, one of the rare occasions in my career, it was pure black and white. And I reflected that and Tommy reflected that in his own very quiet way.

Q: Was there ever a concern...I mean I used to kind of feel this in my gut that the real problem in Berlin was that maybe the Germans in East Germany might take something to the wrong hands, and the West Germans might get involved, and all of a sudden we would find ourselves...

JENKINS: ...drawn into something.

Q: ...essentially with an East German revolt which we couldn't contain.

JENKINS: Well, that was always a possibility, but I think we always felt that the West Germans were basically frightened. Adenauer was trying to cut deals with East Germans long before we indicated any flexibility. Brandt was better. Brandt was very strong in Berlin as a mayor. When he became chancellor, that seemed to dissipate considerably. But I think we, both in Berlin where we regarded the Germans almost as ploys in this whole thing, and in Moscow where the German embassy was weak (Kastl was strong but his ambassador was an ego-maniac). The German Ambassador thought he could seduce Khrushchev by being nice to him. Khrushchev played him like a fiddle. I don't think we ever felt that the German card would ever get out in front of our negotiations because we and the Soviets were both so focused on them, we weren't going to let that happen. I mean, there was an East German revolt, the refugee flow, and they put the fence up. We didn't fight that. That's an example. We weren't going to start World War III over East German attitudes, human rights in East Germany. If we were going to start World War III it was going to be because the Russians were deliberately trying to abolish our rights in Berlin. And as long as we drew that line, and made it clear, they respected it, and there wasn't going to be a world war. All the East Germans in East Germany wanted to either riot, or flee.

Q: Did the Berlin wall happen while you were there?

JENKINS: No. It didn't happen while I was in Berlin. It did happen while I was in Moscow. The Cuban missile crisis happened shortly after I got back to the Department. The wall went up while I was in Moscow.

We would get our Quadripartite team together, share telegrams with them. The interpretative ones we didn't always share, but the factual reports we did, and we shared our instructions with them each time. The western press was all over us. When we'd walk out of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Marvin Kalb, Semore Topping, and UPI, were right there taking notes. This was the Berlin access crisis, and the world all thought we were close to World War III.

Q: When you came away from the performance of Gromyko, did we just walk out and say, no comment.

JENKINS: We went out the door and said, we'll report your views back to our government, we regret this was necessary, and we left. Now, Gromyko called us in for another meeting a week later, in the meantime we had another set of instructions, of course, which were very strong. We presented our instructions. The Russians rebutted them, and we went back to another round. We ended up with the Russians agreeing that there had to be a formulation. They essentially folded in front of our stern refusal to back down. They didn't give up their theoretical position, but in terms of practice they agreed to stop harassing our access. There was a Quadripartite working group set up to consider access problems after that. But basically Khrushchev backed off, and that phase of the Berlin crisis ended. It was very exciting and Tommy was a real hero. It was the high point of my diplomatic career.

Q: Before we finish Berlin, how did the wall going up...you were in Berlin when the wall went up...

JENKINS: No, I was in Moscow.

Q: Did we see this as almost a backing down? In other words they weren't going to go for the whole hog.

JENKINS: Yes, that was one interpretation of it. There was a big policy battle going on within the west, mostly within the United States, with those who said we should never have accepted the wall, that our access to East Berlin as opposed to our access to Berlin generally, was a violation of the Quadripartite agreement on Berlin. General Clay was sent in at that time to reassure the Berlin population that accepting the wall didn't mean that we were abandoning Berlin. We were constantly trying to make sure that we didn't lose this confrontation by losing the Berliners. If they gave up and started fleeing to the West, which they could do, the Russians would have picked up Berlin. So we were trying to stiffen their confidence. We regarded the Wall going up as a step short of trying to get all of Berlin. That was part of the back down. Yes, I had never quite said it that way, but you're absolutely right.

A number of interesting anecdotes in this time in Moscow. I attended public lectures frequently. I went to one at a higher military education school in Moscow, which was sort of like the War College. They would advertise once a month a public lecture at the academy. And almost everybody there was in uniform, and I went with my British counterpart to two of these. Everybody got very excited when we walked in. An officer rushed up to the speaker and pointed to us, etc. They went ahead as they're programmed to do. One of them was a speech on Germany and Berlin. It was full of denunciations and the failures of the imperialists in Germany, and how the German population was being exploited by the capitalists, etc. These officers would then stand up in the audience and say, "I was stationed in East Germany. I've been to West Berlin. I've seen Germany. If Germany is in such terrible shape, and the West German government is so bad, and the Americans are so bad, why is the standard of living so much higher in West Germany than it is in East Germany? Which in turn is so much higher than it is here." The speakers would get very nervous. They knew we were watching this, and the officers knew that we were there, and they were in a sense recording this. Frequently these public lectures would break down into total disorder, almost chaos, because the crowd would hoot at these people. And that was very interesting, very insightful as the real attitudes of Soviets.

We had a lot of very interesting colleagues in Moscow. Generally speaking foreign countries sent their most qualified professionals there. I had this great working group on Berlin, for example, but we also worked hard to entertain ourselves. We had a dacha out in the country which belonged to the ambassador obviously, but it was there for all the embassy to use. And one day Ambassador Thompson had a party with a lot of westerners, and the new Brazilian ambassador (who subsequently became Foreign Minister). He had just arrived and was invited to the party. We had a soccer game. And, of course, the Brazilians are all big soccer fans, and he got in the middle of it. Our Naval Attaché was dribbling the ball down this very rough field, and the Brazilian ambassador came in to try to take it away and the Naval Attaché gave it a boot and caught the Brazilian ambassador's leg and broke it. Of course, he was in great pain. I drove him back in to his embassy and got the American embassy doctor (We had a doctor in the embassy.) He was put in a splint and eventually flown out to Helsinki, to be taken care of.

But on the way going back in the car, he was sitting there with tears coming down his face it hurt so much, and I was trying to comfort him, and assure him that everything was going to be fine, etc. He looked over with a sort of sick smile on his face, and said, "It hurts like hell," but he said, "it guarantees that even though I've only been here a week, tomorrow I will be a hero in Brazil." "Ambassador breaks leg in soccer game with Americans." A great guy.

We had a lot of action with the Indians and the Egyptians, and others of the third world. They were always in touch with a different set of Soviets, and Western defectors. There was a colony of people, international Marxists in Moscow, Burgess and McLean were part of this.

Q: The two British defectors.

JENKINS: Right. And Alfred Gonzales, my counterpart at the Indian Embassy, was a great friend of mine. He was very sharp-tongued, British educated, teasing in his pronouncements. Personally, we were very good friends, and he was crazy about my wife. When I would take a trip, he'd always invite my wife, "C", to bridge and dinner. He would have people like Wilford Burchett and McLean for this bridge party, with my wife, which was so interesting. Wilford Burchett was an Australian journalist, who covered the Korean War from the North Korean side, and was sympathetic to the North Korean side. He was at this point stationed in Moscow, and not allowed to go back to Australia. Certainly McLean wasn't welcomed anywhere else. So my wife would play bridge with these guys and come back full of interesting information. One, she was charming, and two, she was smart and fun to be with and they just talked a lot to her because they were starved for conversation. That was all very interesting.

My Australian colleagues were terrific fellows generally. Rob Lowrie was an especially close friend who went on to become ambassador to Poland. Then a man who subsequently became Australian Minister of Defense, who was an extremely left-wing Laborite, came out to replace the first secretary. He had an American wife, who was also a very left-wing Marxist, and we couldn't "educate" them. It was very frustrating because we kept saying, this is what's going to happen, you can't do this. He said, "I'm going to have a big party. All my new friends are going to come." So he invited 20 or 30 of us, and about 50 Soviets. One showed up. We had warned him that nobody would come, and if they did it would just be the KGB to come watch the rest of us. And that's exactly what happened. He began to get educated in this process, but he was very cocky and he had a lot to learn.

Another funny event occurred when the President of Ecuador visited; a new president who was an alcoholic and very left-wing. The Soviets really went after him because they were trying everywhere to build new outposts, and they made great progress with this fellow. He bought MiGs, and invited Russian military advisers in, etc. He came to Moscow on a state visit. He wasn't important enough to spend all his time with Khrushchev, but he did meet with Khrushchev and there was a picture in Pravda, etc. He was staying at the Sovietskaya Hotel, which was one of the prominent, seedy establishments, but all hotels were seedy. This was reserved for VIPs. Later I stayed there when I was negotiating with them on trade with Harriman. But we would go there for dinner sometimes because the restaurants for foreigners tended to be better than the other restaurants. This was a party for Frank Meehan who was leaving to go to Berlin, and the Tretwells, and the Meehans and the Jenkins, and key colleague Sam and Mary

Wise were all together. We were having drinks -- the vodka was always good, we always got a lot of caviar which was magnificent, and a lot of cashews. Usually you couldn't eat the meat but you'd drink so much vodka and caviar you didn't care. We had a good time, and we were in very gay spirits, when lo and behold at a big table next to us here's the bloody Ecuadorian president, and his entourage of Ecuadorians. There were about six with him, and four KGB goons who were in charge of taking care of him. Their job obviously was to get him drunk, and then get him some women, and tuck him away for the night, which was his lifestyle. So we're sitting there at the next table. Mary Tretwell, John's wife, had been raised in the Philippines (her father was an ex-pat), and she spoke fluent Spanish. She was also a stunning girl, tall, black hair and it was sort of tight on her head, and she had big eyes, and she was a great girl, a terrific personality (still is). We're sitting there, and my wife was cute, Meehan's wife was cute, Mary Wise was adorable, so we had four good looking women at our table, Mary particularly. The Ecuadorian was very interested in all of this, and was sort of ogling the girls all the time. And at one point, right out of the blue, I mean nobody prompted her to do this, Mary turned to one of the Ecuadorians who was there, and in fluent Spanish said, "I do hope you're having a good time, this is a rather boring hotel." They got up from the table, came over and joined our table, all clustered around Mary, and the KGB goons were frantic. It didn't ever lead to anything except a lot of drinking at the restaurant but it was a lot of fun.

Q: Did you have any problems with the KGB trying to set you up, or anything like that?

JENKINS: We had a lot of first stage confrontations. When I traveled, for example, which I did I think six times in two years, and I went to various regions of the Soviet Union. Invariably, on the train or in the hotel, there would be some bimbo come up and brush against me, and ask if I would buy her a drink, and that sort of thing. It was never too aggressive, it was always just probing a little bit. They had an eye, and they were very clever for marriages that were in trouble. And Moscow was a tremendous pressure cooker, and if you didn't have a solid marriage, it would really come unglued there. Or it would be made solid. And some of our people had marital problems, and inevitably they would get targeted for a more serious approach.

We had a friend who was a single woman, UPI reporter, Eileen Mosley, who was the number two person there, and a great girl, very bright, very attractive, nice, good Russian. They set her up. They drugged her coffee, and then took her into a KGB office some place, took all her clothes off, and photographed her in various poses, being attacked by various men, and then sent the photographs to her and suggested that she cooperate or else they'd be sent back to headquarters. We were outraged. I was mad at the press because Henry Shapiro, who ran UPI, and who had been there forever, and who cherished his unique contacts, exercised a veto and the press refused to report this because the rule was that if anybody was going to report on the activities of another newspaper, that newspaper had to concur. It's a logical enough rule, I guess, but in this case we found it very upsetting. We felt that story should have been blown sky high to teach the Russians not to do that anymore. But it wasn't, and Eileen was shipped out, and that was the end of it. I never trusted or liked Henry Shapiro. He was a very wise man, knew a great deal, but he had so much invested in his unique post that he didn't want to jeopardize it.

Q: This is always a problem when somebody feels they have something, they can be used.

JENKINS: That's right. They can be exploited, and the KGB was extremely clever about that. A great book has been written about the Wennerstrom case, the Swedish military attaché in Moscow, who was not there when I was there, who was seduced on an ego basis, not on women, not money, not drink. They persuaded him that he was going to be a key player in saving the world from World War III. They gave him all kinds of things, and information, and he passed it, and he became a two-way viaduct, and they got him hooked. He came to the United States as Swedish military attaché, and of course we treated the Swedes as NATO members practically, and he fed all kinds of stuff back to the Soviets. Eventually he was caught in Sweden, he was convicted. An Englishman wrote a very good book, Agent of Choice. It reflected how sophisticated the KGB was in exploiting psychological frailties.

The German ambassador, who was such an ego-maniac, was named Kroll, he was a politician, not a career man.

Oh, I know one other thing, a high point in my time in Moscow. While I was there, John J. McCloy came to Moscow. He became essentially the arms control spokesman for the administration. He was a very prominent man having been High Commissioner in Germany, etc. He came out to Moscow with a very high powered delegation to initiate what became the beginning of the arms control dialogue, it was called the McCloy Zorin talks, Zorin being the ambassador on the Russian side who was McCloy's counterpart. Gromyko served as Zorin's deputy in these talks. McCloy had Butch Fisher, the legal adviser from the State Department, as his deputy. But there were several other people on the team: Hal Sonnenfeldt was one. We had Dick Gardner who is now ambassador in Spain, who was a UN expert. A fellow named Tom Wolfe, who was an Air Force colonel, who was extremely competent on weapons systems. And I was part of that delegation. We met with Zorin and his delegation a half a dozen times and we reached an agreement. It was the first step, and it had to do with testing, and exchange of information. It was the first step in a series of negotiations which culminated with SALT II. McCloy was impressive. While he was there in the middle of the negotiations Khrushchev took him down to Crimea for a weekend with his daughter. They had a family weekend together, and he came back with very interesting information from Khrushchev which underlined the fact that Khrushchev did indeed want serious arms control negotiations. The Russians were very tough negotiators, but McCloy was extremely capable, a very bright man. And Butch was brilliant, and it was a very interesting thing for me, and I stayed involved in arms control issues throughout my career, never in the center, never full time, but I did a lot of speaking on behalf of the SALT agreement around the country when we had trouble getting it confirmed, etc. I would say the Berlin and arms control were the two big issues for me.

I covered Latin America as well. Frank Meehan did the NATO and African issues, and Culver did the China, Vietnam and Laos issues. We all had things we had to read because the Soviet position was always reflected to some degree in their publications. We read provincial papers when we could get them whenever we traveled because you've got a different story there. They were telling their people out in the country-side something that they didn't want people in Moscow to read. We monitored their TV programs, we went to the theater, we traveled and talked to people on trains and in hotels whenever we could. And we developed, I think, better than any other embassy, a real flow of material from within Russia, and it was certainly never just the newspapers, but they were an important part of it.

Q: Was Brezhnev a figure at all at that time?

JENKINS: Yes, he was the number two man. He was regarded as something of a puppet for Khrushchev. Khrushchev was very rude, and even crude, about people around him. He was always putting people down, and ridiculing them, and demonstrating publicly that he was in charge. And he treated Brezhnev like a puppet. We were never that impressed with him. Tommy thought Polansky was going to be the next leader. He, of course, came a cropper in the agriculture arena. I don't know what has ever happened to him. Gromyko survived through all of them. Mikoyan survived through all of them.

Q: One last thing. You mentioned that you were involved with Harriman at one point.

JENKINS: Well, I was. This was back in the Department and we got into negotiations with the Russians on the air agreement. However, departing from Moscow was a genuine emotional wrench. I remember we flew back on KLM to Amsterdam and then picked up PanAmerican to the United States, 1962 in September. We got out to the airport, a lot of farewell parties. A very intense effort was made to entertain ourselves collectively. I'm sure this was true when you were in Belgrade too. Costume parties, and the girls all got very fancy.

Q: We skinny-dipped in the ambassador's pool when he was away.

JENKINS: There was a lot of that, and everybody had a lot of intensity. But there was a special camaraderie. We left with very heavy hearts because we loved all the people that were there. We knew that this was a high point in our relationship, and although we have stayed friends with all of them to one degree or another, it never is quite the same.

But we got on that KLM plane and it was just marvelous. The dog was in the hold in his box, and the three boys were taken up front by the airline hostesses and entertained while we sat back in our seats, my wife and I, and had about four martinis apiece while we flew to Amsterdam. Although we had known Amsterdam it seemed such a beautiful city. It was before the days of graffiti, I might add. It just hit us with such an onrush. We had gone outside to Copenhagen on a vacation one summer for two weeks, but other than that we were in the Soviet Union non-stop, and it was a big, big event in our lives. We all lost weight, because we were strung out, but we were all on a high because we were doing such exciting and important things. And the people around us were all such great people. We didn't know it at the time, but the CIA station people, and we knew who two or three of them were, but there were some we didn't know like Alex Davidson the doctor who took care of the Brazilian ambassador. He was an Air Force first lieutenant, or captain. It turned out five years later when we read the Penkovsky papers, that Alex was one of the key contacts. And one of our great British friends was the man in charge of Penkovsky, and it was his wife who pushed the baby buggy in which Penkovsky would drop his documents. We knew them well and had a lot of fun with them socially, and had no idea that was going on. We were as close to the intelligence activities in the embassy as any non-intelligence member, but that was so well done, and so professionally done, I've great admiration for the way the agency guys did that, and the way the British people did it.

We played tennis in a British embassy tennis court, and we had squash at the Indian embassy in the dead of winter. The place would be at zero where we were playing, the ball was dead as a rock and we'd go down there and drink three cognacs apiece, and then start playing, and by the end of the first set we were down to T-shirts. That was fun.

WILLIAM D. MORGAN
Russian Language and Area Studies
Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC and
Columbia University, New York, New York (1960-1962)

Publications/Political Officer
Moscow (1962-1964)

Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1964-1966)

William D. Morgan was born in Rochester, New York in 1925. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester and did graduate work at the University of Maryland. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1946. His Foreign Service career included positions in the United Kingdom (England), the Soviet Union, Lebanon, France, Canada, and Washington, DC. Mr. Morgan interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988 and Lester Sadow in 1995.

Q: If you could put yourself back in time, can you say what you expected or what the life of a Foreign Service Officer would be in the Soviet Union in the early 1950's?

MORGAN: That's a wonderful question, because my first answer is, "I really don't remember." I don't have any negative feelings coming back from my memory -- no anxieties, no fears, nothing like that, except how would this assignment affect the children and my wife? I could never exclude them from this consideration. Back in those days the Department sent the post report to us, and still does. In those days it was very important and very helpful. It talked about schools and living conditions.

Q: What did the post report for Moscow say about schools?

MORGAN: Well, it said that life in the Soviet Union was difficult, and facilities were far from Western standards. It described the housing available. The Soviets assigned certain buildings to foreign diplomats. The post report described, and I subsequently learned, what it meant professionally to serve in the Soviet Union. Service there clearly meant entry into a very special group. That was not meant in a "snooty" way but in a proud, professional way. Everybody assigned to Moscow at that time had to know Russian. I would be going through a year's study of Russian in the United States and then a period of time at a university. As it turned out these two years were followed by a few months in Oberammergau Germany. So any anxieties that I might have had about the Moscow assignment and about how I would be prepared linguistically,

academically, and from the intelligence point of view were quickly put to rest. I also soon learned that, despite the form of government and the nature of the Soviet “beast,” there was Russia, a country with a great history, with many similarities with the United States.

The wives, however, didn’t get any preparation. They didn’t receive Russian or university training. On their own, they went to libraries to read about the Soviet Union and Russian culture and history. When you’re spending much of your time raising children, running a home and adding to the income by part-time or volunteer work you also don’t have too much time to learn about the next tour of duty. That, to me was the greatest drawback in the process of preparation for an assignment, especially as demanding a one as to Moscow. Oh, my wife and I did prepare for Moscow together. But a lot of it involved my passing on information to her. She tried to study Russian but it’s hard on one’s own. It’s a hard language. She knew -- and I knew -- that her association with Russian-speaking people would be next to zero. We could find English-speaking people, but we knew that she would be excluded from contact with most individual Russians. I knew that my job would not be speaking Russian so much but mostly reading, although I didn’t know that my duties as Publications Procurement Officer would take me all over the Soviet Union and in close contact with Russians, at least bookstore salespersons!

That is a lengthy answer, but I think that, maybe, this is a good time to go into these considerations. What you’re asking is how I felt at the beginning. My first answer was, “I don’t know, I don’t remember.” Obviously, some of my answer came at the beginning and some of it in the course of the two years of preparation for this assignment.

Q: I’m also trying to get at how you felt about the Cold War and how that affected you as an “insider” in the U. S. Government, how that affected your professional outlook.

MORGAN: I think that I already partially answered that question when we talked about NATO. I had had an introduction to the realities of the Cold War and America’s role in it. I learned some things about the Soviets and their system then. There were intelligence reports in USRO about conditions in the Soviet Union. Even though I read stacks of telegrams every morning, at first I did not focus on the Soviet Union. However, I learned about it.

Q: No, you have covered it. Were you aware of the realities of living in the Soviet Union, meaning the physical infrastructure, the political structure, and so forth?

MORGAN: Yes, once I got into the training program. I absorbed a lot [in the classes and then I started reading. The academic year at Columbia University -- the university I was assigned to after the year of Russian at FSI (1960 and 61) -- obviously had a great deal of material and courses that related to the Soviet Union and its authoritarian and ideological systems.

Q: You’re saying that you read enough to understand, as opposed to what the general public knew, that the Soviet Union, on an economic or physical level, was not a super power. Were you at that point?

MORGAN: That’s a major question. I don’t know that anybody could answer that yet. If that had been the case, we wouldn’t have done some of the things that we did. I think that we thought of

the Soviets as “10 foot giants.” But once we lived in the Soviet midst and saw first hand we saw it indeed less as the superpower.

On the very day that we left Moscow, bag and baggage, even the elevator in our 9-floor apartment -- and we were on that floor -- didn't work. How in hell could they get to the moon? Looking back on it, I was aware of the very real weakness and oppression in the system and the reasons why the system could fall. Nevertheless, I was amazed when the Soviet Union fell -- and the way that it did. Now, today, I say that. Were we “hoodwinked?” We knew the weaknesses. However, the Soviet Union seemed to have such strength, in terms of nuclear armaments, KGB intelligence, and the total control of the population.

My boss in the Political Section when I was in the Embassy in Moscow was Mac Toon. He always said, “Don't you know how strong they are?” This point was relevant the minute you stopped and thought, “These people are really weak!”

But to return to your opening question on how I felt about the assignment. I knew that I was going to serve in the “heart” of the Foreign Service. I had learned in USRO that given the realities of the Cold War that our Embassy in Moscow was the heart of our Foreign Service efforts. An up and coming Foreign Service Officer needed to have that particular ticket “punched.” The career path through Moscow also was a very interesting and satisfying one. We knew also that there had to be major changes in the Soviet Union. If not, we had a “sick joke” in Moscow: If war comes, we'll go first, and clean, by “good” bombs.

Q: So you had a big career change when you accepted the assignment to Moscow. Part of the training involved two years of preparation? One year at the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) And a second year at Columbia. Was the university optional?

MORGAN: No.

Q: So the year at Columbia University was part of the program?

MORGAN: Yes. In those days it was a two-year training program. One year of language training and a second year at a university. The university was chosen each year. I was fortunate to be assigned to the Russian Institute at Columbia. The State Department had used other universities, including the University of California. The four other Foreign Service Officers and I who were in Russian training on this route to Moscow were Dick Funkhouser, Tom Fain, Peter Semler, and Carroll Woods. We went through nine months of Russian language training, from September, 1960, until June, 1961. Just to confuse you, Carroll Woods went right on to Moscow, in part because he had previously served there and largely because he had position to fill immediately. Dick Funkhouser worked in the summer months at the Army school in Oberammergau, Germany, and then to his more senior job as Economic Counselor. But Fain, Semler and I were left to find a job for ourselves in the three months before our academic year began.

Q: Until the fall?

MORGAN: Yes, until the Russian Institute at Columbia started up in September, 1961. We were

literally without a job. We were told to go anywhere we wanted to go. I got a job in the Department in the East-West Exchanges Program in Washington. There were three principal areas which dealt with Soviet affairs: the Soviet desk in the Bureau of European Affairs; the East-West Exchanges Program which, by then, had grown into a very important part of Soviet-American bilateral relations; and the Soviet Union unit in the Office of Research for Eastern Europe in INR (Bureau of Intelligence Research). The four of us went to different places. One of the others went with me to the East-West Exchanges Program.

It was fascinating. We were engaged in negotiations with the Soviets during part of this time. This was very helpful when I came back from the Embassy in Moscow to the Soviet desk (EUR/SOV), because one of my areas of responsibility there was to be SOV's representative on the committee handling the exchanges program with the Soviet Union. This was a fascinating program.

Q: We'll come back to that later. Let's switch now to the Foreign Service Institute and the beginning of your Russian language training. Could you talk a little bit about the training and courses you took at the Foreign Service Institute, from September, 1960, to June, 1961?

MORGAN: I remember that time as days of agony, but most people who have gone through language courses look at them with less than joy. Of course, as most of those who read or listen to these tapes know, the FSI was one of the first institutions to start a new type of language training. In fact, the FSI adopted the system developed, I think, at Syracuse University. Like a child, you started with simple phrases and kept building them up. You did not learn the "grammar" of the language, as most of us, including me, learned French, for example. Rather, you learned the language something like the way a child learns. It involved constant repetition of words and phrases. I remember that the word for "railroad" in Russian was insufferably long. We learned it in bits and pieces, as it were. The system works. Of course, most of us older people -- and we were all well along in our 30's, and some in our 40's -- had a terrible time adjusting to this system. The three Russian teachers that we had found this system equally difficult to adjust to. They all thought that this system was terrible. It was hard for them, because they were repeating and repeating these words and phrases.

I will never forget some of these phrases and remember them to this day -- even some that I never used. Some of them were hard to pronounce. Pronouncing Russian is hard for the American tongue. Some of the sounds are very difficult or virtually impossible for us to duplicate -- like Chinese, for example, or Arabic. However, by drilling the words and phrases in this way, it somehow stays in your memory. That's what it was -- nine months of that. Of course, we made some progress, but we never, ever, studied Russian "grammar." We never, ever, made translations of what we studied. We could never ask the teacher, "What does it mean? What are you saying?" No, you had to say it in Russian. On the first day she would lift up a pen or pencil and say in Russian, "What is this?" Then we would move on, having no idea what the word meant. I think that we didn't have a book for two months. This was deliberate, because they wanted these sounds driven into our heads. Finally, we got a book. At the end of nine months I came out with a grade of 3-3 (Speaking - Useful, and Reading - Useful). As many of you know, 0 is none, 5 is absolutely bilingual. These numbers apply to both speaking and reading a language. I was sort of in the middle, as most of us were.

It's difficult in most of the "hard" languages, such as Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Albanian, and some others, to get a much higher score. The course in Arabic and Chinese, I think, lasts for two years, before you reach a 3-3 level. The alphabet would be completely different with Arabic, and Chinese uses characters or ideographs, but that is irrelevant. First of all, we didn't even deal with an alphabet, until we were well into the language. The Russian Cyrillic alphabet makes sense. Some of the more difficult sounds are represented in it. The FSI training system works, but it involves back-breaking effort.

Q: So it was a complete "immersion" system.

MORGAN: Total. We would use tapes at night. We got quite a bit of homework. You had your tapes, which you would take home. You played them back. Then, when we did get books, we had a text which I still have. The pages are brown with age and worn. The text "walked you through" both Cyrillic spelling and the phonetic spelling.

Q: What can you tell us about the "focus" of the language [training]? Did it all involve oral communication?

MORGAN: Yes. That's the only weak point. We complained about it. It was corrected a bit when we got to Oberammergau, which I'll tell you about in due course. A lot of the vocabulary was not "practical." It did not involve how to analyze what a visa applicant was saying or how to "deal with" a Soviet Intourist guide. It all involved things like, "Hello. How are you today?" "Oh, I must go down to the railroad," with emphasis on some of the more sophisticated but necessary parts of the complexities of the language. That is, whether this involves a "verb of motion" or parts of an automobile, in full adjectival declension!. And the grammar, of course, was simply insane. They didn't teach it as grammar, but it was there -- the complexities of the endings, the complexities of the verbs and the conjugations. While we never conjugated a verb, as we know it in the old-fashioned way of language instruction, it was all out there. The "immersion" system supposedly got you into the grammar and syntax, but some of us could never get rid of this feeling, "I would like to know the grammar and see how this verb looks when it is conjugated."

Q: How big was your class at the FSI? Did they all make it through?

MORGAN: They all made it through. We were five in the class, but never more than two or three in a given class room at any one time. We were mixed around a bit. The three persons in the class weren't always the same, though they tended to be. I think that we were assigned at first into groups. One of them included people like myself, who had "zero" knowledge of Russian. The other two had either served in Moscow as Marine Guards or, perhaps, had studied Russian in college. They had a little knowledge of Russian.

Q: What was their status -- were they all Foreign Service Officers?

MORGAN: Yes. Dick Funkhouser's specialty was in petroleum. One had served in Yugoslavia. Another one had previously served in Russia, but without the language. Another one was married

to a Russian woman. He spoke some Russian. He was the first one to “break the old rule” of not serving in a communist country with close family member ties to that country.

Q: Did all of them end up in the Soviet Union at some point?

MORGAN: Yes. Some of us went directly out of the FSI and did not go to Columbia. Three of us went to the Russian Institute at Columbia:

Q: Tell us a little about why the Foreign Service wanted to send you to Columbia and why they decided not to send other people in your class to Columbia.

MORGAN: Before World War II, and definitely during World War II, when people like George Kennan went into the training program, the Department had a language and area studies program. Some of the students attending it went to a university for the language and area. By “area,” I mean the area of specialization of that particular country. Cornell, Harvard, Columbia Universities and the University of California at Berkeley were all used for Russian studies. Similar programs existed for other languages and evolved into the FSI, plus one year area studies such as the Russian one.

When it was our turn to go to the area part we were told Columbia had been picked. The year before that it may have been Harvard or Princeton. I presume this was negotiated between the Office of Personnel in the State Department and the university. Each year Personnel probably goes out and looks around at the various universities. People in the State Department still go to universities. They go for management studies, and there might still be some area studies. I believe that there isn’t a Russian language/area program any more.

Q: Can you tell me something about the courses that you took at Columbia and discuss the teachers.

MORGAN: Yes. In fact, Columbia was a high point of my career. It was a brilliant, wonderful year. The Department paid the tuition. You did not have to work for a degree, but you did have to write a paper, which I did: “Soviet Ideology and Science”. The people in the Department gave us some guidance, but they didn’t get into catalogues and say that we had to take this or that. We had to report to the Department which courses we were signing up for. We then got an “OK” on it.

The assignment covered a full academic year. We were detailed to the Russian Institute, which was, technically, our “home” at Columbia. The three of us reported to the Russian Institute together and were assigned to a “mentor” by the name of Zbigniew Brzezinski, who, at the time, was an eminent professor, or at least so proclaimed by “Zbigy,” but maybe by a few others too. He ended up as National Security Adviser with the Carter administration. With us he was very helpful and understanding. I’ll be very blunt about it. He said that he enjoyed working with us because he also had to be a mentor to some of the military. He found them very difficult at the educational and intellectual levels that he was used to. He didn’t like the military, as he proved later at the NSC.. We met with him individually and the three of us as a group once a month.

I didn't take any of my other courses with the other two FSOs except one on the Soviet system with "Zbigy." He was brilliant. He was the most impressive and practical of the instructors during that whole year. I took courses on 16th and 19th century Russian literature, a course in Russian history, under Florinsky, an eminent professor of Russian history. He "wrote the book," as it were. This course covered two semesters. I took a course in 20th century Russian/Soviet economics and another course in what amounted to Soviet ideology, under a very distinguished professor, whose name I've forgotten. I wrote my paper under him. This largely covered the period of the 1930's and 1940's, when Stalin exercised control over the sciences -- particularly sociology, to make sure that they were ideologically "pure." There were other courses which I have forgotten. However, I was free to study what I wanted. The "bottom line" for all of us was to build a body of knowledge, not only for the history, economic life, and even present day realities that affect the Soviet people, but to get a perception of the "Soviet/Russian mind." In other words, the realities of today and how they got that way. I also took a course in Eastern European history as an elective. I felt that I had to find out how the Soviet Bloc was operating.

Area studies worked! Without that year I don't know how it would have been like. However, I felt that, during my two years in Moscow and subsequent years on the Soviet desk in the State Department, I was extremely well-equipped.

Q: Tell us, then, what your feelings were toward the Soviet people and the Soviet Government -- before you went to Moscow. Do you recall that?

MORGAN: I guess, to think back to that period, I probably felt like anybody who knew anything about the Soviet Union in a primitive sense. I had done university work in French and European history, so I knew something about Russia, but it was just another "blob" up there on the map. I certainly didn't have any strong feeling about it -- except, of course, that after several years in the State Department and in USRO in particular the Soviet Union was "the enemy." However, to be able to distinguish between Russia and Russian history, civilization, and culture, and the Soviet Union -- this is what Columbia University did for me. And Brzezinski in particular. He was very good at this. I did another paper on Peter the Great's visit to France -- how he was "ripped apart" by the French and talked down to. That gave me an insight into the complexities of their feeling as "second class people" and how they learned that the world looked down on Russia. On the religious side, my own knowledge of religion in Russia was very limited.

By the time I was ready to go to the Soviet Union -- and particularly after my time in Oberammergau, which came that summer, after the end of the course at Columbia -- I really felt that I knew the Russians. I felt that I could distinguish between Soviet authoritarian dictatorship and the *Ruskaya dusha*, the Russian soul. Some people argue that there is no such thing as a "soul," and I was weak on communism. However, I feel that you need to know that feeling to understand fully the doings of the Russians. How you deal with it and how you take it varies with the individual. My background in French literature, history, and so on probably led me to have a greater appreciation for the history and civilization of Russia.

Q: Were you thinking about the Russian people -- how they suffered under the Soviet Government and their mentality? Were you looking beyond this Soviet mentality?

MORGAN: Well, I take your question but I can't answer it quite that way. The Soviet Government and mentality, on the one hand, and the outlook of the Russian people, on the other, are so interrelated. I think that I knew that 50 years -- really, two generations under that controlled system -- had made their impact. As a result of my area studies I learned a lot about the Soviet system; about half of my courses related to the Soviet controls and techniques. After all, the Russian people were used to living in a controlled society. The Czar obviously controlled the people, as their fathers and the church controlled their lives. I knew that the Russian people had fought against that system of control. They wrote about it, they mimicked it, and they wrote marvelous comedies about those forms of control -- especially during the 19th century. There was a Russian "drive" not to be ashamed, to stand up -- a feeling of nationalism, if you will, which goes back to the 14th and 15th centuries. There were intellectual schools of nationalism. I studied those movements and activities.. I guess that what I'm doing is twisting your question to say that it isn't a matter of distinction. It's integration, or how the Russians survived. You can ask this question today: how did the Russian people "tolerate" the Soviet system? Because it was the only way to survive. You "ratted" on your mother, if that was called for.

Q: So the Russian language training at the Foreign Service Institute and your studies at Columbia University ended in June, 1962. How did you get your orders to Moscow?

MORGAN: Again, there was the summer. We finished at Columbia in June, 1962 and were due at the Embassy in Moscow in September, 1962. Well, at the Department of State they told us that they didn't know what to do with us. Dick Funkhouser, who had been with us the year before at FSI and faced a similar issue, found out that the U. S. Army had a special "spy school," if you will, as an extension of its advanced language courses at Monterey, California. This special school was located at Oberammergau, Germany. He found out that they didn't operate in summer. So they had all of those wonderful professors there, with not a thing to do. When asked, the Army said, "You-all come." So the three of us from Columbia followed in Dick's footsteps of the year before.

Problem solved: we three went to Oberammergau for three months, with our families. It was a beautiful setting. We attended classes from 8:00 AM until, I think, 3:00 PM, or something like that. Meanwhile our wives and children enjoyed the scenery of Bavaria. We had no formal classes but rather private lessons. There was a "sea" of teachers up there, some of whom had fled very recently from the Soviet Union. They were "real" contemporary Soviets.

Q: For the record, can I humbly admit that I don't know where this Army school at Oberammergau really is. Can you say where it is and what its purpose is?

MORGAN: Oberammergau is near Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Bavaria, about 40 miles south of Munich. The center is there to "process" refugees from the Soviet Union, particularly military and intelligence types, to learn from them the most recent intelligence information on what's going on in the Soviet Union. By "intelligence," I just mean "knowledge." They would ask the refugees, "What's it like on the farm? What were you doing, what do you think of the regime," and many other questions. It was run by U. S. Army intelligence, but I presume that the other services had access to the product. It was basically gathering "background" information. These people, men and women, had defected from the Soviet Union. They were refugees and somehow

had gotten across the Iron Curtain. They were “picked up” by the U. S. Army and interrogated and, in some cases, put on the faculty at this center. Some ended up as language tutors, but at the advanced level. All of the U.S. military students were there for, I think, two years. They start with zero knowledge of Russian. The Army gave us this summer deal because the professors were available.

Q: So Oberammergau is not only a refugee processing center. It is also a language center for U. S. personnel.

MORGAN: Yes, but let me state it differently. It is not really a “refugee processing center” in the sense that the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) is involved.

Q: It is an intelligence processing center.

MORGAN: Yes. It involves bringing together refugees who possess military and general intelligence. As you know, that can involve anything about the contemporary USSR. It largely concerns “attitudinal” information. Army intelligence personnel interrogated these people. That was the purpose of this center. The Army’s Russian language training school was part of it. I don’t know whether it began as that.

As “teachers” for the three of us, they had no curriculum, no texts or the like. I sat down with one of them. He said, “What can I now tell you about live in the USSR?” Each of us had our own tutors.. The U.S. director of the Oberammergau center would say, “This instructor has just arrived, and I think that she’ll be good at talking to you about life in Moscow.” They would do anything that you asked them to do. I told them that I was going to the American Embassy in Moscow, that it was my first assignment there, and that I would be Publications Procurement Officer.

I said to one of them, “Teach me the practical Russian -- language and mannerisms I need to survive and get the job done successfully.. He answered (in Russian. None of them spoke any English): I will be rude to you”. I will be just like the clerk that is going to be in the bookstore. I will be like the KGB [Soviet intelligence] officer trailing you. Actually, that was my job before I defected. I will do all these things to you.” He knew a great deal of “street” Russian and the kind of Russian which, he said, “will turn their ears onto you.” And he actually did that for most of those three months. Above all, this gave me confidence that I could step off the plane in Moscow and really walk into that situation. He told me story after story. He had lived in Moscow for a while and in other places which I subsequently visited. He was able to show me what the Soviet Union was really like, using his heart and tears. Yes, “tears.” He had had to leave his family behind. He was a wonderful man. He would tell stories about the realities of the Soviet Union. Back at the FSI and Columbia, the teachers were great, but they were academics in their approach.

Q: Can you remember any of the stories he told you?

MORGAN: Not specifically at the moment. He would tell me story after story -- when you walk along the street, when you get on a bus, when you walk into a store. He would say, “Don’t do this. Do that.” I am reflecting back on the full two years of training: my year at the FSI and the

year at Columbia when my wife and children stayed back here in Washington. I rented a room in a house owned by a Russian couple. I took Russian lessons from them and spoke only Russian with them. But that Russian was, of course, "Czarist Russian," because they had been refugees from "White" Russia back in the 1920's. The Russian I spoke would make my teacher at Oberammergau laugh his head off. He said, "They don't speak that way any more. It sounds ridiculous the way you say it." And then there were the acronyms and special words used in contemporary, Soviet society. I learned them from him, thank Heavens..

Q: I asked that because before, when I was in the Soviet Union, there were several stories that stuck in my mind. They were my first, real life and personal impressions.

MORGAN: Well, you are younger and closer to that time when you were in the Soviet Union. I am trying to remember what happened 25 or 30 years ago.

Q: Well, did you work with any of the refugees?

MORGAN: No.

Q: It was strictly at the school?

MORGAN: Well, the teachers at the school were all refugees. This man I have spoken of was a refugee -- or defector, if you wish. I use the word "refugee" to mean someone who had "fled", sought refuge from the Soviet Union for a variety of reasons -- political or personal or whatever. They were refugees in that sense.

Q: Did you ever witness any of the interrogations or debriefings?

MORGAN: No. You see, nothing was going on during the summer we were there. The school was closed when we were there. The U.S. and most of the Soviets faculty was on vacation. However, when they weren't on vacation, there they sat, with absolutely nothing to do. The U. S. taxpayers -- you and me -- were paying their salaries. The Army welcomed being able to put them to work. We could do anything that we wanted to do, as long as we showed up with our mentor.

Q: Did you live off base?

MORGAN: Yes, just off base -- about a quarter of a mile down the road. The Base was in the country, not in a regular town. The hotel we lived in was a regular Bavarian picturesque place. It even had nasturtiums hanging from each balcony.

Q: Then orders came in. At what point did you know that you were going to Moscow?

MORGAN: I knew that from the very beginning. When I was assigned to Russian language and area training, there was a whole "block" order issued, covering everything, including the actual assignment to Moscow.

Q: Why did the Foreign Service wait from June until September, 1962? You finished your

language study at the Foreign Service Institute and your training at Columbia in June.

MORGAN: September, 1962 was when my predecessor, Herb Okun, was leaving Moscow. We were all replacing other people, and we replaced them when they left Moscow. I think that we probably “overlapped” for a short time. We got to Moscow in late August, and Herb Okun left in early September. Also, there was the matter of housing. You had to have a place to stay, so you had to get your predecessor out of the apartment so you could move in, after a repainting job!.

Q: May we come to Moscow now? May I ask about your immediate impressions of the Soviet Union, if you can remember them, on your first arrival?

MORGAN: First impressions, above all, I will never forget. My wife, children, and I were met by the Embassy driver.

Q: Did you fly in on a commercial flight?

MORGAN: Let me think. We flew from Munich to Vienna, then Aeroflot from Vienna to Moscow, non-stop. About the only way you could get into Moscow in those days was from Vienna. There was no Pan Am or any other commercial airline service available. Maybe there was a flight available from Paris, but I can’t remember it.

It was an afternoon flight. We got off the plane about 7:00 or 8:00 PM. It was a Sunday night, as I remember. It had to be a Sunday night. It was dark by the time we were through the formalities. I think that Peter Bridges from the Embassy came to the airport and met us. We took the apartment for temporary visitors in a part of the Embassy where the Marine Guards and the DCM lived. There were four or five apartments like this when we first arrived. Peter Bridges, his wife, and children were in the adjoining apartment. He brought us up to our apartment and then brought us over to theirs for drinks and to meet his wife, and kids-on-kids. At that point, after this nice, warm welcome, and the feeling you get in the Foreign Service or any other organization, where people take care of their colleagues, we looked out at the skies of Moscow. On our way into Moscow we drove past the Kremlin and through Red Square. We had a nice view of Moscow, which was lighted. There was a tremendous display of fireworks. The skies were just filled with flares and sounds.. Well, it wasn’t for us, of course. Every Sunday night the Soviets have fireworks. So our first arrival in Moscow was just fine.

Q: Did you have any trouble going through customs?

MORGAN: No.

Q: Did you have a diplomatic passport?

MORGAN: Yes. I don’t remember any delays. I’m sure that if there had been any, I would recall. If my wife were here, she would remember more particularly, I’m sure. After what I had heard about the bureaucracy and the heaviness, I thought, “My God, Are we really in the Soviet

Union?”

Q: How did your children feel?

MORGAN: The kids couldn't have cared less. They were about 10 and 7 years old. They wondered who their new friends would be and where their new school was. I should have asked my son that question before I came here today. He should remember those early days because a few weeks later we moved into our assigned apartment. The very first word of Russian that he learned was “durok”, the Russian word for “stupid” or “idiot,” as you know. That's what a Russian “neighbor” kid said in the courtyard of the apartment building when he hit my son over the head with a brick! I saw my son scraping up the stairs with blood running down his face. He said that a Russian kid had called him “durok.” My son asked its meaning; it was his first serious encounter with Soviet society.

As new arrivals we were waiting for our Finnish maid to arrive and getting ourselves together. Of course, I went to work at the Embassy. My wife was well taken care of by other Embassy wives. She did the rounds and met people.

Q: Do we still have the same Embassy?

MORGAN: Yes, it's in the old building on Tchaikovsky Street..

Q: It's a very nice building.

MORGAN: That's a real joke. It's a dump! I mean, you're crowded. It's a small place.

Q: It's very crowded. When I visited the Embassy three years ago, the space for the Visa Section was extremely crowded.

MORGAN: Very poor conditions. I think that it's changed.

Q: The Soviets who were waiting for visas said that the conditions are terrible.

MORGAN: A few years ago the Soviet authorities dismissed all of the Russian employees. So the Embassy until recently has had none of the support staff to help us in communicating with and doing the staff work necessary to process the visa applicants. Let me interrupt this train of thought to make a point clear. I'm not sure how long this was the personnel policy before and after me, but during my time in Moscow all junior and mid-level Foreign Service Officers who had gone through the Russian language and area courses and were then assigned to the Embassy in Moscow got, with very few exceptions, two different work assignments during their tour.. They had one year in one Section and one year in another. For most of us the first year was in the Administrative, Consular, or Publications Procurement Section. I was in Publications Procurement. Then, during the second year, you were assigned to the Political or Economic Sections, depending on your background. My second year was spent in the Political Section. If you went to Moscow as the Science Officer, a highly specialized assignment, it was different. For example, Dick Funkhouser was the Economic Counselor during his whole tour. If you were

assigned as DCM, that's what you were. But most of us had come into the Russian program at the junior or middle level and went to Moscow as middle level officers. There was nobody below us. That was the program, and I thought that I should make that clear.

Q: All right. Where did you live and what kind of Embassy regulations did you live under -- from Personnel? And what kind of Soviet regulations were you subject to?

MORGAN: We had two main apartment houses some distance from the Embassy: at *Sorok pyat* (45) Leninsky Prospekt, the one we were assigned to, and another similar one whose name I forget. The Soviets assigned us the space, as they did all foreigners living in Moscow. They were supposedly "new, modern buildings.", but that was all: "new".

Our building was a nine-story shaft, in the sense that it had one staircase up the middle of our wing of this enormous U-shaped monster. Everyone on that "shaft" was from the American Embassy, with the exception of maybe one or two American correspondents. One of them was really a reputedly KGB "employee" named Ed Stevens, who lived on one of the lower floors. There were two apartments on each floor. Each family was there for two years, coincidentally with their tours of duty. Our neighbors were the Perrys, Kirks, Semlers, Morans and others. We were all good friends and neighbors. You better be under those circumstances.

Of course, there was a big, ever-alert guard at the entrance. Allegedly there to protect us (from whom?), no one else could come in but us or other authorized diplomats. Additionally, we had a so-called concierge on the ground floor. Since she helped us in no way I presumed she was just the secondary line of defense to make sure that we didn't do anything "unauthorized or unobserved". Her main function was to suffer our curses as we went by her whenever the elevator didn't work -- which was frequently. We lived on the ninth floor. It seemed that the elevator never worked on what we called "commissary days" when the Embassy Commissary received a shipment of milk, lettuce, and fresh vegetables, which came in from Finland. That would be the day when we would come home with huge cases of groceries which lasted a couple of weeks, at least. But the elevators wouldn't work, due to "technical difficulties."

On our last day in Moscow, we were all ready to leave for good. Our kids and suitcases were out at the elevator -- and, of course, it didn't work. So down we went, lugging our bags and baggage. Of course, now, there is a procedure to go through on your way out. This was a happy moment. The concierge was there, grinning. We said goodbye. I said that the elevator still wasn't working. I had to give her my last words in impeccable Russian: "You got to the moon, but you can't even get an elevator to the ninth floor! So that was my farewell to the USSR. Smell a little bit of paranoia?..."

Q: As an anecdote, you said that you had an American correspondent in your building who was really a KGB agent?

MORGAN: Yes, reportedly

Q: What paper did he represent?

MORGAN: He was one of the top correspondents. I think that he represented the AP Associated Press, or perhaps it was a British paper.. We all suspected that he was a KGB agent. There has been some discussion about this in recent months about an American correspondent who was in Moscow for a number of years. He was accused by "Time" magazine of being a KGB agent. Then came Warren Zimmermann's (DCM at the time), and our Department's responses, in part, to that. Everyone serving in Moscow gets a share of his information from people who are tied into the KGB in some way. The KGB is one of the best sources of information. Does that make you an "agent"? If you know about your source you make allowances for it. We, in the Embassy, more or less knew who is what, though not always.

Another news agency American was Shapiro who had been in Moscow for 30 or 40 years. He was considered reliable. How can you survive that? How can you be tolerated in the Soviet Union and have that kind of knowledge -- and not have some sort or another of a connection with the KGB? But I think that Ed Stevens, by the way, "alluded" that he was closely tied with the KGB. But an "agent," using KGB information, often was spreading "disinformation," along with good information. Such an agent is probably paid, just as the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) has people who are recruited to provide information and at times disseminate some. However, Stevens, as I remember when I was in the Political Section, was known as a source of potentially flawed information.

Q: Did you ever have any social contact with him?

MORGAN: Yes. He was at cocktail parties I went to, and I saw him about our apartment "shaft". He was not a "friend" in any real sense. Also, correspondents live a different life than diplomats do. They are always after different stories, which ultimately appear in the media or publications. At the time I was in Moscow the American community was very small. It was just about limited to correspondents and diplomats. There was also a delightful American Catholic priest whose position had been there since the time of Litvinov-Roosevelt agreements in the early 1930's. There were no resident businessmen, apart from an American Express representative. However, I think that even he was a Russian national. I don't think that he was an American. So, we "fed" on each other -- and still do. Correspondents are marvelous sources of information.

Q: Could you tell us a little bit more about the demographics of the foreign community there and, in particular, the American community, and their role?

MORGAN: I can't give you the number of people in the foreign community. There must have been about 50 or more full-fledged embassies. They were there for their own reasons. The British, the French -- the NATO embassies, if you will -- were there as normal embassies in the capital of an "enemy" country, the Soviet Union. The Ambassadors of these NATO countries would get together and have regular meetings. The people in the British, French, and Canadian Embassies were probably our closest social and professional contacts. We got together for cocktail parties and small dinners. They were small because our apartments were small. You could get six or eight people in our dining room for dinner, and that was it. You could have a "stand up" cocktail party or buffet, and there were an awful lot of them. As a matter of fact -- and I am now rather "picky" about it -- that was probably, believe it or not, one of the greatest pressures on us in those two years in Moscow. This way of life meant going out an awful lot --

for personal and professional survival. Just to be able to talk to people. Also, you needed to exchange information with people. You needed to tell stories, just plain old stories about life. These social contacts provided a means to “let loose.” In a very closed society, that is what you have to do. This is how you can be human.

Also, to get back to your question as to what it’s like to live in the Soviet Union, given Russian history and authoritarian realities. Some foreigners lived there for a number of years. Some of them were really “bilingual” or even “multilingual.” Press people would show up on these occasions, but it was usually American Embassy functions within the Embassy or with other diplomats. There were rarely Soviets who showed up, and if so, very “authorized” bureaucrats. You rarely tried to invite Soviets to your house. The chances were “zero” that they would show up. We had acceptances from Soviet acquaintances, but practically never had the honor of their coming. Of course to Spaso House, the Ambassador’s residence was something different. But he also never was certain who would arrive at the front door. We in attendance had fun guessing who’d come to his affairs.

My wife had one special experience. If I may diverge here, I will mention this because it was to us a very special example of the realities of the Soviet Union. I was on a trip to Central Asia shortly after President Kennedy was assassinated in November, 1963. When I came back, my wife said that she had had a phone call. She knew well that she had to be careful about her calls, which might be harassing KGB calls to shake her up while I was absent. They are seldom from friendly Russians who are calling to find out what the price of eggs is in New York. Although Russians lived in other wings of this huge enclave of perhaps 200 apartments, some with more than one family to an apartment, they didn’t dare to contact you directly, unless authorized. You might look out the window, see a funeral, and realize that one of them had died. However, you never had any direct contact with ordinary Soviets. That was a near impossibility.

My wife received one of these rare telephone calls. We knew that it had been “taped,” as all of our phones were. The man concerned was a young Russian in tears. He wanted to know how saddened he was by Kennedy’s assassination and that most Russians felt as he did. I came on the phone and he went on and on, recalling how he and my wife had met and he wanted us to know how ashamed he was of the Soviet control system and had been caught up in it when he had accepted a dinner invitation to our house some months before.

He had actually met my wife when I was away on a trip the previous summer. She was out with the children at the diplomatic, or almost totally diplomatic beach on the Moscow River, where the Soviets allowed us to swim. This man came up to her as she was reading a James Bond novel. He started speaking to her in English. It was most unusual in itself that such a contact would be made. It was a beach scene, and there are no “barriers” around the area. However, ordinary Soviets don’t go there. If a Russian went there, he would be picked up by the police. They would be interrogated and asked, “What are you doing?” Probably, they would just be whisked away.

So she was approached by this fellow who spoke quite good English. It ended up that she gave him our telephone number. He called again, a few days later, while I was still away. My wife said, “Come on over.” He said that he would like to come over. When I returned to Moscow, we

set up a date for him to drop in for a drink and have dinner. I even called him back on the phone so that the Soviet authorities would know about it and that is was totally on the up and up. He said that he had been told that he could not accept but he had asked for reconsideration. So we thought that he must be a KGB officer. We even arranged to have him picked up by an American Embassy car. This was so above board We even learned more about who he was -- a writer of some sort. The bottom line of all of this is that the driver went to pick him up, and there was no such address whatsoever. The whole thing had vanished. It really upset my wife.

Back to you question about the diplomatic community. While the most numerous ties contacts were with representatives of the Scandinavian and NATO countries, we also had contacts with the Indians, Indonesians, Arabs, and so on. Many of these colleagues had their own special functions to perform. India's mission, for example, had its special relations with the Soviets. The Arabs were something else, but most had particular issues to pursue because of their geographical proximity to the USSR and that they were largely Third-World, trying to maintain a balance with the West and the Communist world.

The African countries had "Lumumba University," established by the Soviets to teach the African people of newly free nations, how "evil" the capitalist countries were, and particularly the United States, and how wonderful the Soviet system was. These students went back to their own countries, fully trained in Russian and in Russian techniques and ideology. These countries obviously had somewhat different kinds of diplomatic missions than we did. Most of these non-NATO and non-Western embassies were there to make sure that the Soviet Union was not harming them but, rather, was giving them support. The Cuban mission obviously had a very special relationship with the Soviets. Once in front of our apartment there was a very dramatic, special parade. Groups were assembled by bus loads to applauded Fidel Castro with great gusto. After he went by, calm returned and away they went in the organized buses..

I can't leave this story without telling you about the special "access" these non-Western diplomats had to Soviet sources. Their apartments were often filled with exceptional works of Russian art and pre-Revolutionary antiques. I remember we were once invited by the Second Secretary of the Indonesian Embassy to come to dinner. There were just my wife and I and he and his wife present. Very soon after we arrived and had had drinks, he took us back to his spare bedroom. It was covered, top to bottom, and all over the floor with magnificent, really "genuine" 13th to 19th century Russian religious ikons. There were paintings -- forbidden paintings under the Soviet system -- by contemporary, "impressionist" Russian artists. They were "good buys" -- very good buys. When you left the Soviet Union, you could sell anything that you wanted -- your car, for example, and the kind of "junk" that you wanted to get rid of at a yard sale, for example. Only embassy people came -- from most of the Arab countries, India, Indonesia, etc. They "swarmed" through our apartment. They took my clothes out of the closets. They would give me almost any price I asked. They were prepared to buy everything that we had, except that, obviously, we didn't want to sell most of it. The Sudanese ambassador bought my beat-up old British Ford! So this was one aspect of the "unique" nature of Moscow society among the Diplomatic Corps.

Q: Did you use the diplomatic community as a source of information, say diplomats from the non-aligned countries, for example?

MORGAN: Yes, indeed. But they were very poorly informed. Most of what they had in the way of basic political and economic information came from us. We were trained, we were the experts, we were the major power. They knew that, even though Moscow and Washington were at odds, what we were told and how we were told it, was significant to them. It probably was useful to them. Now, how reliable they were as sources of information to us was another question.. That didn't mean that there were not well-informed, professional and intelligent people among them. However, you had to be careful. Were they in the pay of the KGB or even innocently passing on to us disinformation? The amount of useful, reliable information which you could obtain from them was surprisingly limited. Some, of course, had deep ties -- family and other -- into the Soviet society. Some had lived there for years. Others had a abetter life in Moscow than in their own countries.

Q: I should have asked this question before we began to discuss your time in Moscow. Did you have any kind of special security training before you went to Moscow -- on how to behave, the KGB, and so forth?

MORGAN: Oh, yes. "Training" probably is too formal a word. I don't remember that there was any course which you attended for a week or so. We did have to go through a security briefing given by SY (Office of Security). We were warned that we would be followed and that the Soviets would try to get us to "defect." They talked about Soviet KGB "methodology". But this was the kind of the thing that you would have picked up anyway by reading the "Washington Post." It wasn't any particular kind of "inside" information. The security people, for example, finally discovered the place where all of the tapping of the Embassy was done. One day the "Seabees"...

Q: What's a "Seabee"?

MORGAN: A "Seabee" is an engineering, plumbing, technical, or electronic specialist from a Navy Construction Battalion on loan to the State Department for construction work in the American Embassy in Moscow. The American Embassy building had been built during the Stalin era. Stalin couldn't abide the fact that our previous building had been practically under the Kremlin Wall. He wanted to get us away from Red Square and gave us this building on the Ring Road, Ulitsa Tchaikovskogo. It was reportedly "built" for us, but in fact was constructed for VIP Soviet authorities. It was a nine story apartment type building in a nice district between the Moscow River and the Kremlin, with a big courtyard. It would have been a great residence for senior officials of the Communist Party. Therefore, the building was already totally "bugged" with electronic listening devices, since above all the KGB had to listen in on their own leaders. From Stalin's point of view the building was perfect for us. It was making Stalin's dream come true, because it got us out of Red Square and into a well "surveyed" embassy. So in the late 1940's or early 1950's, I think it was, the Embassy moved to the building on Tchaikovsky Street, which, as I said, was all nicely "bugged." We knew that. We knew that something was wrong. The telephones in those days, as you probably know -- they're more sophisticated now -- were a wonderful source of information for the Soviets, because the telephone lines belonged to the Soviet Union. Their wires ran right down to your desk, and the phones made wonderful "speakers." Actually, the "speaker" was the telephone itself, because the "vibrator" on the

telephone takes your voice and converts it into minuscule vibrations. If you send these vibrations into the telephone wires, an electronic device can reconvert them into the words you actually use. But they can't make elevators work effectively! It's a matter of priorities.

What we did was to "unplug" the telephones by installing a kind of "circuit breaker" between the telephone instrument and the telephone wire. That broke the circuit, so that the sounds that came through the telephone could not get easily into the telephone lines, and the Soviets could no longer "tap" the telephones. For a long time we had known that they were doing this and probably had other tapping devices built into the building. We knew they were actively trying to listen in to our conversations because you could see them doing it. I could look out my office window and see on top of the adjoining building some but not all of the equipment they were using. We knew what they were doing. Once in a while we could see someone "fiddling around" with the machinery up there on top of the roof.

Q: Do you remember the church across the street from the Embassy?

MORGAN: Yes, in the back.

Q: I was told that the church was completely taken over by the KGB.

MORGAN: Oh, I am sure of that. Also, the building across the street and in front of the Embassy a big apartment/office building and obviously was being used by the Internal Security Forces. What I'm getting at is that we knew that there was an "inner" listening system, in our building, but we couldn't find it. The Seabees came in while I was there. Behind my free standing, hot water radiator they found the first evidence of where the listening devices of the "inner" listening system were. They ripped out the radiator and went at it. What they discovered was that behind the radiator, to make it harder to find the listening device behind it, was a pinhole. The Seabees found it because the paint job wasn't very good behind the radiator and they used "sound waves" beamed through the whole Embassy wiring system. Out came the first metal, straw shaped device about six inches long. That went into a total wiring system buried in the middle of the walls throughout the entire Embassy. So the Seabees went through the Embassy, ripping out entire walls and uncovering this system. But that story is a long way from your question about security training I was given!

Q: I asked you whether you had been warned and briefed about security before you went to Moscow.

MORGAN: Well, we knew or learned things like that. We also knew that we were being followed, we knew that the intention was to get me to "defect" to the Soviets and tell them all my secrets -- which I didn't have!

Q: Were you ever "approached" by the KGB?

MORGAN: Oh, yes. During my first year as a Publications Procurement Officer...Shall I tell you now about the two jobs I had in the Embassy in Moscow? Would that fit in now?

Q: Yes, why not describe your work, and then we can work around to the security aspect. You started work in the Embassy in Moscow in September, 1962, as a Publications Procurement Officer.

MORGAN: Right. There were two of us -- Bob German and I. The briefings before I left Washington were at the CIA, the Library of Congress, and so on.

Q: This was a briefing on how to do your job?

MORGAN: Yes. The job, publications procurement, was exactly that. I bought books and periodicals. In those days -- and from the beginning of our diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in the 1930's, through World War II, and since then -- the PPO job was probably the single most important source of intelligence about the Soviet Union. (PPO is obviously the acronym.) This was because our contacts with anti-Soviet agents and defectors in and from the Soviet Union were limited. As you know, the entire world of the CIA and other such agencies is to decide what is good intelligence, what is important, and what goes to the President. What is decided on the basis of such information is another matter. The Penkovsky Affair was the big spy/intelligence story of our time, or at least my tour there. In fact, my colleague, Bob German, was accused of being involved in that case. I'll get back to that later.

The publications procurement job involves going out and buying a copy of every new book that you could lay your hands on published in the Soviet Union, "period". We called this "WF," a not so terribly secret acronym for the funds given us by the CIA. It stood for the "Working Fund," and the Soviets must have known this. We had a delightful Russian national packer down in the Embassy storage area. He would bundle up books for us, once a week, to be shipped out by diplomatic pouch. He must have known the purpose of his labors and the source of his salary, or should I say salaries. That's how we shipped the books out to 19 agencies, as I remember, in the U. S. Government. The principal customer was "WF." They (the CIA) paid all of the bills, then, back in Washington, the various agencies would resettle the accounts. The second biggest customer was the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress wanted a copy of every new book, magazine, newspaper and map published in the Soviet Union, except novels! They would scold me if I sent them a novel by mistake.

Q: Would it affect their color scheme?

MORGAN: I would like to accept that as the rationale, but I don't think that was the reason. Other customers included the Library of the State Department, the Department of Defense, and other major U. S. Government agencies. I can't remember which ones they were in those days, but agencies concerned with the environment, education, and so forth. So all I had to do was to settle my accounts a month later or so with the "Working Fund," and then the other Washington agencies settled the bills with "WF"..

The actual modus operandi was that Bob German and I would divide up the Soviet Union. We would make trips to every single republic and to Siberia. One or the other of us were on the road, most of the time. Usually a given trip lasted for about a week. We would go to the capitals of the various Soviet republics, because we were pretty much restricted by the authorities from going

anywhere else. They wouldn't let us into smaller places -- and certainly not to the more interesting places. Leningrad was, thank Heavens, one of the exception.

In Moscow, Bob or I went to Bookstore No. 1 every Monday. We had a marvelous relationship with the lady there who ran the shop. She said to us once, "You help me to fulfill my monthly quota!" She loved us. She set books aside for us, as did many of the other, specialized bookstores in Moscow, and particularly the Map Library. We had a special, and very good contract with the U.S. Army Map Service. In turn, we had a special arrangement with the guy at the Map Store in Moscow. He knew where his maps were going, but he could meet his quota with our help. He would curse us for buying maps by the dozens to ship to "the enemy", but then grin an appreciation whenever Bob or I would go into his store, and Bob or I would do quite often. The Map Store had a different name in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg.

However, in Moscow the principal outlet was Bookstore No. 1 -- I can't remember the full name in Russian. When the bookstore lady got in a shipment of new books, she always set aside one copy for us. I would arrive at the shop and go back to her office. She would pull out of a cupboard stacks -- sometimes 100 or several hundred -- new books. I would take every one of those books. In pencil, up in the corner I would put 0, 5, 15, 100 or whatever. Mentally, I had to figure out which of my "customers" wanted this particular book, and how many copies. What I did was to turn to the back of the book, look at the "tirage" -- number of copies published -- and thereby whether this was a relatively "rare" or limited publication book.

Q: The term is "the number of books in print."

MORGAN: Yes. Then I had to be careful. If I took all 100 copies of the book, then she would say, "I can't do that, because I have to provide this to this or that other customer." So you had to figure out how to settle this. Our "coup" the book by a Soviet general -- Sokolov, as I remember -- on new Soviet nuclear power strategy. Somehow, this book got through the distribution system and was published. The U. S., military, and others at home, went wild about that one. We bought about 300 copies of it over a period of time. It was "the" document used by the U. S. military for years as "the Bible" as far as our relationship was with the Soviets in terms of our nuclear power interface. That is just an example. The Russians were very precise. They don't "lie" unless they have to, for some ideological reason. They are proud of their scientific research, their map making, and all of this. So we knew that what we were buying was pretty good stuff -- unless it was deliberately intended to mislead us.

But that's the way we did our job. We marked the copies. Then the bookseller might say, "Oh, I only have 10 copies. I don't have the 20 copies you want." Then she'd say, "Why do you want 20 copies? Who back there [in the United States wants 20 copies?]" And she'd laugh. She couldn't care less.

I would go to other bookstores, although less often, all over Moscow and the Soviet Union. I went to Leningrad, probably every two months. Kiev we did every two or three months. The *Dom Knigi* (House of Books) in Leningrad had the same arrangement with us as Book Store No. 1, in Moscow. They loved to have us come, and were even more friendly and less "heavy". The farther you were from Moscow, the more relaxed the booksellers were and the more they

enjoyed it -- with some exceptions, and that's where the KGB came in. They knew what we were doing but they didn't dare stop us. If they did, we could, although to a less effective degree, pull down the curtains in the U. S. on them and make their purchasing of U. S. books more difficult. I hope that they knew in their heart of hearts that their information, which we were getting, was far more valuable than what they could get out of public sources in the U. S.

To go back to your question about the context and atmosphere of our trips during my first year in Moscow as PPO, that was where Bob German was caught. "Caught" is the wrong word, but that's what happened, in connection with the Penkovsky story. Bob was publicly named as having been in a certain bookstore, taking information from Penkovsky. It was in the newspapers as part of the material bought up at Penkovsky's "trial," at which Penkovsky was found guilty and subsequently executed. I was not included as one of the "evil" Pops. We concluded German was singled out in order to blacken or at least throw suspicion on our book-buying and perhaps caution our book store helpers.

Q: For our readers, could you give us a brief overview of the Penkovsky affair?

MORGAN: Yes. Penkovsky was a Soviet military officer who defected to us "inside" the Soviet Union. Those who defect decide that they wish to associate themselves with the United States or another country. Those who stay in their country are the greatest sources of intelligence because they remain "plugged into" the system. He was a Soviet Air Force officer, I believe, although I am not sure. It doesn't matter. He was high enough up to have access to some very interesting material at the time of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. This relationship with Penkovsky lasted over a period of years. Our Embassy doctor was an Air Force officer. I don't think he was the CIA Chief of Station. Anyway, he was the principal contact with Penkovsky, "under the lights and by the bridge" as was reported in the Soviet press. The "doctor" was PNGed -- declared *Persona Non Grata* -- and kicked out of the Soviet Union.

What the KGB caught Penkovsky on was passing information over a lengthy period of time. But the most significant thing was that he -- as I understand it, though not from my own sources but from the newspapers -- was the principal source for information about Cuba over the years regarding what the Soviets were going to do and how they were going to do it. This climaxed after the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

Q: Did you ever meet him?

MORGAN: No. Good gracious, no American ever met him! That would be denied categorically. Americans assigned to go to the "lamp post" may have met him, but...

Q: What does that mean, "go to the lamp post"?

MORGAN: That's where they exchanged information and money, the traditional -- or at least written in spy novels, and Pravda -- way in which *espionki* (espion agents) do their business. They do it in a mail box, or by lamp poles, "under the bush," or something like that.

Q: You said that Bob German was approached by the KGB?

MORGAN: No. Well, no more than I was, in terms of being roughed up by some huge guy behind you. Harassment.

Q: Tell us a little bit about the harassment.

MORGAN: Well, middle of the night telephone calls. You're all set to go on a trip, and it's canceled. You go to the train station to catch a train, and you're not allowed to board it. Your permission has been canceled.

Q: When you say "harassment by telephone," what are we talking about?

MORGAN: Things like telephone calls at unusual hours and "heavy breathing." We used to get those at our apartment frequently, and in patterns. People would come to our apartment.

This story was not exactly harassment aimed at me, but I put it into the general Soviet anti-US antics. I was called in the middle of the night by the Embassy Duty Officer since I was on the Embassy fire team or its housing group. The story given me was that the building was on fire. One of our Marine Guards, who should have known better, had his replacement or a new Marine on duty for the first night. The new Marine was brand new to Moscow and, poorly briefed, assigned to burn the classified waste for the day. The place that you burned the classified material was up in the Embassy building attic. The poor guy burned the material in the wrong place. He actually started his fire next to the open ventilation system of the entire Embassy. Flames and smoke were going through the vents. Well, we had to call the police and finally called the fire department. That's when I was called in. Several other officers of the Embassy and I stood there, preventing the Fire Department from getting into where they wanted to go, which was the Code Room. They kept insisting, "The fire is back here on this level." We kept saying, "It's upstairs! You can see it up there. That's where the flames are."

Q: You kept them from entering which building?

MORGAN: We prevented the Soviet firemen and other "authorities" from going into that part of the Embassy where the Code Room was, which is where they really wanted to go. They used every ruse (I wonder where we got that word?) they could to say that the fire was back there. They said, "That's where the water system is." We kept saying, "No, the fire is up in the attic." And then the firemen proceeded to put the fire out. I think that we could have as effectively put the fire out. Of course, the Marine Guard involved was on the next plane out of the Soviet Union.

Q: Was anyone in the Embassy, to the best of your knowledge, ever "roughed up"?

MORGAN: Yes, or poisoned, which was one of the principal ways of doing it.

Q: Tell us about it.

MORGAN: Say you are on a trip. You have dinner. You always travel in pairs -- like nuns. Someone slips something into your food. When I say "poison," it can be anything. You wake up

in the middle of the night and wish you were dead -- in pain and so forth. It never happened to me, but to several of those with me at the time. My "misadventures" of that sort were in Eastern Europe. In Romania I had a woman come into my shower to proposition me.. That's the closest I came to being poisoned!

I would say that almost every U. S. military officer, who traveled all the time, has had an experience with poisoning or drugging. And often the whole party of who were together, sometimes other NATO attachés They were traveling in areas that were very "questionable." Their Soviet counterparts wanted to discourage them from such trips, or just simple harassment.

Q: How can they be sure that it is "poisoning"?

MORGAN: You often can't be sure, which is why they the Soviets did it they way they did..

Q: What I meant was that when I was traveling in the Soviet Union, I personally suffered from food poisoning several times.

MORGAN: They know the way to do it! Or how about just plain bad food?

Q: They got me that time.

MORGAN: You don't know, nor did we always know. You often can't prove anything. By the time they get to our own doctor, so that the contents of their stomach can be analyzed, they're "clean" -- they're purged. I don't know of anybody that died in one of these "drugging: episodes. But the object is to intimidate and/or ultimately to "get through" to you. They try to find out your weaknesses -- whether sexual, or you can't stand to be around mice, or whatever. They do their best to "turn" you psychologically. Then, at the right time, they make the right offer to you, or simple blackmail. I'm rather proud of saying that none of them ever succeeded in "turning" a Foreign Service Officer, or at least in Moscow. The "forces" did get through to one in Warsaw, using sex. Some of us didn't do as well. After you read the latest "spy" novel, or even non-fiction, you wonder whether the effort was worth all the resources that the KGB put in, particularly when they profited so seldom their efforts. But then, every Ames is worth it to them, as Penkovsky was to us..

In fact, the easiest target is one who is ideologically favorable to the Soviet Union, or just needs the money. That happened in a number of cases in the 1930's and 1940's, in the early days when communism seemed an attractive alternative to capitalism. But usually, like the Ames case, it's a matter of money, sex, or greed. Another motivation is that somebody is "mad" at his boss. The KGB would work on that. They would come across such a fact, and use it. Or they would try to trap your wife in some weakness or indiscretion; they would try to find something that would cause you to "step over the line."

In most cases the harassment, including drugging, is intended to keep you "on edge" and to let you know who's "in control, the boss." Let you know whose country you are in.

Q: What sort of regulations were you subjected to from the Soviet as well as the American side?

MORGAN: The Soviet side was easy. The number one technique was to use travel controls.

Q: What was that, specifically?

MORGAN: You couldn't travel more than 25 kilometers, I think it was -- or 40 kilometers outside of Moscow without Soviet permission. You couldn't travel to certain areas at all -- prohibited zones. A large part of Moscow and the "open areas" were also off limits. You couldn't take a trip without the permission of the UPRK (*Upravleniia po Diplomaticheskoi Korpusom* -- Office of the Diplomatic Corps), a branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but really run by the KGB. So travel was a primary and specific means of control.

Q: Tell us about the procedures you would have to go through to get that permission.

MORGAN: You went first to one of our Foreign Service Nationals, Yelena, in our personnel office. A charming, highly qualified FSN, who we understood to be a Lt. Colonel in the KGB.. She would get you tickets to the Bolshoi ballet and various special cultural programs. She would do all of these "wonderful" things for you, like half a pint jar (you brought the jar) of Black Beluga caviar for \$25, or was it \$15?. Only she could do them. You couldn't go down to the Bolshoi Theater and buy, say, three tickets. I could try. Sometimes it worked but usually it didn't, especially if the box office found out you were a diplomat. She'd get tickets when nobody else could get tickets. So you used her. However, incidentally, she also took all travel itineraries when she got the tickets.

May I interrupt to tell a story. I was tutoring, doing some teaching, at the fourth grade of my grammar school behind my house where I now live in Alexandria, Virginia.. I had two Russian kids in the class -- one from St. Petersburg, and the other one from Moscow. The parents of both of them came to the school for a "show and tell" night. One of the fathers came up to me and chatted at great length. He was asking me about my time in Moscow. I mentioned the UPRK. He said, "Ah, I was a junior diplomat in that office!" He said, "I didn't like to be mean to you diplomats.. I thought it was terrible, but it was my job. Today (at my job in the Russian Embassy in Washington) it is very hard to stop being communist and authoritarian!" You don't just undo all your previous life-style. His office is now in charge of commercial affairs.. He was thinking of quitting the service and going into business as a capitalist travel agent. But it's very hard to get that old way of doing things out of your system.

Yelena handled all of the travel for our Embassy officers. So you would give her an itinerary. When I was the Publications Procurement Officer, I laid out the travel plans myself. I didn't need permission from my superiors but I did send my proposed trip to other offices in case there were any projects I might do for others. We were supposed to "cover" the Soviet Union as well as possible. The travel money came from other sources. It wasn't paid by the State Department, so we didn't have to worry about funding authority as much as other Embassy officers..

I would give Yelena my itinerary. Then you would wait and wait. Usually, the day before your scheduled departure she would phone and say, "Oh, Mr. Morgan, I'm very happy to tell you that there is room for you on the train." or at the hotels. That was always the way she put it. Or, in the

case of air travel, "We found a plane that goes there!" What it meant was that you had permission to go. Or sometimes she would say, "Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Morgan, there's no room left on the train," or, "Oh, Mr. Morgan, there's no plane that goes there!" That was the way they handled it. Sometimes an hour before I was to leave, she would call and say, "Oh, I made a terrible mistake! The train has been canceled." So all of my plans went out the window, in terms of getting out of Moscow to do part of my job. It was very frustrating.

The same procedures and results happened for all of the other offices in the Embassy. So my next year in the political section our trips were subject to the whims of the Soviet authorities. Only then I also was subject to the fiscal strictures of the State Department.

I mention travel controls as the primary harassment thrown at us. There was just that idea of inefficiency mixed in with control over your daily lives. You weren't in charge. They were. And then the idea that your phones were "tapped," or whatever you want to call it. The Soviets called it "regulations." No way. It meant simply, "We will keep our eyes on you." There were purely Soviet realities. For example, shopping for food on the local market. Although we used our commissary and imported food, we did try the open markets for some things, or just to get out and shop. My wife came back from the market one day with four, wonderful pears. I asked, "How much did you pay for them?" She said, "I paid \$8 for these four." I said, "Well, how much in rubles?" She said, "Well, 80; you divide by 10." I said, "You don't divide by 10. It's the same thing as \$80 for those four pears." But everyone had to suffer that, obviously most Soviets. That was the system, I guess, not the regulations.

Whenever they wanted to "get" you, or you were doing something which they didn't consider proper, they would just "PNG" you -- declare you "*persona non grata*." If you had "crossed the line" -- their line -- they would say, "You are engaging in conduct not suitable for a diplomat." That was always the term used. But I would argue that many of those :PNGed were in retaliation (reciprocity?) for one we had kicked out -- for cause. The other half of your question concerned U. S. Government controls or regulations on us. I never felt really "controlled." I never was told, "Do this or do that." You were treated like an officer and a gentleman, if you will, well-trained linguistically and in area studies, etc. And everyone -- all your bosses -- treated you accordingly. Foy Kohler was my Ambassador during almost all of this period. He knew the Soviet system. He had been the head of the Voice of America. He knew what was expected of us. I never, ever, felt that someone was "directing" me. I might go to my bosses for advice and general instructions. I might say what had happened, or I would say that I was going on a trip and was seeking "input" on what I should look for in such and such a place or how best to undertake a project.

The only way I can really answer your question on U. S. controls on me while I was in the Soviet Union brings up a very interesting and fundamental question. And this point came clearly to me as I've pulled together the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training "Reader" or "Collection" of oral history interviews of fellow FSOs who have served in the Soviet Union. My impression from the views of others is that I think that it is fair to say that there are some with Soviet experience who might be considered as "soft" on the Soviets and people who are "hard" on them. A new Ambassador or supervisor would arrive. He would be looked at and, say, found to be very "rigid" and perhaps characterized as "anti-Soviet." These are extremes I am dealing with in using such words. Obviously we were all more to the center and conversant with the

complexities of the world we were dealing with. What I'm trying to say is that some FSOs were seen in terms of their over-all attitudes toward the USSR and Russia.

For example, take Ambassador Mac Toon. I had a series of bad experiences with him at an earlier stage, when he was my boss in the Political Section. We are talking now about inter-relationships in the Embassy, "control," mechanisms and so forth. Mac just considered, in my view, that the Soviets were a bunch of SOB's. His attitude was, "Don't be fooled by anything they do. Don't have anything to do with the artists, don't have anything to do with other such groups, because they don't have power." Really, I think, that attitude came, not so much from Mac's feelings about the Soviets as his impression that he was mistreated and misunderstood in his position on power -- especially when he was Ambassador. We didn't serve together then at that later point.

Subsequently and since he's retired, he has just gone on and on, at great length, in the same vein. He was appointed the head of a presidential commission to look into allegations that the Soviets had held American "prisoners of war" from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. He was on television and radio a year or so ago. He came out with the same old stories. He said, "When I served in Moscow, especially as Ambassador, they didn't relate to me, they didn't share their information with me." Well, of course they didn't. They had other people, they had other ways of conveying information to U.S. authorities. They didn't necessarily go through the American Ambassador in Moscow. So there was that kind of "school." You can call them "hard liners" or people who had basically only bad experiences in the Soviet Union, who were "PNGed," and who had reason to feel the way they do. Maybe they are a little "right wing," maybe they are a little less "liberal," if you will.

And then there are others, like Peter Semler, my colleague at Columbia and in Moscow, and a number of other officers, who knew and appreciated Soviet history and culture. They had more of a place in their hearts for the "Russian" side of things. I am exaggerating this in part, but there was that sort of feeling. I'm giving you this more for the real answer to the issue of "control" over the officers in our Embassy in Moscow I guess I'm sort of talking about "thought control"!!

Certain people were in positions of authority or influence, for example, military attachés, bosses in the Political Section, the Ambassador, or the Deputy Chief of Mission. They would tend to react to what you had done -- or not done. This could have been advance guidance or after the fact. You might have your hands "whacked" for having done something which the Ambassador, the DCM, or your boss felt was "uninformed." They might say, "You almost asked to be arrested. You put the Embassy in a difficult position. Do you realize, Mr. Morgan, that the U.S. Government has spent two years training you for service in the Soviet Union? They've spent all of this money, and you're in a very important job. Now you're about to be 'PNGed.' Do you realize that all of this effort is now 'down the drain,' just because you did this stupid thing of walking up to this man on the street corner and chatting with him?" Obviously, I'm making up a "speech-story". I wasn't PNGed. But there was that anxiety -- especially felt by some of U. S. military people assigned to the Embassy in Moscow. They were in the most precarious position of being PNGed or doing something that State Department officials questioned.

The military were very daring and got themselves into very difficult positions. That's why some

of them were “poisoned” at dinner, and so on. And the Ambassador would “go through the ceiling” -- particularly with the military. Some of the military would think, “Who the hell does he think he is? He’s supposed to be the American Ambassador. Why isn’t he ‘with’ me on this?”

I’ve heard many stories about Ambassador Llewellyn “Tommy” Thompson and Ambassador George Kennan. They would say, perhaps, “Why did they ‘blow’ this thing? They know what the Soviets are like. They know that they’re impossible to deal with rationally, in some ways. So deal with them as we know them. If you don’t, you’re going to be ‘PNGed.’” Or, “You’re going to create serious problems for the United States Government. In some cases just your being arrested or beaten up might have tremendous bilateral significance. It could even result in World War III, if you will.” That’s what I’m trying to say in terms of U.S. control by the Embassy over what you do.

There was control. It was subtle control. It was a varied type of control. The only explicit controls that I can think of was that any time you met with a Soviet citizen, you were to report it to the Security Officer. That is security control. Most of us didn’t do this. For example, I was in touch with Soviet citizens all the time. I wasn’t going to prepare little memos about what the Intourist guide said or did to me, or whatever. I think that, in Kathmandu, Nepal, maybe, it’s better to report something like this, but not in the Soviet context, where it happened repeatedly. Of course we did report to various elements in the Embassy, Security included, when we had something to say about the contact and the setting in which it took place. Full trip reports were of course made, but not to bookstores in Moscow That’s the only direct or technical control that I can think of.

However, as I said, there was all kinds of “indirect guidance.”

Q: My impression is also that there was a requirement that you travel with another American.

MORGAN: Oh, yes. That’s another form of control. Right.

Q: Were your travel companions limited to Americans or could it be with “good guys” people from friendly countries?

MORGAN: You could, in certain circumstances, travel with “good guys.” I never traveled with non-Americans, but I know that some of the U. S. military did. I know that the American military often traveled with their Canadian counterparts, because they all were traveling all the time. They couldn’t afford to “wipe out” their staff by requiring travel in pairs of Americans. However, it was largely Canadians and British -- but not French.

Q: Where would the U. S. military travel and why?

MORGAN: Any place and every place that they could get to.

Q: To collect intelligence?

MORGAN: Oh, yes, or shall we call it information? That’s the only reason that they were there

in Moscow. They were not there to work out bilateral agreements with the Soviets or sell them arms, as we do in many other countries!

Q: While we're on the subject, I think that it's a good time to cover CIA's role at that time in Moscow.

MORGAN: Yes. CIA had what was called a small "Station" or group in Moscow. It just wasn't something one talked about, especially in-country. You knew who they were, in most cases. I don't think that I was ever surprised, because it was such a small group. You knew that the Embassy doctor was from CIA, because of the Penkovsky case. He was an Air Force doctor seconded to CIA. The Chief of Station, also served as the Embassy Security Officer. He and I took Russian language lessons together two times a week. The Russian teacher was there throughout the time I was in Moscow. She would just "pick" at me. A new Chief of Station arrived just before I left, Dick Stolz; a great guy who recently retired from the CIA in a most senior position. I must tell you a side-bar at this point. I mention his name because when he retired he did so with lots of publicity. He was in charge of the clandestine, "black", side of CIA operations (the Directorate of Operations or DO). He was one of those mentioned concerning the Ames case because of his position..

Q: What does the "black" side mean?

MORGAN: Les, this is not an interview on the CIA. However, as is well publicized, the Agency is basically divided into Intelligence Research (Directorate of Intelligence) and Operations (Directorate of Operations). The "black" side is the Operations side, the DO.

Q: Does the Operations side include "covert action"?

MORGAN: Yes, covert action. The other people are analysts who analyze books and other, written material, including reports from the field. Dick Stolz arrived shortly before I left Moscow. We got to know each other right off. He said, "Bill, you know, I've got to do some travel. I'd like to go to Leningrad. I understand that you are going there on your final trip." I said, "Sure, I'd be glad to go with you." We got permission from the Soviets, in the sense I described above; that is, tickets etc. were available. We took off, and the plane landed at Leningrad airport. The pilot was maneuvering on one of the tarmacs. We were right in the middle of the main tarmac. We had landed and turned around and were about to move to the arrival gate. The pilot stopped the aircraft, right in the middle of the tarmac. Dick, sitting next to me, could see a plane landing -- coming down onto our tarmac. Dick was a very responsible, level-headed person, with a lot of experience. He said, "Bill, isn't that plane coming down where we are?" I said, "Yeah, it looks like it." He said, "But you don't seem concerned." I said, "Oh, I guess I don't feel particularly troubled." Well, this other plane kept coming down, and he said, "It's going to hit us!" I said, "It's a Soviet plane, and they can't afford to lose one." So the plane that had been about to land pulled up and flew right over us! Dick and I were together in the Soviet Union for a month or so more. Every place we went he would tell this story. He said, "Some day I will really understand the Soviets when I know that they consider a plane more important than human lives or because they can't afford to lose one."

The CIA had a very small Station in Moscow. It was in a very delicate situation. Obviously, I didn't know what they were doing, because I didn't have any "need to know." You might wonder why they were the principal suppliers of the funds for publications procurement and why they didn't have their own people doing it. Well, they were indeed the biggest "consumers" of published Soviet material and had been given responsibility in the Washington intelligence community to do financial analysis on the Soviet economy, rather than leave it to their Station in Moscow to do. Obviously, they also were recipients of State and Agricultural Departments reports which did a lot of analysis. All we had to do as Pops was to buy and package the books we bought and send them to the various Washington agencies. I should add that we also did periodicals but these we published routinely through Soviet sources. This free and efficient "flow" of information never became a problem; our office subscribed routinely along with Embassy subscriptions. We always bought independently, and enthusiastically, periodicals to which you couldn't subscribe, say from the Republic capitals and large cities. Somehow, editors in the boonies seemed a bit freer, or perhaps naive, what they published so you got some interesting insights into Soviet life in the far-away places.

When we would get back to the Embassy the books up on a shelf in the basement. We had a shelf for "WF", "LC," (Library of Congress), Interior, State, etc. -- and the names of all the other agencies which received books from us. I would open up the packages. Sometimes we'd only get half of the number I wanted.. The FSN packer, who had enough knowledge of the letters of the English alphabet to pack them, or keep them on the shelf if I indicated we needed to get some more : "to meet our quota". He understood that! Once a week -- I think that it was every Monday -- Igor, or whatever his name was -- would pack them up in bundles for shipment in the diplomatic pouch..

I don't think that I had to make any accounting for the books. In Washington they took what they got, gratefully, and bills went out. Once in while I'd get a cable or letter singling out some "treasure" they particularly appreciated, or a gentle "reminder/reprimand" if we strayed from target. (50 copies of "Gone with the Wind"?)

I only went to the Eastern European countries twice during my service in Moscow to encourage and give guidance to the part-time PPO's. That's how I got "approached in Bucharest!"

It wasn't a CIA "operation" at all. The CIA was just the principal "consumer" of books and publications and the paymaster. However, the State Department would "go wild" when they received some of these books. You can go to the Library of the State Department today and find some of those books on the shelves there. They continue to flow to the State Department -- probably not as many books, though. This program, during my time in Moscow, involved looking at virtually every book that was published. To use that position as "cover" for a CIA agent could have been very dangerous. It's very hard to do the PPO job, which is a full-time one. Think what would have happened if that person's other job were "blown." What would happen to the PPO job? It would just stop. You don't walk into that position easily. It was, traditionally, a Foreign Service job, and it was a good one. You need to know Russian, you travel, and you get to know Moscow and other cities as much as possible. We picked up our own "sense" of what was going on. I would do reports for the Political, Economic and Military Sections on things I had seen.

Q: While we're at it, could you tell me a little bit about the Embassy itself? What was the staffing and what were your relations with the people in the different parts of the Embassy?

MORGAN: During the time I was a PPO, I the FSN who wrapped up the books. He had some other functions as well, in Admin as I remember. I don't think that he was really a KGB agent, the poor soul. But, God love him, he had a terrible case of "B. O." I had an American administrative assistant who would not go down to that room when he was there. She could "smell" him.

We also had a nicely equipped Embassy library, run by an FSN, under my "guidance"; obviously me, I was the book man.. She told me one day that she had been a colonel in the KGB. She'd been "demoted" and threatened with dismissal by the KGB because she hadn't gotten enough information out of us. The Soviets were going to demote her to captain, or something like that. She was in tears and went on and on. She asked if I could do something. I think that her name was Yelena. She asked, "Couldn't you give me some little, interesting things that I can give to my bosses?" I told her to make up any stories she wanted. She continued on her job in the library and I never heard anything more. I guess she must have satisfied the KGB with U.S. "disinformation".

Then we had an Embassy wife who worked as our American part-time administrative staff person who kept our books and did our travel vouchers. She worked with us and helped downstairs, when "he" wasn't there..

On paper (to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and on the diplomatic list) I was assigned to the USIA operation. Officially, there was no USIS (United States Information Service) operation (in the Embassy in Moscow). I did some of the cultural exchange program work. The Soviets considered USIA as a propaganda agency and would only accept USIS's work in Press and Cultural Exchanges. They were aware that I also worked for USIA. Rocky Staples, Public Affairs Office and in charge of the USIA operation, was my immediate boss. As one of my USIA assignments, I took the Robert Shaw Chorale all over the Soviet Union -- right in the middle of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which was a fascinating story in itself. I took professors from the University of Michigan down to Chechen Ingush Autonomous Republic(s) which nobody ever heard of and never would have, except that Chechnya happens to be in the newspapers these days.. Such escort assignments gave added credence to my position. The Soviets liked it that way, too. I think they thought Publications Procurement belonged better in Cultural Affairs. We had a fairly "open" cultural exchanges program with the Soviets for many years.

Now on to my second year in Moscow: The Political Section had a Political Counselor, with Internal and External Political Units. I served in the Internal Political Unit. The officers assigned to that unit were the "Kremlin Wall" watchers, so to speak, dealing with internal Soviet matters. The External Unit was concerned with Soviet relations with third countries -- such as Indonesia, Cuba, and so forth. During my time in the Political Section the Political Counselors were Dick Davies and then Malcolm (Mac) Toon. There were two senior Political Officers under them as deputies and then a batch of Junior Officers. These junior officers were Jack Matlock, Peter Bridges, Bill Luers, and myself, under the boss, Ken Kerst, a U.S. Civil Service employee from

INR (Bureau of Intelligence Research) and a specialist in Soviet affairs. He was a wonderful person and a superb boss. Going back in this interview when we talked about bosses, I talked about Kerst as a sophisticated and human leader. He understood all of the complexities about the Soviet Union. He knew how to deal with and lead us as younger, inexperienced but learning FSOs. One of my colleagues, Peter Bridges, followed the arts and the literary types. He had a real challenge; his job was to talk to people that we weren't supposed to talk to, at least under our boss's boss's directions. That's a throw away thought, but an excellent example in my mind of how we did our job and under certain controls and leadership pressures.

The External Unit of the Political Section had, as I remember, a leader and two FSOs at the mid-to junior levels as was I and my three colleagues in Internal. They had area expertise, Africa and China/Vietnam. They all concentrated on USSR-rest of the world relations and how they affected the U.S. This involved such complex topics as Cuba, Vietnam, NATO, Disarmament, China, et al.

Dick Funkhouser, fellow Russian language student from FSI, was the Economic Counselor. Under him, we had an Agricultural Attaché from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, with an assistant as well. Finally, in the Economic Section, were Commercial and Science Officers and a State Department FSO Economic Officer.

The Administrative Section was relatively large. Jim Moran was the Administrative Counselor. He was great, because he really knew what the administrative function was all about and he also knew how to deal with people. He had a bunch of young FSO's assigned to him. We had some Foreign Service Staff people, including a Budget and Fiscal Officer and a Security Officer. We had a Personnel Officer who was from the Staff Corps but also had Jack Perry, an FSO going through this multi-assignment two year program. I would say that about half of the people in the Administrative Section were Foreign Service Staff specialists and the other half were on the first part of their tour as language and area FSOs. They went to the Administrative Section instead of being Publications Procurement Officers or working in the Consular Section.

The Consular Section, was headed by Tom Fain, fellow language and area colleague; he stayed in that position for two years. In those days the Consular Section was busy and important. Not that it isn't always important, but it was a particularly challenging job at the time. There were a lot of Americans who had come to the Soviet Union in the 1920's and 1930's and had become Soviet citizens but who now wanted to go home to the U. S., especially people from Soviet Armenia. There was total Soviet control of all exits from the Soviet Union for everybody. "Tourists" didn't exist. There were "official" visits, all tightly controlled, all on a "quid pro quo" basis. For every Soviet scientist who visited the U. S. you had an American scientist who could come to the Soviet Union. The Soviets going to the U. S. were all well briefed on the "evils" to anticipate in that capitalist country. Additionally, most Soviet travelers were ineligible for an American visa since they were members of the Communist Party. So it was necessary to obtain waivers from the U. S. Attorney General for these Soviet scientists, for example, to get a visa to enter the U. S. In addition to Tom Fain, Jack Matlock was the other Consular Officer there for my first year.

There were two officers and a very excellent, support staff of four or five Russian FSNs.

Excellent, but also KGB officers. Nevertheless, since there is something absorbing and demanding about consular work, I sensed, and learned from what my colleagues said and I could see, that maybe these Foreign Service Nationals were quite proud of working at the American Embassy. Incidentally, the Soviet authorities got more valuable information from them concerning those wishing to leave the U.S., Soviet or American. We certainly knew that they reported back to the KGB on anyone who came into the Consular Section. There were problems, of course, with those affected by such information.

There was an American Catholic priest who surfaced many years after his arrival in the Soviet Union; most of the time he was in a prison in Siberia. We finally got the Soviets to release him out solely because of a Civil Service employee back in Washington in SOV (Soviet Affairs) in the State Department. She kept after Embassy offices and in SOV to get him out. There were other prisoners -- people who had "vanished." All of them were entitled to protection as American citizens, except that the protection of Americans in the Soviet Union is quite a limited, to put it mildly.

Q: When I visited the Soviet Union, I met a man who was working as an electrician in the building where my company was located. He was an American named John -- I can't remember his last name. He had come over to the Soviet Union in the 1920's. His parents had brought him over as a child. He was "stuck" in the Soviet Union. The authorities wouldn't let him out. Now he's 70 years old and can barely speak English.

MORGAN: There were a lot of people like that, especially in Soviet Armenia. The minute we went into a hotel restaurant in Yerevan, Armenia, we'd be surrounded by all of these guys speaking Brooklyn English. They had been brought over to the Soviet Union as kids and had grown up there. They were brought to the Soviet Union by their parents for ideological reasons. Armenians, as you know, were given a special welcome by the Soviets. But the family kept their English, and their accents!

Q: I wonder if you could tell us if you ever encountered or can mention any first hand incident with American citizens or former American citizens who were "kept" in the Soviet Union. Were there any particular problems that we had to deal with or any "sticky" issues in this connection?

MORGAN: Not at first hand, because I was not in the Consular Section. There were stories I got at second hand and have forgotten them. These were traditional cases, except for those which I became acquainted with when I was on the Soviet desk in the Department on my next assignment. There was Virginia James, the Civil Servant I mentioned above who worked for years there. It was part of her "job" to take care of issues like this. Basically, she was involved in consular "support" activity.

Specifically, on this Catholic priest, I was on the Soviet Desk and became aware that we needed an American "detained" in the Soviet Union to exchange with a Soviet. I was involved in "exchanges" of "prisoners" when in SOV and the U.S. had decided to return a Soviet citizen that the Soviets wanted back and we had no problem releasing. As a *quid pro quo*, they would return an American. So Virginia James said, "It's got to be Father So-and-So!" I don't know how long it had been, but after 30 some years that this priest had been held in the Soviet Union. She really, through her persistence, caused it to happen. They probably thought that we were idiots to

ask for a priest, but we did.

I don't have anything else to mention from my first year and in general about Moscow.

Q: Okay, one last question about your days as a PPO. Can you tell us what you really got out of it? What did you learn from being a PPO?

MORGAN: I was able to travel and I got everything that goes with travel. I had more freedom than most of my colleagues to get out and see Russians and other people of Soviet nationality. I got to see the Soviet Union -- every republic in it. Central Asia will always have a special place in my heart. And that goes for Siberia, Lake Baikal and the vastness of the frozen north. I will never forget this experience. It's different. But you could get to hate it in some ways because of the Soviet bureaucrats and general inefficiency of the system. You always had these Intourist guides with you. They were generally "horrible" people.

Q: I don't think that you mentioned that you had to travel with a guide as well.

MORGAN: Well, I didn't exactly travel with a guide. I traveled with my companion from the Embassy. However, once we got to our destination, we had to deal with "Intourist," the Soviet national travel agency, so called, to get a taxi or a car, to take a local tour of the area, to get a service at the hotel, or to do anything. They were at "your service". Not that they were good at watching you at all times. They didn't go with me to the bookstores. I would explain to the Intourist guide that I was going to spend the day at bookstores. He or she would say, "I don't understand why you do that. What a waste of time! I could go and buy a book for you." They did anything they could do to harass you, if you will, or to find out what you really do when you're buying the books. He wanted to know where the books would go. The Intourist guide would say, "Tell me, Gospadin Morgan, exactly who are the customers." I would say, "Come on, Sonya, or whatever the guide's name was, don't be so dumb to ask such a straightforward question." Then I would think, "Oops, I shouldn't say that. I could get PNGed" Under stress you could get so angry and frustrated that you might make an "provocative" (they loved the word "*provokatzy*") remark].

Or you might have to bunk with three Soviet travelers who were completely drunk. You couldn't sit at just any table in a restaurant. If just any Russian sat with you, innocently or for the excitement of it, the Intourist guide, or maitre-d' would say, "Oh, no, they really don't want you to sit with them". Then we might start a *provokatzy*!

Or take the little lady, actually she was huge, fat and not really too lady-like, that we in Odessa. This was when I was in the political section and I was traveling with a USIA officer. We took a ship from Odessa to Sochi just North of the border between the Russian and Georgian Republics. Or was it to Batumi in Georgia?.

We were having dinner one night in Odessa when this "lady" in question, and a very young and attractive woman came over and sat down near us. Well, you know, it was so obvious what happened that it became pathetic. They approached our table and said, or at least the "trainer" did, that they wanted to practice their English because they were learning it. The conversation,

not to mention the antics, became ridiculous. My traveling companion, Jerry Prehn, and I had a couple of glasses of wine. About that time our inhibitions were lowering[. We finally said to the two women, "Look, you've gotten about as much out of us as you can. Go back and tell your bosses what you did. We will send you a letter of recommendation, but please, enough is enough. You are being very amateurish and doing a very poor job of picking us up." The older woman said, "Oh, don't say that! Look at this woman whom I am training. I'm trying to show her that I'm a model person and I want to help you Americans." So we said, "Enough," paid our bill, and walked up a hill, which was fairly steep, at a relatively fast pace, to our hotel. After us came "Mamma" with her so-called "daughter." I said to Jerry, "Let's go a little faster." So we did, and the poor lady just puffed in defeat. They both also were wearing shoes with high heels, because they were very "chic," you know. They were very "*kulturny*", you know. They finally couldn't keep up with us. The older lady was puffing. We turned around and waved goodbye. But they had tried!

Experiences like that really don't add greatly to oral history but they meant a lot to me at the time as revealing the realities of the USSR. I tell it to give you an example of how we had always to be on the alert, to be careful. You know, you didn't know whether that extra glass of wine or vodka would make you tell them what you really thought of the internal security system. It "controlled" you. That was their goal.

Q: Well, let's move on to your position as a Political Officer working on the internal affairs of the Soviet Union, beginning in September, 1963. Is that correct?

MORGAN: Yes, it sounds right. I had that job for a year.

Q: Tell us how your position was changed and why.

MORGAN: The Embassy made such internal assignments. If you were a language and area officer you weren't assigned to a specific job in Washington, just to replace a person scheduled to leave. However, I knew that I was going first to the PPO job, though I didn't know what I was going to do in the second year. That second assignment was handled by the DCM and the Ambassador, probably about half way through your first year, during which time they could see your strengths and weaknesses. There were openings coming up in other parts of the Embassy. There were openings coming up in the Economic or Political Section, in most cases. It was a "sore point" if you didn't get moved up to one of those positions. The officers were moved up were congratulated and you knew that you had made it on that "promotion list," which is silly. However, that's life in any organization. There are certain jobs which are regarded as being "better" and more interesting and "main track, substantive" than others. The Political Section was one of those jobs. That spirit permeates the Foreign Service.

I was told that I was going to the "Internal Affairs Unit" of the Political Section. There my responsibilities included reading newspapers, because you couldn't meet anybody, except when you traveled, and then with difficulty. Even then, there's only so much that you can talk about when you meet people. The farther you got out of Moscow, the more people would talk to you. I went to Central Asia. I could tell you story after story about people telling you how they feel. But these times were rare.

Dushanbe, capital of the Tajik Republic. was the locale of one of my favorite stories. I think that Jack Perry and I were “fellow travelers”.. I remember asking our waitress, a lovely and charming person in her 50’s or 60’s, where she was from. Americans are usually initially identified as coming from Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania. The local people thought that we had to be Soviets and certainly couldn’t be Americans, because foreigners don’t get to Dushanbe very often. The Baltic States are considered “sophisticated” and well dressed, as we appeared to the waitress.

The farther away you get from Moscow, the more relaxed the local people are. This woman was very pleased to talk to us. We told her a few stories in answer to her many questions of what it was like “out there”. Most questions begin with, “Is it true that...?” I noticed the meat skewers in our kebab that we were served (the only entrée) were interestingly made. I told her, “Do you know that I spent an hour today at your market, trying to get some meat skewers? My wife would love to get some real, Central Asian meat skewers. Do you know where I might buy some?” This is before we were assigned to Beirut, where they have lots of skewers. She said, “Oh, yes, I can go to the chef. I’m sure that he has some skewers that he can sell you.” Shortly after that she reappeared very, very upset, with the chef right behind her. He wanted to meet an American, because she had obviously identified us.. He was great, and we had a nice, long chat. He said, “I understand that you are having some trouble getting skewers. Here we have a supply system which is insane, it’s crazy, it’s terrible.” Then he reached for the plate, shook off the skewers, and said, “These are for you.” I said, “How much?” He said, “Nothing! Do you think that I would charge you for this? Take these skewers and good health to you!” I still have those skewers to this day.

Such are the long-lasting memories you preserve from traveling in the Soviet Union. First, you learn about what people feel. That woman was in Dushanbe for one, simple reason. She said, “I had to get out of Leningrad. It was too controlled.” She said, “Out here I’m a waitress and I’m poor, but I’m free. I can say things that I want to say.” She had been a professor of English, I believe. Those are the kinds of things you learned. They are all fed into at least a trip report and perhaps into a larger report on a more general topic. You kept files. Other people in the Embassy might use them for something they were writing about. They gave reports a certain amount of local flavor and supporting examples.

I will give you one other example. I read newspapers from all of the republics, whenever we could lay our hands on them. I was responsible for military affairs, a large part of the Soviet power structure, and struggles, education, and all aspects of Soviet-American bilateral relations. We divided up the Soviet Union among the three of us in the Internal Affairs Unit of the Political Section. As I recall, I followed developments in Leningrad. I had been reading a biography of Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, who at the time was the leader of the Soviet Union. It was one of those rare books which, I think, the PPO gave me. It was relatively new. It was simple, pure, and unadulterated propaganda. However, I found myself -- as I was supposed to do -- focusing on what might be new or little known about him, as well as any between the lines insights into what made him tick, or at least the author thought about him. After all, all leaders can be succeeded. That’s the kind of thing the Political Section does.

I read other newspapers from Leningrad, including the “Vyechorka,.” slang in Russian for the

evening newspapers, which are published in most of the larger cities. They are real “gossip sheets,” comparatively speaking. That’s where you can often find out what is really going on, or at least between the lines. They are controlled by the Communist Party or the local government, of course. But they also focus on movie and theater schedules and have a lot of local “goings on,” the equivalent of Soviet gossip, less ponderous reporting. So I was reading the “Vechernaya Leningrad.” It carried a letter to the editor from an leading educator in the city. It didn’t exactly complain, but you could read between the lines. Whenever you read Soviet newspapers, you had to read between the lines, of course. I looked for this “hint.” I gave it [the article] to one of my colleagues, who said, “Well, you look for one word.: “*odnaka*” -- “however”, in English. There was extensive praise about Nikita Sergeevich and how great a leader he was. Then another paragraph began, “*Odnaka*”. That’s when you start reading carefully. In fact, that’s the only reason you read the newspapers. Otherwise, you couldn’t possibly get through all of the garbage that was there.

You look for the “counter arguments,” if you will, which begins with, “However.” The article continued, “However, Nikita Sergeevich is making a great mistake,” or words to that effect -- obviously not that strong -- in his educational reform program. But the article said things like, “Vice Minister So-and-So,” who was Khrushchev’s “follower, stooge” Khrushchev had really put forward this new educational program. I mean it was a real reform, a masterful, “liberal” reform. So I went in to my immediate boss, Ken Kerst and I said, “It might be that this is a real complaint.” He agreed and said, “Draft a telegram.” And I did. I drew some material from this book which I was reading and pulled it all together as a sort of report due at an appointed time. As you know, that is what most reporting is. It is not someone’s immediate reaction to something. In reporting from the Soviet Union it is mostly “think pieces” which have developed over a period of time. This report was on education.

Mac Toon, who was the Political Counselor and Ken’s immediate boss, threw the telegram back to me and put a note on it: “See me.” “Do you really believe this? Do you really think that this is indicative of weakness in the Soviet structure?” I said, “Well, I’m just reporting what I saw in this article,” and how I had come to the conclusion I did. I was indeed my defensive self, especially in front of strong-man Toon. These aren’t the exact words that Mac used with me, but he said, “If you insist, I suggest that you put it in an Airgram,” a slow way by mail of getting words back and probably not read in Washington, at least by the people in power. I went back to Ken and said, “I’m not happy. I don’t think this is right.” He said, “You know, Mac feels strongly that he’s not around to train you.” I said, “Then who trains me?” Ken answered, “Well, he feels that he’s above that.” I’ll never forget that. Hopefully, I kept that with me for the rest of my career. That is, you are there to train subordinates, no matter who you are, the Ambassador or anyone else. Ken said, “Well, Mac won’t sign off on a telegram.”

That was in late August, early September, 1964, just before I was leaving. I had the “pleasure,” one month or so later, at the most, while painting my fence on Home Leave to hear on the radio that Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev had fallen. You can imagine my reactions. Such silly things as, “if only I could have gotten that draft telegram approved.” On the other hand, perhaps it shows you how people react to bosses sometimes and way we run things.

The final answer to your question about what the Political Section does or how I functioned in it

is that the highlight of that year was Khrushchev's political decline and demise, and we didn't see it coming. The highlight of the previous year, when I was PPO, was when we declared an embargo on Cuba. I was the only foreign diplomat permitted to travel during that time. I was in Leningrad with the Robert Shaw Chorale. I was assigned to be the escort for the group to a number of cities in the Soviet Union -- I think, five or six.

Q: Can you tell us what the Robert Shaw Chorale is?

MORGAN: Robert Shaw is one of our great, American conductors. He was the conductor of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra at the time. He was subsequently with the Atlanta Symphony. I think that he is retired now, or close to it. He also established a choir, which he developed during the years when he conducted symphony orchestras in various cities. His chorale was a group of about 50 or 60 singers. They are magnificent -- probably the best in the United States. They came to the Soviet Union under our Cultural Exchanges Program. I think they were the first group of that size to come to the Soviet Union under that program. Among other things they performed the Bach B Minor Mass which, of course, made people fall apart when they heard it. That was on the program performed in Leningrad. They also did a lot of American folk music, classical and religious choral work. But the Bach B Minor Mass the peak of it all.

I was with the Chorale for about weeks or longer -- a long time -- as "escort officer", which means the official, Embassy person who goes along to give them guidance and support and solve problems if they arise. *Goskoncert* is the Soviet agency responsible for all concerts and musical shows in the Soviet Union. It is in charge of all the logistics and overall management of the tours.. We had a delightful man from *Goskoncert*, who really ran the show, of course with the help and arrangements of the local representatives. I was just a little American Embassy presence and make sure the group was not "mislead" or got into any serious troubles. Some called me their "Nanny". I didn't actually do much except keep Robert Shaw as sober as I could and the group from squabbling with each other, as artists tend to do.

A few of the members of the Chorale were of Russian ancestry or actually had emigrated. They wanted to see the "motherland". The Soviets loved the performances. People stood in line for 24 hours at a time, waiting for tickets. Often high Soviet and local society was present. The Russians appreciated the beautiful music the Chorale performed and the simple fact that an American group of such calibre was in the USSR.

At the end of the program of Leningrad, the center of culture in the Soviet Union, or at least the Leningraders thought so, there was a standing ovation that lasted for 30 or more minutes. People would not sit down and would not stop clapping. They were doing the Russian-style, synchronized clapping. Robert Shaw was up there, bowing and getting all of the members of the Chorale to bow with him. He was in tears. I was in tears every time I attended one of their performances and watched the appreciated Soviet audience.

MORGAN: In the middle of the Leningrad performance of the Robert Shaw Chorale, I got a telephone call from Bob German, my deputy, at the Embassy. He said, "There's a little something going on that I think you should know about, which you can read about in the papers." I said, "Well, I did look at '*Pravda*.'" Bob continued, "Well, actually, the United States

has proclaimed a quarantine around Cuba. All diplomats of every nation have been recalled to Moscow.” I said, “OK, Bob, what do you want me to do?” He said, “What would you like to do?” I said, “Well, I’ll tell Bob Shaw. I don’t know what his reaction will be, but I’d prefer to stay with the Chorale. We still have a couple of performances. I’ll call you right back.”

So I went to see Bob Shaw. He said, “That’s too bad. If you’re withdrawn, you can tell the Embassy that I will not perform another note. I’m going to pack up the Robert Shaw Chorale and leave for the United States. You can tell them that.” I said, “Well, our Soviet hosts have to know about this.” There was this poor, sweet old guy whom I told. He said, “You cannot do this!” He was a man of the arts who genuinely seemed to love us very much. So he said, “I must make my [phone] call.” So I said, “Go ahead and let me know.” He came back in a few minutes and said, “Yes, it is true. My government has called all diplomats back to Moscow.” I said, “What did they say?” He said, “They said that they would make no exception for you.” Well, I said, you’d better find out because I’m about to call my Embassy. After a short while my Soviet colleague came to be and said that his authorities had said they would reconsider their decision. I called Bob German back and said, “I’ve had a Soviet reply; I presume that you’ve been doing something from your side.” He confirmed that the Ambassador had called the Foreign Ministry, but it was unwilling to make any exceptions. I told Bob that apparently, the Soviet authorities were having an internal communications problem. Bob agreed but added that he understood that every diplomat was back in Moscow, except me. In about an hour Bob German called with the words: “The Soviet Foreign Ministry has withdrawn their demand, you may stay with the Robert Shaw Chorale, and they may continue with their program.”

Before and after this “mini crisis” Bob German and I had done a little “double talk,” although I’m not sure how “double” it was. Bob’s real message was, “keep your eyes open.” He hoped that there would be no anti-American demonstrations or activities because of the Cuban events. I said, “On the contrary, I think it is the opposite.” I also understood him to be telling me to keep my eyes on the Soviet ships in the Leningrad harbor. I knew that if the ships set sail, that would indicate that there were some problems with the Soviets militarily reacting to the Cuban missiles crisis. But our indications, apparently through Penkovsky, were that the Soviets didn’t intend to do anything. The Soviet ships already en route to Cuba would reverse course and in fact honor the quarantine. So I would reported to the Embassy over the next few days in “double talk” on the location of Soviet Navy ships in Leningrad; they were not moving, nor was there any anti-American demonstration. Nothing. All was incredibly calm.

I thought about this later as I was reading a front page story in the “New York Times.” It reported that I was the only American diplomat who had not returned to Moscow, that the status of the program of the Robert Shaw Chorale was probably indicative of the trend of events, and that the Soviet Union was not about to do anything “inflammatory,” for whatever reasons.

That happened in October, 1962, during my first year in Moscow. I’m giving you that anecdote in response to your question about what happened when I was in the Political Section. I said that I would have to go back in time to my PPO days and tell you one of my best “political” tales: the “Cuban Missile events.”

Against this background, the next dramatic bilateral event that took place occurred when I was in

fact in the Political Section. That was the assassination of President Kennedy in November, 1963. I've already told you how my wife was involved in that and how the Soviets really showed their grief. During the actual assassination, we were at the Embassy "*dacha*" (country house), outside of Moscow, a place where you could go to relax. The Ambassador had a "*dacha*," and, adjoining that, was a "*dacha*" for the rest of the Embassy staff and their families. It had about 4 or 5 bedrooms We were there with Tom Fain and his wife and were enjoying the evening very much.

I had gone to bed. I was awakened by my wife who said that Jack Perry had just called from the Embassy. The President was dead. He had been assassinated. Ambassador Kohler had issued special instructions to everybody. Tom Fain and I were part of "everybody," and the Embassy knew that we were at the *dacha*. We were told that, under no circumstances, were we to display any outward feelings toward any Soviets about this incident -- in the sense of who might have killed President Kennedy, why he was killed, or anything else. Not that we would be dealing with any Soviets, but this was an extraordinarily delicate time. I think that Jack said this over the tapped phone for the obvious reasons since the Soviets already were being seen by some as behind the assassination. Some people at home were apparently saying this was done deliberately, and some were merely speculating. When we got back to the Embassy, I remember Ambassador Foy Kohler talking to us and to the American staff of the Embassy in general, about the delicateness of the times. He said how final this was. There would be lots of rumors and accusations and we were in the heart of the activity.

In that context a couple of weeks later -- maybe it was a couple of months -- the DCM, the Deputy Chief of Mission, Walter Stoessel, called me up to his office and said, "Bill, I've just had a call from my counterpart over in the British Embassy. The British had a 'walk-in,' a Soviet citizen, who says that he knows who killed the President." This man had defected from the KGB and was in the British Embassy, seeking protection. The British had a Russian language officer there to interview him, and they wanted someone from the American Embassy to be present as well, for obvious reasons.

Three hours later, after a very lengthy interview with this Soviet defector, the British decided to release him. They said that they couldn't give him any kind of protection there. They let him out the back door of the British Embassy so that he could escape, if he were legitimate. Obviously, the fundamental question which my British colleague and I were trying to determine was whether he was a legitimate defector. The Soviet talked at length about Lee Harvey Oswald, and his Soviet wife whom he said he knew well in Minsk. The defector was trying to make the case that Oswald, and particularly his wife, were KGB agents. He said that Oswald had killed President Kennedy on orders from the Soviet KGB. This was pretty heavy stuff.

I went back to the American Embassy and told Walter Stoessel what had happened. Like a good boss, he said, "What do you think? Do you think he is telling the truth?" I said, "Walter, I don't know. Frankly, my greatest concern was whether I got every word right which the defector had said." Here we were, talking to somebody who was rattling away in Russian. I had agreed with the British Embassy officer that he and I would sit down afterwards and talk it over, comparing notes to make sure that we had the right verbs and nouns, etc., to see what we were sure he said and to compare our conclusions.

So we did this afterwards. As I remember, my British Embassy colleague and I pretty much agreed that we couldn't conclude he was a "legitimate" defector or a KGB "plant". To carry out his defection the way he did certainly tilted our opinion to the view that he was a "plant." You can't get into any Embassy in Moscow -- British or American -- without having to walk past Soviet guards. He came into the British Embassy via a back entrance. But he was there and we did hear what he said, but it was only his story, all verbal.

Q: So what made you virtually certain that he actually knew all of that much about the case? I think that the name of Oswald's wife was Maria (Marina?).

MORGAN: Yes, that was a question. I guess that we were more satisfied on that matter. But then, again, he could have been "briefed" on how to do the whole thing. So I sent off a report on the interview, through Walter Stoessel. We had asked the State Department how this information should be submitted; to whom. It wasn't really a "normal" Embassy report on the Soviet Union. It was somewhat "privileged" information, concerning the assassination of President Kennedy. As I remember, we were instructed to send it to the Warren Commission. It went out as an Airgram.

Nothing ever happened as a result of this report. I've been waiting to be called since then. When I was Deputy Director of the Visa Office 15 years later, I got a call from a person I had inspected in Mexico City. She was on the Mexican desk in the State Department. She said, "I need your authorization for something." So I went over to her office. The subject was my Airgram on the interview with this alleged Soviet KGB "defector", which was in files sent to her from Mexico City concerning Oswald's days in Mexico. The Warren Commission or post Warren Commission phase keeps going on and on.

Q: This was on the role of the KGB in Mexico?

MORGAN: Something like that. My Airgram surfaced, having obviously got to Embassy Mexico City because it concerned Oswald. I think that there was a request for material under the Freedom of Information Act or a Congressional inquiry. I had to "sign off" on reducing the security classification I had put on the original document. I had to agree that making this information public would not endanger U.S. security, etc. I was so embarrassed to see this report after so many years. I thought, "Did I write so poorly while in Moscow? This language is terrible! Even the spelling is off. How did Walter Stoessel ever let me send this report off?" That was my chief concern. My initial concern had been my Russian language ability. My second concern was my English language ability in drafting the report. Ego does play a part of our professional careers. I'm sure that the document was released. That's the end of my Oswald story, and that piece of history.

Q: It might be a little beyond the scope of this interview, but what would be the purpose of a Soviet "plant," claiming that Oswald was working for the KGB?

MORGAN: That's a very good question. At the time, I'm sure that I had a detailed answer to it. However, thinking about it now, perhaps the objective was to create confusion, to mislead, and

to test the British Embassy's handling of "informants". Perhaps they also were testing the American reaction. Those are a few ideas which come off the top of my head. Because it wasn't an "authorized" KGB operation -- I'm assuming that it was a "plant" -- it had to be done by the KGB. Remember that the KGB at that time, under Khrushchev, probably was more "sensitive" to criticism. Probably, it was more "sensitive" to whatever role it did play. We do know some things about Oswald and his wife and his connection with the KGB, etc. "Disinformation" is often used to mislead or to try to confuse you. You may recall from the days of World War II that there was a view that we should "give the [Abwehr] highly detailed information so that Germany would fall from the weight of this information, since they wouldn't know how to file it all." There is that consideration. However, finally, I don't know. It may have been stupidity, and the Soviet Union was fond of intrigue and complexity. Don't forget that a lot of the things they did were just "dumb." Is that enough for this interview?

Q: Yes. Let's turn now to the post-Moscow period, which was in the fall of 1964. Is that correct?

MORGAN: Yes. About September, 1964, the point when Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev fell from power.

Q: You were assigned back to the Department of State to work as a desk officer in the Office of Soviet Union Affairs. How did you get the assignment?

MORGAN: Routinely, in the sense that most of us in those days who had served in the Embassy in Moscow were "lined up" for a job in INR (Bureau of Intelligence Research), working on Soviet Affairs, a job in the USSR Exchanges of Persons program, or the Soviet desk in the Bureau of European Affairs. Most of us went to the latter, unless we were highly specialized, like a petroleum or science officer or something like that -- or came from some other place. But those of us who were "trainees", if you will, or were involved in a two-year language and area studies assignment in Moscow, would go to one of those positions. I was assigned to SOV (Office of Soviet Union Affairs).

Q: Tell us about the office and how it was set up. Some of our readers may not be so familiar with the State Department. What exactly is a "country desk"? You might think of people sitting around a table who were the greatest experts in the world on a given subject.

MORGAN: Well, we were. That's characteristic of the State Department. It still has "tables of experts." However, the real answer to your question is that the Department of State, to put it very simply, is basically cut into two parts. One is composed of "functional" bureaus, and the other is geographic bureaus. The functional bureaus include consular, intelligence, economic, political-military, administration, general services, and so on. Those are all "functional" areas. They are big offices. They have "desks", let's call them offices, where the specialists of varying degrees work. They are a combination of Civil Service employees and Foreign Service Officers and staff. The same is true of the geographic bureaus, which have both civil service and Foreign Service Officers. They are very much intermingled. However, the functional bureaus largely deal with their [particular] function. The Consular Bureau, for example, has to carry out the laws dealing

with consular affairs -- visas, the protection of Americans [overseas], and passports.

The geographic bureaus cover the world, which is broken down into geographic areas: Europe and Canada, East Asia, South Asia, the Near East and North Africa, South of the Sahara Africa, and Latin America. Those are the geographic bureaus. Within each one of these geographic bureaus are subordinate offices, sometimes called desks if the office is confined to one country.. SOV is part of the Bureau of European Affairs, although it also covers that part of the former Soviet Union, now mostly Russia, which extends into Asia. In fact, responsibility for Moscow is assigned to the European Bureau. Canada was under the European Bureau, but finally, the Canadians “got their independence” and the Bureau of European Affairs became the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs. Within the European Bureau there are many desks. SOV had about 12 officers assigned there, plus eight or so support staff, including secretaries and clerical help. We focused on the Soviet Union, which in turn was broken down into three parts within the Office of Soviet Affairs. First was Soviet Bilateral Affairs, to which I was assigned. It dealt only with U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations in all of their dimensions. Another section was Soviet Multilateral Affairs, which dealt with U.S.S.R.-third country or international organizations such as NATO, UN affairs and how they affected the U.S. interests. Soviet-U.S. economic issues was the third element of SOV and was a very small office consisting of two or three officers. This is not to be confused with the Economic Bureau of the Department!. Yes, they all worked together, but this was a specialized area within SOV, the Soviet “desk.” It focused largely on Soviet agricultural and economic affairs. In my Soviet Bilateral Affairs section I was deputy to Carroll Woods, the director. We had two other, more junior officers, neither of whom had served in the Soviet Union. Also was Virginia James, about whom I spoke above and, as a Civil Service employee, had served in SOV for many, many years. She largely followed issues with a need for continuity, like people in jail, for example.

In turn, to go on with your question, we divided responsibility for specific aspects of our bilateral relations among the three or four officers in SOV. Carroll Woods, as the Office Director, was involved in all of issues and some topics he was especially interested or qualified in. As one of the three Office Directors in SOV, he reported to the head of the Soviet “desk,” who was, my first year, David Henry. Mac Toon succeeded him. There was also a Deputy Director. They took care of the larger problems that related to the Soviet Union, many of which started with us subordinates or at least were tracked on a routine basis until they escalated to the bosses, including the White House. I have read with great interest of recent efforts to “de-layer” -- remove supervisory personnel -- the bureaucracy. It’s not easy, as you naturally report through your own channels to bosses of more authority, and hopefully more skills and knowledge. There were numerous such layers at that time. Nevertheless, I reported to Carroll Woods, period. Once in a while I would find myself taking guidance or direction directly from Toon or Henry or even from an Assistant Secretary of State -- although that was most extraordinary. The structure was very “layered.”

Finally, there were my specific “areas of competence”, as we called them. Whether I was really “competent” or not didn’t matter; the desk called them that. They included maritime, military and general consular affairs. I also followed the activities of those “spying” Soviet diplomats as they maneuvered around our society. I looked into such things as violations of their travel status. Another responsibility of mine was the control of travel by Soviet diplomats in the U. S.. This

was a result of the Soviets' restricting our travel and access the Soviet Union. I did the same thing against them, in "retaliation". I made sure that in the case of any diplomatic note which came from the Soviet Embassy to the State Department, advising of the travel plans of Soviet diplomats, that the local authorities in whatever state knew that they were coming there and what they were coming for. And I "made note of" and advised them in writing when they violated the approved itinerary. That was a "black mark" against them.

Q: I think that I remember hearing that even until recently cities like St. Louis, Seattle, and other places that either had military installations or buildings with military significance, like the Boeing Company or McDonnell-Douglas aircraft factories, were "off limits" to Soviet diplomats.

MORGAN: I don't know specifically that those areas were "off limits" but let me use the case of the Boeing factory, because I think that it is a very good example of the difficulties of U. S. relations with the U. S. S. R. Certainly, this was the case in those days and up until the fall of the Berlin Wall, communism, and the Soviet Union.

Q: Do these restrictions continue today?

MORGAN: Yes, every nation has the right and obligation to guard its own national secrets. So if you have a naval base or an air force base, you "close" it. You "close" it also to Americans in that sense. I'm sure that today there still are special rules about keeping Russians or Poles or French or Canadians away from certain installations. They may be still today applied on the basis of reciprocity; I just don't know. Remember, there are two considerations here. We and the Soviets had the "need" to protect certain facilities. At the same time, some of the effort we exerted to keep the Soviets away from some installations was sheer "pressure" on them to give up their control on our diplomats in areas which, as far as we were concerned, should have been "wide open." There was no military interest in them at all. They just wanted to control us. I underscore that.

When the Soviets first applied a travel restriction on us -- I should remember the date, but I do not -- they started saying that you cannot go beyond a 40 kilometer (25 mile) circle of certain areas in the Soviet Union, Moscow for instance. You cannot travel to these areas. You must get permission to go any place else in the Soviet Union. There were certain areas which, by definition, were "closed." You needed special permission to go there. Other areas were "open," but you still had to get specific permission to travel there. All of that was a bore and a symbol of authoritarian controls by a totalitarian state of the worst sort. It was a symbol of a bureaucracy which had run "amuck." I can assure you that an awful lot of these restrictions were cases of bureaucracy at its worst. It wasn't really that the Soviets wanted unnecessarily to harass us, although they enjoyed doing that very much. It wasn't to keep secrets. It was just the bureaucracy. This kept a lot of people very, very busy, watching where we were going and then turning over to the KGB all of this information so that they could follow us.

Obviously, the first purpose of these controls was to preserve secrecy, but it was also just to keep the system going. This was like winning World War II by inundating the Germans with too many documents. I think that the Soviet Union, in part, fell because of the heavy and inefficient

bureaucracy -- just plain inefficiency.

Seriously, though, those are some of the things I did on the Soviet desk for my two years there (1964-66). I had to follow where the Soviets went, constantly reminding them that we were not going to harass them. We did it largely to convince them that their excessive travel controls was a system which they should abandon. Of course, both sides had to protect those areas which were highly sensitive for military or other truly sensitive reasons. Remember that the Soviets thought that some of the areas which were "sensitive" were non-military in character or were "sensitive" for non-military reasons. They were embarrassed -- or there were problems there that they wished to keep from foreigners, or often from their own citizens. There may have been internal issues, not that a revolution was under way, but there were a lot of reasons to keep us out. They didn't want us to see certain areas, lest they be shown to be not up to standard, etc.

What we did was constantly work at them and remind them that, "Yes, you must ask permission to go to St. Louis. It's a wide open and wonderful city. The only reason that we are doing this is in reciprocity for what you have done to our Embassy people in the Soviet Union."

Q: Can you tell us exactly how you would do that?

MORGAN: Yes. We did the exact same thing they did. Doesn't that sound awful. Every time that travel was scheduled to a university, a meeting, a lecture, or any other purpose Soviet diplomats in the U. S. were required to send us a diplomatic note with a schedule of the proposed trip. I would get the note and copies of the note would go out to the areas concerned and to U.S. government concerned agencies. If a Soviet diplomat were going to visit the University of California to make a speech on this or that subject, they had to put down the specific reason, the date, the method of transportation, and so on. This schedule was turned over to the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), the University of California, and the local authorities (in California), so that they knew who was coming and what the purpose was. We would also confirm the schedule with the sponsoring group. Of course, under an agreement with the United Nations, anyone going to New York could not be restricted. However, we insisted on knowing when they were going and what the circumstances were.

If the purpose of the travel was in connection with a controversial meeting of some sort and the press had already learned of it, or there were groups opposed to that Soviet official going there, we might double check the circumstances and ramifications of the travel]. Sometimes I found myself caught between groups that wanted a Soviet representative at a meeting and groups which did not want him there. Going back to your question about the aviation industry -- a visit to the Boeing Aircraft factory in Seattle and so on -- not all U. S. Government agencies were in agreement on how to handle such a matter. CIA might want one thing, the FBI might want something different, and the U. S. military might want something still different -- or had different inputs into the reasons for making certain areas "out of bounds" for travel by Soviet diplomats. Some of the proposed travel resulted in long, inter-agency battles.

Q: Can you "walk us through" one such controversial case that you can remember -- that really takes us through the decision-making process?

MORGAN: Well, as you can imagine, picking a specific case out of my memory is not easy, but let me walk you through the process. Then I'll either come up with one example and/or give you a typical case. First of all, not every single request for travel requires the approval of a huge "sea" of bureaucrats. Most of these requests were very, very routine and were approved without difficulty. Let's take first the case where only the State Department was concerned. That would involve reciprocity. We would have reason, because of a very bad case recently in Moscow, where the Defense Attaché ran into one of these very difficult situations in connection with, for example, a proposed visit of his to Vladivostok. We wished to retaliate. So our comparable "reciprocity" in this case would be to delay action on the next application by a Soviet diplomat to visit some place in the United States. This request might involve the simplest, most acceptable, proposed visit in the world. However, it well might involve an application for permission to travel by a man of relatively the same rank as our man in Moscow who had been denied permission to travel. In other words, we would try to find a case as similar as we could find. We usually we make no reference to the case in Moscow, at least by name, etc. That was our way of showing that we disapproved of the way the Soviets had handled a comparable case in the Soviet Union. But the Soviets knew, of course. In such cases the State Department acted on its own authority, in retaliation. Reciprocity is the word we would use. To say it today, thirty years later and post-USSR, it sounds a bit childish. But we were convinced at the time it was an essential *quid pro quo* to get the Soviets to make changes in their system, if they wanted to "play with the big boys".

Take another case involving the State Department and other U. S. Government agencies, but not in the intelligence community. Let's say that St. Louis University had invited some Soviet scientists to go out to St. Louis, as well as the Science Officer in the Soviet Embassy in Washington to join them. The Soviet scientists would come under the exchanges program. That would have been approved ahead of time -- their itinerary, and so forth. Their visit came under my counterpart in the US-USSR Exchanges office. The Soviet scientists were in exchange for a comparable program of scientists from the U.S. going to the Soviet Union.. Both itineraries, their programs, and their leaders were all agreed to in advance, and visa applications submitted and approved, or turned down. My office was not directly, "operationally" involved, although both of us in the State Department went through the same process of U.S. clearance.

Now we have the case of the Science Officer of the Soviet Embassy wanting to join in at the program at the university. The embassy officer has received some previous bad local publicity. This all results in a tremendous, local brouhaha. The White House and several Members of Congress have gotten involved. There are various groups taking pro and con positions. We would find ourselves at the State Department -- and this is something like approving a visa, if you will -- working at this issue from the political point of view. Is it in the U. S. national interest to have this issue go one way or the other? The Secretary of State -- and maybe the President -- would have to decide. Many of these questions reach the very highest level. An issue like this is not an intelligence one, but a policy question, including the integrity of the Exchanges Agreement.

Q: Exactly how was that decision made? When you received such a request for permission for the Science Officer of the Soviet Embassy to attend a meeting, what did you do with it?

MORGAN: I “worked” the Science Officer’s diplomatic note. I knew the purpose of his visit and the opposing views. I’d wrap the elements of the case into a “Decision Memo”, get clearances from all those with differing views, largely in the Department and then start the paper “upward”. I would probably make a recommendation. Cases like the one above were settled in the State Department, probably at the Assistant Secretary Level or maybe just by the Soviet desk. In some cases a functional bureau, say, the Consular Bureau, if a visa were involved, or the Economic, Science, or Energy Bureaus on other issues might have a strong “vote” in the decision. But most discussions largely focused -- were worked -- on the geographic desk. This was not just the case with the Soviet desk. Whenever there are issues that need to be decided, reconciled, they always end up on the geographic desk. If they can’t be settled at a lower level by the desk, in consultation with other parties, they go up to the level of the Assistant Secretary. From there, they may go up to the Secretary of State or even the White House -- the “Seat of Authority” of Power. That’s the route involved, to answer your question as to how you get a request approved or disapproved.

If the Secretary of State should approve the request and another agency such as the ABC (Atomic Energy Commission -- now Nuclear Regulatory Commission) -- didn’t like that decision, it can appeal to the President. And that’s what it does. Then there is Congress, of course. Let’s not forget that members of the House of Representatives and the Senate are involved in such issues all the time, usually because there is a constituent who has expressed himself one way or the other, or because there is a Congressman whose area of competence causes him to get involved.

What you’re getting at is the more routine, clearance procedure needed for national security related issues. All of those others were basically “political” issues, in which the State Department is primarily involved in U.S.-U.S.S.R. bilateral relations. However, a decision may involve other areas, such as a military base or a KGB agent who is off “spying” or “ensnaring”. That was also my area of “expertise.” We pretty much knew who was who. We kept a little book listing who was and who wasn’t a KGB agent. Of course, no government agency would say, “So and so is a KGB agent.” The phraseology would always be, “He is believed to be a KGB or GRU (military intelligence) agent.” I would say that a good 50% of the people assigned to the Soviet Embassy in Washington were KGB agents. But the distinction between diplomats who were employed by that agency or other Soviet agencies, as far as security is concerned, is moot.

Remember, they had no “local American” staff -- no equivalent of the Foreign Service National staff. They were all Soviet citizens. Many of them at the theoretically “lower” levels, in fact, were intelligence operatives. Other officials in the Embassy often took their directions from them. KGB officials often had the “cover” of “First Secretary for so and so.” The senior officer of the KGB was known as the “Rezident,” and most in the Soviet Embassy knew who he was. I think that he “passed” semi-officially as “Rezident.” Beyond that, other agents were sort of “buried” in the Consular Section or other parts of the Embassy. The Soviet Ambassador’s chauffeur was probably at least a colonel in the KGB. Then other Soviet citizens holding various jobs, such as journalists were also considered to be, if not under the control of the KGB, certainly under its influence. At the Embassy, too, those not employed directly by the KGB might be real Soviet Foreign Office people. However, they walked a very careful line. The Ambassador was not a KGB officer, but he listened carefully to the Rezident.

The other intelligence group was the GRU, the military intelligence organization. They were a large group but they focused on military questions, just as in Moscow we had a large, military attaché office. The people in our Embassy in Moscow were largely from DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency). Some of them were associated with the CIA.

When GRU people traveled or were out “doing something,” they were looked at very carefully by all of the members of the clearance committee. On the committee were representatives of the military, CIA, FBI, I think, maybe, the ABC—all of those agencies involved in national security in one way or another were members of the clearance committee. We didn’t meet around a table. It was very rare that we sat down and discussed some issue. We handled it by telephone.

Obviously, we were not discussing classified material on the telephone, but we knew what the issue was. We also used interagency memoranda transmitted by secure, interagency means, much like telegrams from our Embassies abroad. If the FBI, for example, had a reason to object to a certain person leaving Washington, they would send a “No” back to the State Department and often come and visit me to discuss the problem. We would have to go back to them and say that you can’t just say “No.” A negative response was only acceptable if one of the agencies had a very strong defensible objection to the individual’s travel. Usually, there weren’t many objections. For instance, you didn’t have the FBI and the CIA squabbling over whether one Soviet official went on a particular trip or didn’t go. Usually, if there was a serious doubt, they didn’t go.

Often, reciprocity was the principal consideration. I don’t say that we did it to be mean. We would declare someone *persona non grata*, taking the next person in the list I kept of folks deserving to be expelled. Action of this kind wasn’t taken out of meanness. It was because the persons involved had the biggest or the most “black marks” against them and/or because it was time to exercise reciprocity for what was being done in Moscow.

Q: You mentioned the “black box.” First of all, what did that mean and how did you rank the bad guys?

MORGAN: I had 5” x 7” file cards and a black file box big enough to hold them. It was three or four inches thick. I kept cards which I made out myself, every time a new Soviet diplomat arrived, with his (there were few “hers” in those days) name and probably date of birth, as well as his title. The CIA keeps regular biographies on these people. I probably prepared a summary of their biographies on the front of the card. Basically, these were UNCLASSIFIED cards. That is, there was UNCLASSIFIED information on them, but it was not to be distributed. I didn’t put extraordinarily sensitive information on the cards, but I indicated on the card whether they were believed to be GRU or KGB. I indicated what their assignment might be.

Routinely, FBI information flowed to us on these people, as they were observed in their functions, or were visited, perhaps, by somebody. As you know, it’s rather common knowledge that the FBI kept a keen eye and ear on what happened within the Soviet Embassy and when Embassy personnel traveled. FBI reports on these people went across my desk. I would read them. They tended to be terribly involved, extraordinarily bureaucratic, and written in a kind of “double talk.” Never could they say that the information came from eavesdropping, because they

would never admit it. They would say that the information came from “a known, reliable source,” a “thought to be reliable source,” a “suspected to be reliable source,” or a “sometimes reliable source.” They used these “jargon” words to describe a mechanical device or, in some cases, a real person “who is known to be.” The report contained those “caveats,” and I would then make a note -- if the man had been “caught” servicing a suspected] mail box or “lamp post”. In other words, activity which involved really serious indications that the man was “performing duties not in accordance with his diplomatic status.” That, of course, was the basis for declaring him *persona non grata*. This, of course, is what the Soviets did frequently, but it was a matter of degree or seriousness behind their motive.

I would put little sentences on the card which would accumulate over the year or years that the Soviet diplomat had behaved in “improper” fashion. Then I shuffled the cards in “rank” order of black marks. Number one card probably was PNGed next.

Q: Was it really at your discretion to pull out a card, give it to your superiors, and say to him, “This is the next person in line to be ‘PNGed’?”

MORGAN: Yes, but the only word I would argue with is “discretion.” It was a mechanical thing. I kept records of this kind on these people in the box, basically in chronological order. As new people arrived, I would put them at the back of the box, to work their way forward. What we tried to do was what the Soviets tried to do. That was to “PNG” the right person. Obviously, there would be people whom we would “PNG” in their own right. If a person really got caught “red handed,” the FBI wanted to kick him out of the country. Sometimes they’d go “public” which forced our hands. We objected, but the CIA really raised the roof: “Now they’ll get one of ours”. The question would get into the newspapers, and the American public would demand, “Get this man out of our country.”

However, often -- and I don’t have any specific recollection of a real case -- if the Soviets “PNGed” one of our people, later on they would say that it was their right to do this, and they of course were correct. Hopefully, it would be somebody who was nearing the end of his tour in Moscow. To expel somebody early in his tour meant that you were “throwing him out” forever, because once a person is “PNGed,” he will seldom be able to go back to that country. In a very few cases we were able to arrange for people who had been “PNGed” to go back to Moscow, but there were very few of these. So by “PNGing” somebody, you were ending that person’s career in Soviet affairs, as well as blow years of preparation and expertise.

So PNGing was a very serious step. It applied to the Soviet Bloc countries, too. The Soviets also did not want their person to have to leave the United States after he had only been here for, say, a week or a month. He would have gone through an enormously extended period of training. Read the book, “The Charm School,” by Nelson De Mille, for example, to get some idea of the years of training involved for some of them. Our people are trained for a shorter period, but it still involves a long period of time and lots of resources.

So the decision to “PNG” somebody was a chronological decision. You tried to find someone who had been in, say, Washington about the same length of time as the person expelled from our Embassy in Moscow. However, the thickness of the card, the length of the entries, “earning” his

place at the top of the list (or front of the box) because of the behavior he had been involved in would also play a role in the selection of the person for expulsion. Maybe there had been clear, previous expressions of our dismay at the behavior of the person. That sort of thing would cause such a person to come to the front of the box. I would maintain the box mechanically, but often driven by the length of service in Washington.. I would be asked, "Who's next?" And I would say, "Abramov," or whoever. I would prepare a memorandum giving the reasons for the choice - maybe attaching the full FBI reports which I had received and filed away. The final decision would always be decided at a very high level. Maybe it would require approval by the Secretary of State for someone to be "PNGed," because of the possible ramifications

Q: Could we talk about some of the other things that you did. Did you monitor the movement of ships?

MORGAN: Yes. For lack of a more specific term, I had a sort of "military" responsibility: the military, in general, although certainly our political-military people and our military people had a big piece of that. However, on bilateral political issues, I was pretty much responsible for military matters. Very few of these involved the Soviet Army or Air Force. Once in a while an incident would occur in which a U. S. plane had been shot down by mistake, deliberately, or whatever. But that was rare. The same was true of the Soviet Army. All of the exercises held were so routine that nobody ever crossed the line into the Federal Republic of Germany.

I think that the biggest thing I got involved in concerned John Hemenway, a former U.S. military officer and later an FSO, diplomat in Moscow. He was on the German desk when I was in SOV. He came storming into my office one day and said, "Bill, we must get ready to go to war!" He was livid. I asked, "What happened?" He said, "Well, the Soviet Army in Berlin is making us lower the tail gates of our trucks." We had refused to lower our tail gates, and this became a very serious issue between the Soviet Army and the U. S. Army. Things like that were rare. That was more a question of John Hemenway getting excited than it was an issue between the Soviet and American Armies, because in Berlin all sides kept things fairly under control and orderly. They weren't "poking" each other. Incidentally, John calmed down, eventually, and we didn't go to war, and I can't remember what we did with our tail gates!

That left the Navy -- and the Treasury, because, I might remind you -- the Department of the Treasury was then responsible for the Coast Guard. (I believe the Coast Guard came under the Department of Transportation in 1967.) The Coast Guard was where most of the "action" was for me. But, first of all, the Navy. Both the Soviet and the American Navy -- I would like to say, absolutely equally -- like to play "chicken." I think it must be something written in the manuals of both navies. My son is in the Navy. I must ask him to say what the manual says about encounters with Soviet Navy ships. Clearly, it was part of the "game" -- to break the boredom, that's what you do on the high seas in the North, when the icebergs are coming at you. You play "chicken." to test each other -- each other's prowess and professional abilities. I exaggerate somewhat, but not a lot. When we got into these cases afterwards, we found out that that's what was happening. They had become too damned "clever" and "cute." And, of course, I would have to blame the other side for being equally "cute," or I think I used the word "provocative" in the diplomatic note I drafted. I knew the Soviets would understand that word. I got into such incidents, encounters; they ended up on my desk.

Q: Can you remember one, specific incident? What does that mean and how did it reach your desk?

MORGAN: Let's say that it happened near Murmansk, out on the high seas, where there are more Soviet than American ships. We have an American submarine, and there is a Soviet submarine operating nearby. Or an American cruiser or destroyer. A Soviet flotilla is coming out from Soviet territorial waters and into the high seas, off Norway. The first thing you know an American cruiser is passing a Soviet cruiser, six yards apart. Or they scrape each other or back into each other. They are "playing games" on the high seas and at some speed. This was happening -- and still happens. It's a way -- I should not go on any further in characterizing this behavior. But it was trouble, because you had to back your way through "non-apologies," through "who saw it first," through "intensive examinations," through things that took an awful lot of time for just one, simple thing. From one Navy to another Navy. And no lessons learned whatsoever, nor victories claimed.

The big thing with the Navy, with the Coast Guard, in part, and with the Canadian Government, because it sometimes happened in Canadian territorial waters, transit through the "Northwest Passage," for example, in the area of pack ice, and sometimes under the ice. The Navy made an annual or maybe semi-annual trip through the Northwest Passage. Some of the trip was by submarine under the ice. A lot of it was by cruisers through the pack ice, preceded by icebreakers. It was our Navy's way of asserting our "rights." We did not accept Canadian claim of national waters or said all navies have the right of transit from one national territory to another. This basically is international naval law and what keeps lawyers in business. The high seas are anyone's territory. There was a big question regarding the Dardanelles Strait, which flows into the Mediterranean Sea, and other, similar issues, involving international waters. Who proves that they are international waters? The fleets of the various nations. That's where we got into trouble. Sometimes it involved the Canadians. They said that the Northwest Passage is in their territory, and we have to ask their permission to pass through it. The Soviets would go through, our Navy would go through, and we would find ourselves involved in encounters and disputes -- sometimes caused by "provocative acts" on our part or on their part. In some cases these were accidental. Some of these incidents were tragic, in which some people lost their lives.

But naval tradition was also the basis for one of the nicer aspects of bilateral Soviet-American relations. Let me now switch 180 degrees. When one sailor is in trouble, another sailor helps. It doesn't matter what country it is. If there is an accident on the high seas, a ship of another Navy will come to the rescue. I've seen some cases of the Soviet Navy helping the American Navy.

As an outgrowth of the Navy and other U.S. agencies, I remember case of exceptional cooperation. When I was in SOV I got very much involved in a program which the Soviets wanted. It first came up when I was on a trip to Siberia and visited the Far North. The topic is "permafrost." -- permanently frozen earth just inches under the surface. The Soviets had an excellent Permafrost Institute in Yakutsk up near the Arctic Circle. I spent a day there with the director and staff. We had some undertakings with Canada, especially since we adjoined territorially in the frozen north. With the Soviets, who joined in with Canada and the U.S. some wonderful things developed -- testing permafrost conditions and exchanging information. That

was one of the more positive things that happened with the USSR back in the days of the Cold War.

Contact with the Coast Guard was really the area where most of my time with maritime affairs was spent. This involved Soviet ships coming, either by request or by accident, into American ports. There were far fewer American ships going into Soviet ports, in part because the USSR doesn't have the number or types of ports that we do. Soviet ports are located in a very limited area along the Pacific Ocean and the Baltic and Black Seas. We had some problems with the Black Sea when American ships tried to get to Soviet ports. Actually, some of the Soviet ships had accidents or problems off our coasts and they needed to be rescued or assisted. But all of that needed our permission -- literally, my agreement.

We had one official from the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury who was responsible for Coast Guard affairs. We had some stressful moments. I guess that I "excited" him, particularly when I had to raise a problem with him in the middle of the night, such as Treasury's ok for a Soviet ship to come into New York. Usually, under such extreme conditions, such a request involved an accident to the ship's engines or something like that. In other cases it was deliberate -- they were merely testing us. Finally, in some cases, it was simply a "formal" request.

We in State were always looking for ways to try to improve Soviet-American relationships. Sometimes, there were little things like these maritime issues which were symbolic and which both sides, down into the two system, wanted. That is, the U. S. Coast Guard and the Soviet Maritime fleets and counterparts. There were a lot of forces out there that weren't trying to find ways to show us as enemies but, rather, how we might relieve some of the tensions that existed between the two superpowers..

This often involved working within the Soviet system of bureaucratic controls. We knew that if we could "eat away" at rigid, "knee jerk" reactions to Cold War antagonisms it would eventually produce a more relaxed relationship, detente, if I may use the exact term.. It would be better to keep working at this tactic: the visitor exchanges program, for example.. By the way, the Soviets had -- how shall we say it -- ideological reasons to support such exchange agreements. They were ideological in the sense of showing the Soviet Union as a country rich in cultural affairs such as music, opera, ballet, literature...and highly competitive in scientific research and accomplishments. It was rewarding to see some of our military colleagues -- certainly maritime - - recognize that it was in our national interest to strive to reduce tensions and sources of disagreement.

JACK R. PERRY
Exchanges Officer, Soviet Exchanges Staff, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1960-1962)

Personnel/Political Officer
Moscow (1962-1964)

Ambassador Jack R. Perry was born in 1930 and raised in Georgia. He received a bachelor's degree from Mercer University and a master's degree and doctorate from Columbia University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1951-1954.

Ambassador Perry's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Moscow, Paris, Prague, and Stockholm, and an ambassadorship to Bulgaria. Ambassador Perry was interviewed by Henry Mattox on July 2, 1992.

PERRY: My first assignment, to my astonishment, was the State Department. I had thought that everybody went overseas first, but back in those days, at least, not everybody did -- because we got stuck in Washington for two years, living in a very inferior apartment which we had thought we were only going to be in for a few months. However, the job was great. My first assignment was the Soviet Exchanges Staff, which was created in 1957, I think, to follow up on the "spirit of Geneva." Our office handled cultural exchanges with the Russians. So my first two years I spent working in the Bureau of European Affairs on Soviet exchanges, a fascinating assignment.

Q: Give me an example of what you might do, what your office was responsible for.

PERRY: My boss for those two years was a very fine FSO named Frank Siscoe, who had already served in Moscow. Frank assigned me to cover, among other things, tourism. There was an effort then to increase tourism to the Soviet Union, and to try to get more Russians to come to the United States, which was, of course, a very different kettle of fish.

One of my fun endeavors was to escort a group of Soviet tourist experts around the United States, to places like Miami and Chicago and other places that Soviet tourists might be going. And, needless to say, that was a great learning experience.

Another fun time I had was when we were staging exhibits in the Soviet Union, and they were staging exhibits reciprocally in the United States. We were about to open a medical exhibit in Moscow, and they were about to open one Oklahoma City. The Soviets were not giving us the kind of facilities in Moscow we felt we had to have to stage a successful exhibit. So Frank Siscoe, my boss, being a pretty combative fellow, determined that, by God, if they weren't going to let us do it right, we weren't going to have the exhibit, and we weren't going to let them open their exhibit in Oklahoma City. So he sent me out to Oklahoma City to stand in the door, as it were, and forbid the Russians from opening their exhibit. Well, it was sort of a nervous assignment, because the Oklahoma State Fair was going to feature this medical exhibit from the Soviet Union, and, needless to say, in those days (this was 1961, I suppose), there was a lot of excitement about Soviet exhibits. I literally had to go up to the tent and say, "You cannot open." And since the State Department's not used to having that kind of power, I wasn't sure it would work. But, sure enough, it did work. And it turned out to be quite a pleasant time, because the people of Oklahoma City understood and they didn't blame us -- and they took those Russian doctors (there was a whole gaggle of them with this exhibit) to their hearts. And so the Russian doctors had a wonderful time, because they were entertained by the doctors of Oklahoma City every night.

Q: Were we in a period of detente at that time?

PERRY: It's always hard to say exactly what was "a period of detente," but I think you would say so. I can't remember the exact timing of this, but I believe it may have been in the last year of the Eisenhower administration or the first year of the Kennedy administration. At any rate, it was before the Cuban missile crisis, and therefore things were relatively good.

Q: With that kind of background and that kind of initial assignment, you were clearly on track for a Moscow assignment. According to my estimation, you went off in '62 as personnel officer.

PERRY: Yes, being personnel officer was a funny thing. The embassy in Moscow was trying to expand its number of officers who spoke Russian, because there were so many things to be done besides work in the office. Since all of our officers in Moscow who spoke Russian (and most of us did) could travel and could see the country in a way you couldn't in Moscow, they could potentially make contacts with the Russians and all the rest of it, so they were trying to expand the staff. And they came up the idea of adding that year a personnel officer and an assistant GSO (General Services Officer), both of whom were youngish, junior Russian speakers. So I felt lucky to get the job.

It was a very tedious job. I kept the leave cards and planned people's travel and other 'personnelly' type things for a year before I got promoted (I guess it's a promotion) to the Political Section.

But the interesting thing about it, I think, is that the Soviets seemed to think that my job was a CIA position. I guess to them personnel seemed a little bit sensitive, and they seemed to think that I might be CIA. And they treated me with a great deal of attention. The surveillance that I got (and my wife, too, who got even more than I did) was very strong.

There was a Yale professor, Frederick Barghoorn (this was the second year of the Kennedy administration), who was more or less kidnaped by the Russians on the streets of Moscow, and it was quite a cause célèbre at the time. I was told by my friends who had access to the information that the Soviets asked Barghoorn repeatedly about me and what I did at the embassy. Well, Barghoorn had never heard of me or seen me, and I was nothing to him, so he couldn't give them any answer. But I took that as a sort of a gratifying sign that the Soviets must think I was much more important than I was.

Q: You had been in Army Intelligence, though.

PERRY: Well, not really. I was in the Army Security Agency, which was electronic intercept stuff. And very low level, at that.

Q: But as far as the KGB would be concerned...

PERRY: Well, they probably thought so. They probably did.

Q: Well, I don't know. I'm just sort of fishing here.

PERRY: Probably true, yes. They may have put that together. In any event, they were wrong. For me, “personnel” meant leave cards, not spying.

Q: Did you find that you had, in the two years...I assume it was exactly two years you were in Moscow...

PERRY: Just about, yes.

Q: Did you find that the stresses and strains and tensions got to you, as many people have said about their tours during those times?

PERRY: I don't think so. My wife and I (two of our four children had been born at that time) had a very pleasant time. We remember Moscow most pleasantly.

There were certain things that happened, that all the old Moscow hands of those days know went on -- the surveillance, the wiretaps, even the microwaving of the embassy (which caused us some nervousness later when we found out about it). Those things went on, and it was not a particularly pleasant atmosphere, but the excitement of it and the knowledge that you were doing something really fascinating and important buoyed one up. To serve in Moscow in the early sixties was a privilege and an enjoyment as well, even if the Cold War atmosphere did close in about you at times.

I would also say that the spirit at the embassy in those days was really very good. We were close to each other. If the Foreign Service ever had a post, it seems to me, where people were fond of each other and enjoyed each other's company and formed a very warm little colony, it was Moscow in the early sixties.

You have to remember that we went through some trying times. We were there for the Cuban missile crisis. We were there for Kennedy's assassination. And we were there for some spy-trial stuff that caused a great deal of surveillance at the embassy -- Penkovsky, the Soviet colonel who was spying for the United States, was arrested while we were there. And the Penkovsky incident caused a lot of us to be declared persona non grata (not me, thank God), and just sort of stirred things up greatly.

But I guess I would have to say that all in all we found service in Moscow most exciting and most agreeable.

Q: Well, I'm quite prepared to believe that, but you were there, according to the list of things that you have just laid out, during some very tension-filled times, the Cuban missile crisis, perhaps, above all. Did you notice at the time, then, a perceptible tightening-down of surveillance or other kinds of harassment?

PERRY: Well, the Cuban missile crisis was an especially interesting time. Needless to say, I was just about the most junior officer at the embassy, and I had no real idea of what was going on. I mean, I wasn't privy to the cables. I know that the cars would go dashing over towards the Soviet Foreign Ministry with messages, and we'd see them go, but I didn't know what was in those

messages.

It's hard to document this, but the feeling that my wife and I and our friends felt was that the Russian people were, by and large, trying to show us Americans that they were our friends and that they did not want war. In a general way, this has always been true. Whenever I've been in the Soviet Union (I have, of course, visited many times), most Russians like Americans and they've generally tried to show it. But during the Cuban missile crisis, I think that we felt a particularly strong feeling that the Russians were trying to communicate to us, in any way they could, that, gosh, we don't want war, and we have nothing against you.

To give you an example of how you felt this a little bit "in the air," we had a performing arts attraction that was touring the Soviet Union at the time. As I recall, it was the Shaw Chorale. They had been touring for some time before the Cuban missile crisis, and they were having a successful tour, but not an overwhelming tour. And then all of a sudden the Cuban missile crisis came, and they started getting these tumultuous ovations that would last for ten minutes or so. The embassy officers who were traveling with them (they were out in the boondocks) would call us up and say, "We don't know what's going on; all of a sudden these people have become well loved." And so our explanation for this is that the Russians were trying to show this American group: "We love you. We don't want to fight you; we love you." Well, one never knows about those things.

It was a somewhat tense time, there's no doubt about that. And the Russians did send mobs outside the embassy.

One of the experiences I'll never forget is that our next-door neighbors in our apartments, which were quite some miles from the embassy, had a governess, whom they had brought with them from British Guiana (now Guyana; then British Guiana). She was very religious, and she had been told that the Russians were atheists, and therefore she was somewhat fearful, and she wouldn't leave the apartment. And our friends, the Woods, kept saying, "You really must go out and enjoy life a little bit." So, about this time, they had lined up some tickets to go the Bolshoi Ballet, on a Saturday afternoon. They picked the worst possible time, because it was the day that the Russians decided to demonstrate about the Cuban missile crisis. They loaded the governess in the car with their children and the two of them, and they had to come by the embassy to pick up their tickets. And, of course, they drove straight into this mob of several thousand howling Russians. They were able to get out of the car, and all of us at the embassy were taken upstairs to the Marine apartment, which was on the top floor, that being considered the safest place, because people were throwing bottles at the embassy, and so forth. This poor woman from Guiana sat there and trembled for a couple of hours, and after that, I think she more or less refused to leave the apartment.

This riot, by the way, was the time that has become rather famous because an officer from the embassy went outside and mingled with the crowd and asked somebody, "How long do you think this will last?" And the guy looked at his watch and said, "It's going to be over in twenty-two minutes."

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

PERRY: Well, when we first went to Moscow, in the summer, it was Tommy Thompson. Llewellyn Thompson was there on his first tour, and then he went back later. But he left soon after we got there, and the new ambassador was Foy Kohler, who then stayed several years.

Q: And the DCM?

PERRY: The DCM was Jack McSweeney, our first year. The second year, it was Walter Stoessel. And Mac Toon was political counselor. So we had a pretty strong team; with Kohler, Stoessel, and Toon, it was quite a lineup.

Q: Stoessel, rather shockingly and unexpectedly, died not long ago.

PERRY: Right. In fact, among old Moscow hands, when we get together, one always brings up things like that -- the early deaths of so many of us -- and I suppose this is a phenomenon you would expect. But it was documented that the embassy was bombarded with microwaves for a long time by the Soviets. And we always compare notes as to how many of our colleagues died of cancer. And, to us, it always seems that there were large numbers that did so. But, of course, there are large numbers of people everywhere who die of cancer. I will say that Walter was exposed to an awful lot of those microwaves, because the ambassador's office was right up on the top floor, where it was probably pretty bad. So who knows.

**VLADIMIR LEHOVICH
USIS Exhibition Tour
Soviet Union (1961-1962)**

Vladimir Lehovich was born in New York in 1939 and received his Bachelor's Degree from Harvard University 1961. He was positioned in Saigon, Brussels, Bonn and Vienna. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Lehovich on March 25, 1997.

Q: So, you came into the Foreign Service when?

LEHOVICH: Right after college. I followed up on a lead and called USIA and very soon found myself in a little group of people in Washington preparing to go off with a set of cultural exhibits to tour the Soviet Union. I went with two cultural exhibits, one on medicine and one on transportation.

Q: This is 1961.

LEHOVICH: In '61 and '62. I toured it for 9 or 10 months, from September 1961 until May of the following year. We had a grand time. We went to places like Stalingrad, Moscow, Kharkov, Kiev, and put up our show with about 20 guides. Our show was absolutely mobbed. We had as many as 10,00 visitors a day. I remember at that time I was keeping an informal log of my own

social activities. My count was that I was invited by an average of 30-40 people a day to go and do something afterwards, at the end of the day. I was keeping this mental log because we were all a little worried about having the KGB take care of our free time for us. If you get 30 or 40 spontaneous invitations a day, you're changing the odds a great deal in your own favor. I simply followed my instinct and was out probably five to seven nights a week with some or other character or other.

Q: I think it's very interesting because contact between the East and West was normally so circumscribed in this. What type of things would you be doing?

LEHOVICH: A very good area -because it gets a little into the social history of the former Soviet Union. This was the Khrushchev period, '61 and '62. There was no question that it was much freer than things had been a few years earlier. This was the high Khrushchev period. Things were easier then than they became a few years later. So, I had a surprising amount of communication compared to what I had expected. There was a fair amount of surveillance, I think. Anytime one was out more than once with the same person, there would either be surveillance or the other party would be contacted. There was a real fine calculus of how much you want to see people on the one hand because you are attracted to them because they're nice people, and how much you don't want to put them in a tight spot. What one did, it's very simple. One went outdoors. One goes outdoors for two or three reasons. The abysmal housing shortage which has been the hallmark of the Soviet Union; the horrible cold nature of the winter; the shortness of the day. And, no privacy. All this means you're stuck and there's nowhere to go. So, what does one do? One spends enormous amounts of time taking walks. That was probably the biggest single thing that I did with any of the large number of folks that I got together with at one time or another in the former Soviet Union, take walks. It's a little like Adam and Eve. "Adam, do you love me?" "Of course, Eve, who else?" "Did you take a walk?" "Of course, what else is there to do?" There isn't much else to do. You can go to communal centers. You can go to some rather foul movie theaters. You couldn't really go to restaurants, normally speaking. They either didn't exist or were too crowded to get in, a real short commodity. Cafes were a little hard for the same reason. There really weren't places like that were accessible. So, one took long walks and got to know neighborhoods very well, very enjoyable.

Q: What did you find yourself imparting to the people you would walk with and they to you?

LEHOVICH: We had fairly endless conversations that would be a lot about society. A lot of it would be their showing me what was going on. With people one got to know very well, there was a very quick transition to a whole set of frustrations about the environment they were coming from. In the case of several people, the relationship was heavily based on humor. I'm a good audience and if somebody is a good raconteur or a good joke teller, I'm a person who is happy to shut up for very large periods of time. I listen and, above all, I laugh. Laughter is very spontaneous. I had a couple of people I met over there who were great raconteurs. I was a very good listener. Afterwards, I wrote down some of their best products and for a short time had one of the better joke books.

Q: So many of the jokes were nationally political, weren't they?

LEHOVICH: The jokes were delightfully political, a lot of them. They were basically jokes that were based on the sadness of the human condition or the sadness of the political condition or the sadness of the lack of food or the sadness of the shortness of the male organ or some other thing like that. In that sense, they're very similar to Yiddish humor and come from a mournful period.

Q: I always think of a sardine as a whale that has passed through all phases of socialism.

LEHOVICH: Actually, it's very good because it gives wonderful insights into a society. It's also terribly funny.

Q: Yes. Our society doesn't lend itself to spontaneous humor.

LEHOVICH: I think we're being badly hurt by what we see on television, one liners, where some bozo is writing poor jokes and it passes for humor. A lot of it is sarcasm packaged as a joke. I agree with you, Stu.

Q: In the first place, what did USIA before you went out; and, at the time, did you have an equivalent to a den mother or somebody who was trying to keep you under control?

LEHOVICH: Stu, thank you. I want to talk for minute or two about an amazing thing USIA did then. USIA took groups like the one I was a member of - i.e., groups of 10 to 20 people that they were sending off to a place like the former Soviet Union. Before sending them off to do, in effect, high class propaganda or high class publicity work on behalf of the US, they gave us a training program. My training program at USIA was two weeks. Many years later, it's still one of the most brilliant pieces of education and communication I've ever seen. For that two week period, it was run by Paul Conroy and Charles Vetter. Chuck Vetter is still around. Whenever you see Chuck Vetter, remember he was a terrific educator on behalf of USIA, as was Paul Conroy. They ran something not too different from what had been done with some of the civil rights crusaders. They were given training in how to react to a hostile environment without either imploding or exploding. We were given much the same stuff. We worked with these folks and then later with each other for a couple of weeks on dealing with issues, with likely questions, and with different forms of unpleasantness or confrontation that might be thrown at us - a very useful experience.

We did have some keen leaders or den mothers who went with us. They were very unusual people as well. One was Fran Macy, one of the most distinguished young public servants I had ever met at that time. Another was Jack Masey, a man with artistic flair and a terrific leader. They were not related. They both happened to be together and were very much our leaders at that time. On one of these exhibits, we were led by Andrew Falkiewicz, a USIA officer. Andy, in addition to being a very smart and very entertaining man and a good leader, was also a concert-quality pianist, a mathematician, and a very good chess player. Quite an unusual guy. Career USIA officer. I met him later in Vietnam when we were both down there.

Q: Were you provoked at all? I mean, I assume you would be getting up and explaining what various things were.

LEHOVICH: Yes, we were provoked quite a bit. It was typically done by these young people who were local party activists who got their kicks by going out on weekends with red armbands on their arms and enforcing public order and doing things like that. I guess for the first week or so it was pretty daunting to be baited by these people, but not for long. The reason is that about a week later we got better at it than they were. How many ways can you be abrasive to somebody that the person won't figure out after a while? You learn certain techniques of saying nothing for a while, knowing perfectly well what you're going to say a minute later when the fellow digs himself a little deeper or you let other people tell him to shut up because he's offensive.

Q: I'm sure, in a way, in a crowd like that, you're not going to find, you might say, the full discipline that you would find maybe in some other type of meeting.

LEHOVICH: In public, we never had to deal with truly gifted opponents because they weren't there to bait us. If they were, they were being quiet.

Q: Were you feeling any of the political tensions that were coming up about this time? We're within a few months of the rather difficult time for Kennedy after his first meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna, which didn't go well at all. We were calling up the Reserves. I was here in Washington and we really felt the pressure was moving up at that particular point.

LEHOVICH: It was. Later, not too long later, with the Cuban Missile Crisis, it moved up further. The amazing thing is, at this time, the only real tension that one felt in an international relations sense was Russian-Chinese relations. Somehow, this was the hot topic. To the extent that the Russians at that time were raising international topics spontaneously in private or group settings, that was very much the direction. It was very clear that something was changing and it was clear that the word had gone out that the Chinese were entering the bad list. The Americans had also been on a bad list, but it was so much better than a year or two before. We were pretty easy to deal with at that time.

Q: Did you find that you or any of your colleagues - were there attempts by the KGB to compromise you?

LEHOVICH: Yes, there were attempts to compromise a couple of my other colleagues. I was not put in that particular situation. I think what they were doing was conducting very intensive biographic intelligence on me, personality surveillance, psychological profiling. I think they were looking at me much more in terms of the long term than anything they wanted to mess up right there and then. I presume they knew that I was going to join the diplomatic service. I didn't conceal this kind of thing. So, the KGB was actually very decent to me. I knew that they were around all the time. They got me cabs without my knowing it or asking for it. Once, they pulled me out of a very nasty situation with a half-crazy drunk whose hobby was fist-fighting. He was very good at it. A half crazy drunk on a snowy night attacked me and was amusing himself by having me on the ground and was stomping on my ears. That's a very frustrating situation, Stu, when some guy is stomping on your ears, when you're lying on the ground, with the heel of his foot. Luckily, I had a hat on, which didn't come off. Even more luckily, a taxi pulled up, which I should have noticed earlier was in the neighborhood because of me. The driver got out and I saw from the ground out of the corner of my eye, he took the guy who was stomping on me, he hit

him only once in the back of the neck, and then he stacked him like a big bag of potatoes against the wall. Then he changed the expression on his face to a friendly one and in a friendly way asked me if I wanted a taxi ride. That was the KGB. So, I didn't have any hostile behavior. The rules we played by, those of us who were reasonable about it, was not to make life hard for those guys and we didn't.

Q: I would have thought though, using young people - I've had problems with young Foreign Service officers who start playing games. I think, as you get older, you understand your surveillants are people doing their job and you don't play games. Why make it more difficult for them?

LEHOVICH: There's a big temptation to do it. I remember clearly that we were told in a very unambiguous way before and during not to do that. Apparently, it was convincing. The real reason you don't do it is because they have one of the dumber jobs in the country, and they were not being well-rewarded for it. It's not a particular glamorous job to tail people like me around. If you don't bother them, they think they've done a great job. They think they've followed you all day, know a lot about you, and have not fallen into disgrace and you haven't made an obscene gesture at them or anything like that. The only thing I ever did to those guys, which I think was a good thing to do on balance, was one evening when I was with a young lady at a cafe, one of these hard to find cafes in Moscow, called "The Cafe Lyra," which was open rather late every day and had a good omelette and very cheap champagne, a very drinkable kind. I sent a bottle of champagne and a glass with my compliments to the KGB monitor who followed me around most evenings. This fellow then left. I didn't mean for him to leave. I hoped he might enjoy the champagne, but he left. I felt more like James Bond than I ever had before or ever have since. I don't think that was an unfriendly thing to do to the guy.

Q: Did you find there was interest in the fact that, obviously, Vladimir Lehovich is not Joe Smith. I mean, the fact about your family and all of that.

LEHOVICH: There was. That tended to be something one had to get past in every conversation. Had to get past because for me, at least, it became very monotonous. Interestingly enough, one got past it very quickly because they were actually at that time much more interested in someone as a representative of another society with whom they could communicate in their language. But it was certainly an interest.

Q: What about connections with the American Ballet company and all of that? Did you find your mother's connection there. Was ballet at all a subject of interest at that time as far as American ballet goes?

LEHOVICH: Well, it was unknown. They were very full of their own ballet. At that time, their own ballet was absolutely excellent, but it had sort of the quality of a fine piece of Thai sculpture from the Ayuthya period. When you have a fine piece of Thai sculpture from the Ayuthya period, it's the same for 300 years. It's absolutely gorgeous but each rendition is the same. Russian ballet was gorgeous stuff, but had been done the same way for quite a long time, with sumptuous costume and great style. Unfortunately, America hadn't yet visited. They would get there soon afterwards. In serious art circles, American dance caused quite a sensation. Sorry if I

go on about this stuff. I really enjoy the arts; it's an exciting theme..

Q: No, I'm trying to capture the times. Were there any elements of the United States that the people you would meet would particularly dwell on? I'm not talking about the ones who were set up to criticize you, but of genuine concerns. I'm thinking of race or the role of women.

LEHOVICH: I'll tell you, one wanted to get past that fairly soon. These issues, while real ones, were raised by people who had come with the intention of disrupting public conversation. The thing that was really interesting and the thing that people wanted to know about when they could speak more privately were not social issues or politics. They wanted to find out if it was true that... For example: "Is it true that in your society, you can get a telephone in a month?" "No, it's not. You can get a telephone in a day." "Well, I don't believe that." "Anyhow, you can get a telephone." "Is it true that the American economy is as generous to its people as we always heard?" It was asked in a hundred ways. There were also questions about freedoms -what you can read in the papers, what you can write about. The freedom that was the show stopper of all of them - so basic that people often did not realize that it existed - was that there was no national identity card in America, no system of required registration for where one lived, could live, that one could go and change jobs and change locations and seek one's employment or fortune or education anywhere in the country. This was the most unbelievable thing of all and still is to some degree. Amazing stuff. The political stuff was rhetoric for a public setting, in front of other people. These were the real questions, and they were really very exciting. Freedom to travel abroad, that type of thing. America had enjoyed a golden image in Russia from probably the 1910s on. It got heightened by some very good Soviet authors in the 1920 and 1930s and by word of mouth.

Q: And also World War II and the GIs who came over and all that.

LEHOVICH: I remember one guy who came up to me at one of these exhibits who had a rather fanatical look to him. He couldn't have been more unpleasant. He made life miserable for me for 35 minutes with nasty put-down comments, political, personal, and everything else. I really didn't like this guy at all. So, when I had a chance, I went off to spend a few quiet moments. We took breaks every once in a while. This guy comes up to me. I figured it was going to take all my self control with this guy. He comes up to me, but he's a different person. He comes up to me and says, "I have a question for you." I'm a nice guy, so instead of telling him to go to Hell, I said, "What's your question?" He says, "Listen. Do you know Brooklyn? Do you know such and such street in Brooklyn? That's where my brothers live. Now, what I want to do is, I want to talk to you about New York. I want to talk to you about Brooklyn." This guy had spent 35 minutes making an artificial spectacle of being rude and negative to me so that he could then get away with it when he came up privately to make contact about his relatives overseas. Very interesting. That's word of mouth. Those people knew.

Q: Did you find yourself dealing with people who had such a rosy view of the United States that you want to say, "Yes, but we've got our problems. I mean, this is not a perfect society."

LEHOVICH: Stu, that was a constant problem. There's a question of ethics. If people had too rosy a view, you had to let them down. But you had to do it gently. If you let them down too fast,

they would think "God dammit, we've got another one of these fellow travelers from America over here." But there were people whose views, for example, of the racial society were totally rosy. They'd say, "We know that was absolute baloney, all the propaganda we're told, blah, blah, blah." I would have to say, "No, that's a case where some of what you're hearing is not boloney." But the too rosy a view has been, of course, a problem not only in the former Soviet Union, but it's a problem in all parts of the world where there is a notion that the streets of America are paved with gold.

Q: As you say, it's a matter of ethics, but it's also a matter of practicality. People should understand that we have our problems and we're wrestling with them and there is a lot of unfinished work to do.

LEHOVICH: Absolutely.

Q: Vlad, as we move away from this particular episode- But it's fascinating. This is why I wanted to spend some time on it. Obviously, you were going to go into the Foreign Service. What did you come away from the Soviet Union with, the system and...

LEHOVICH: Very simple ideas. I came away with the idea that a highly intelligent person working for years and years could not invent a worse system, primarily economic. I felt that the uniquely bad features of the Soviet Union were economic. The reason is that you can find repressive politics in a lot of other places. You could find repressive politics all over Europe in the 1930s, not just Germany, not just Italy, but it was all those poor new democracies that became little dictatorships. But you couldn't find an economy that had managed to underachieve so badly for so long. The Soviets could go into outer space, but they couldn't make toilet paper and a whole host of other things that are absolutely basic. An absolutely miserable economic system. The other thing I found which has fascinated me for years later and also in other situations, I discovered the ability of a whole society to repress certain kinds of knowledge and information. I dealt a lot with people my own age. I was 21 and 22 when I was over there. I dealt a lot with people in their late teens, early '20s, mid '20s, bright people. I fell in with a group of folks who were musicians and were very gifted kids in Moscow (I had a lot of fun with them) from privileged families and in several other places. These folks had much less knowledge of what had happened in their own country in the 1930s than I did at that time and other reasonably well informed Americans in reading the newspapers. You didn't have to be a scholar. This was pretty obvious stuff. You didn't have to be steeped in Joseph McCarthy; this was obvious stuff. I saw the same phenomenon later in Germany and then Austria. One just finds it time and time again. Society will omit from family discourse and from the oral tradition that which it doesn't like.

But one of the fascinating things I learned from Russia and from that year there is something a lot of reporters also learned - a lot of reporters and a lot of young people who were going over there at that time from America and other parts of the West thinking, "Wow, we're going to really find out, is this place great? Is it awful? How much propaganda have we been getting?" The amazing thing is, these folks would come back and say, "It wasn't propaganda, what we heard." This was the case with some very good reporters over there at that time. Basically a lot of them had gone over feeling that maybe this was a lot better experiment than we thought. They

came back from there thinking it's a total failure. Very useful to go there. I took my kids many years later to Czechoslovakia and Hungary. This was before the collapse of communism when my kids were young. In three or four days, without any prompting from their parents, they reached some conclusions that had were extraordinarily valuable political insights for them as young people ever since. The details aren't important, but they saw certain things that simply don't happen in other societies. It's there hanging out, it's festooned all over.

RICHARD TOWNSEND DAVIES
Political Officer
Moscow (1961-1963)

After graduating from Columbia College in 1942, Ambassador Richard T. Davies served in the U.S. Army in World War II. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1947, Ambassador Davies has held positions in Moscow, Paris, Kabul, Calcutta and Warsaw. He was interviewed by Peter Jessup on November 9 1979.

DAVIES: But I'm ahead of my story because at about that point, I left Washington to go back to Moscow to the embassy there again. Tommy (Llewellyn) Thompson was there. The interesting thing that happened - that was in the middle of 1961 - I was in the internal political section; I was first heading that - and we had the 22nd Party Congress, Soviet Party Congress at the end of that year, at which Khrushchev attempted to put through his de-Stalinization effort again, as he had at the - on two earlier occasions when he made the famous secret speech and then at the Party Conference that had been held a couple of years earlier.

Ambassador Thompson - Tommy Thompson - had a remarkable relationship with Khrushchev who liked to see Western ambassadors and conceived what I think was a personal rapport or affection insofar as that can exist under those circumstances between the two. He believed that Khrushchev was thoroughly in command, that he was Number One without any qualifications.

Kenneth A. Kerst, who was for many years in the Bureau of Intelligence Research in the Department, head of the Soviet branch there - he's now retired - was there working with me in the internal political section. We had been there earlier, in fact, in 1951 to 1953, when Stalin died. So we were back there and we didn't think that Khrushchev was unchallenged inside the Party, and we believed that the course of the Congress showed that, because they did publish the speeches and some of the debates. It was possible to form from them, by close analysis, an idea of the outcome; that it was clear, to us at any rate, that Khrushchev was asking the Congress to pass measures which would result in a thorough investigation of the so-called crimes of the Stalin era. Of course, being Party Secretary, he would have been in a position to insure that the people he didn't like were those who were tried, one assumes, and that he himself would not be. But he did not succeed in that. He did succeed in some things such as having Stalin's body moved out of Lenin's tomb. And then there was a commission established, in fact, to investigate the crimes of the Stalin era but it never reported. It was a dead letter before it got started.

And there was also some kind of resolution to consider building a monument to the victims of the cult of personality, and nothing ever came of that either. These were all obviously abortive efforts on his part to create a situation in which he would be able to enhance his power by moving against, or at any rate, by threatening people who were, perhaps, more culpable than he, or whom he would be able to accuse successfully of having stained their hands with blood during the Stalin era.

It was a time of enormous ferment. Again, as whenever this subject arose, we went around Moscow. They had these public lecture sessions put on by various societies: the Society for Spreading Political Knowledge. And we used to go to their lectures and for a matter of a month there, all these people who had been released from the concentration camps in 1956, the period after Stalin's death but particularly in 1956 and thereafter, rehabilitated - these older people, many of them bearing on their persons the marks of years not to say decades that they spent in hard places like Kolyma and Siberia and various places, were showing up at those meetings and making fiery speeches demanding that justice should be done and that there should be retribution. A lot of them, of course, had been perfectly good communists in the twenties and thirties, many of them, I suppose, idealistic communists who then had been purged by Stalin or others for little or no reason except Stalin's tactic of using terror to establish himself.

And they were demanding that the things that Khrushchev was arguing for should be implemented. And the people who were running these meetings and lectures were very much on the defensive, making all kinds of promises, saying, "Well, the Congress had passed a resolution and this would all happen in the fullness of time, comrades."

And these older people were saying, well, frankly, they didn't have the fullness of time to wait because, you know, after 20 or 25 years in the places they'd been in, they didn't expect to be around much longer and frankly, they wanted to get their pound of flesh or whatever, the weight of retribution, which they judged was owing to them, before they left, shuffled off this mortal soil. There were some moving scenes. It gave you a real appreciation of how explosive an issue this was on which Khrushchev was playing, quite calculatedly for his own political advantage.

Well, Ken and I tried to make these arguments with the Ambassador and he really just wasn't buying any of it. He would not admit that there were divisions in the leadership. So far as he was concerned, Khrushchev had the whole thing very well in hand.

So it was a very interesting time to be there. You remember, of course, that in 1958, Khrushchev delivered the ultimatum on Berlin. Ever since, he'd been trying to deliver on that ultimatum. He talked at first about, I don't know, six months or a year. Then he kept extending this one way or the other. In the summer then of 1961, actually shortly after I got there I believe it was - I think it was the summer of 1961 - he had put up the prices for milk, meat, butter. There had been quite a riot in Novocherkassk on the lower Volga down towards the Black Sea. He was beating the drums at the same time about Berlin. He had troubles inside the country. We pointed all these things out, or tried to, but we didn't get very far.

Then in the summer of 1962, Ambassador Thompson left.

Q: For what reason?

DAVIES: Well, he was reassigned back to Washington and Foy Kohler came. Let's see, was that Tommy Thompson's second tour? I guess it was just at the end of his first tour. He'd been there a long time.

Incidentally, I think that of all the post-war ambassadors we have had, despite the fact that he didn't agree with our perceptions which I think were quite correct and borne out of course by what happened afterward, he was far and away the ablest - and if for no other reason than that after he came back, when the Cuban missile crisis developed, he played a key role there as an expert, so to speak. For that alone, I think, in that advice he gave, he showed how wise he was. I always felt he was far and away the ablest of our post-war ambassadors.

So Foy Kohler came in the late summer or early fall, September I guess it was, maybe August, and I began to go around with him and make all the calls on various people. It was in that period, of course, that - it must have been the middle of September that Khrushchev called him. I think on that occasion, Jack McSweeney went with him, the DCM, Deputy Chief of Mission, who died here not too long ago, less than a year ago. And Khrushchev, of course, told Ambassador Kohler not to worry about Cuba, that the Soviets had no intention of putting any offensive weapons in there. And after the election, there would be time enough to talk about those things. But after the election, it would be necessary to try to resolve the Berlin crisis. However the talk was very reassuring.

Of course, the Ambassador reported all this. Meanwhile, - yes, well, of course, the Vienna meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev must have been the previous summer. So then at the end of September, - I wrote some of this stuff up a long time ago - I made a copy of it which I can leave with you - there was a U-2 incident when I think it was a U-2 overflew Sakhalin on August the 30th.

We had gotten a note. By this time, I had become Political Counselor. The Political Counselor, Boris Klasson, had come back here to the State Department, and I moved up. We got this note to deliver in response to a Soviet protest. The Soviets protested this violation of their air space in a note of September the 4th. Well we got this note about 6 or 7 o'clock at night and it said to deliver it immediately to the highest ranking - it was one of these things, you know, that betrays a lack of knowledge of the way things work. (Laughs) Obviously the President himself had been involved in this. The instructions made it clear. It said, "The President wants this delivered immediately to the highest ranking available official of the Ministry." And sort of "Return receipt requested." "As soon as you've done it, let us know."

So we had to do something about it. I telephoned. By this time - you know, they work from 9 to 5 and literally 5. I mean, you know, it's 4.49 : 4.59 : 59 and everybody's out of there, you know. The last one out turns out the lights.

But there was a duty officer on there and I had the phone number for the duty officer. So I called the guy over there and I said, "Hey, we've got this note in and it will take us a little while now to type it up in the proper form but I should have it ready for you in a couple of hours, or maybe

sooner than that, an hour and a half; as soon as we can get it typed up. And then I'll bring it over."

And he said, "Aw, deliver it tomorrow morning when the mailroom opens at 9."

And I said, "Well..."

He said, "Well, if you can get it here by 9 o'clock tonight, deliver to the mailroom, that's fine." But we couldn't make it. By that time, it was 7.30 or 8. We had a girl stenographer-typist coming in to do the work, the duty stenographer. And I said, "Well, this is a hell of a note. I mean, after all, we have instructions and..."

He said, "Oh, well, you know, it's not civilized."

The instructions said DELIVER. So as soon as it was typed up I got a driver - and all these drivers, we didn't know, but they certainly were trusted. [They were] cleared. Whether they were colonels in the K.G.B. I doubt, but maybe some of them were.

Well, I got a driver to take the note over to the Foreign Ministry, and he was back in about ten minutes - we weren't that far from the Foreign Ministry - and he said, "Well, you know, the mailroom is closed, there was a major, I think, of the militia, a police major guarding the main entrance of the Ministry, and he refused to accept it; he said he had no authority to accept it, and consequently we have to bring it back tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock."

And I said, "Damn it, the instruction says..." And then I said, "Come on, we'll go back and we'll get it in."

He pleaded with me and said, "Please don't try to do that," and I said why not? I have been told to deliver it, it's an official communication.

In fact I am not sure whether it was a letter from the President or not, or whether he'd enclosed a letter or not. I don't remember. Anyway I said we had instructions to deliver the damn thing, and he said, uh, well...

He took me back there in the car.

Q: Back where?

DAVIES: Back to the Ministry, and I went up to the door - they had these great big double doors of glass, monumental doors - and here was this major. I succeeded in getting him to open the door - you know, very gruff...

"What do you want?"

"Well, I have instructions to deliver this note tonight. I have to deliver it now and report to Washington, and I have done so."

He said (imitates stentorian voice), "I am not allowed to receive any official communications. I am just in the police, I am not in the diplomatic service."

Well, it was obvious - big uniform, very nice.

And I said, "Well, I understand that, but there is a duty officer here. Call the duty officer."

"Oh, no, I can't call the duty officer."

"Why can't you call him?" And we went on like this, and getting more and more heated.

Finally I said, "Look, this is ridiculous. When I was in Washington, at any hour of the day or night your people in the Embassy would call up, and I would go down there and open up and take anything they had to deliver."

"Oh, well, you do it your way and we do it our way."

So I tried to...to slip it into...

He was wearing this greatcoat, and I tried to slip it into this, tried to shove it there.

I said, "All right, I am going to leave it on the floor here, right in front of the door. So far as I am concerned it has been delivered. I am going to go back and send a telegram and tell my Ministry that I have delivered the note."

Then he got very agitated (and said), "Oh, you can't leave it on the floor! That's an important state document." (hearty laughter)

I said, "Yes, that's right, it is an important state document, that's why I want you to take it. But if you won't take it..."

By this time the chauffeur had come in, and he was pleading with me. He was saying, "Oh, please, Mr. Davies, don't. Let's not make a fuss."

I said, "Oh, I am not making any fuss, I am just trying to deliver the note."

So the upshot was I did leave it on the floor. The police major - the militia major - wouldn't touch it, but he was shouting at me, "You can't do that, you can't leave it on the floor!"

When we got back into the car the driver was saying, "Oh, go and pick it up, it's an important document." And I said oh, I have a copy of it.

So we went back to the Embassy.

Well, it became clear that somebody had picked it up - I think the Major did, obviously - because the next day in Izvestia or Pravda - they published a translation of it. It was an apology, it

expressed regret. In fact I think the President had given orders, and he was pretty sore that they found out this plane a little before it had overflowed Soviet territory.

But I went back and sent a telegram.

Well, all this by way of prelude to the Cuban missile crisis, which we really knew nothing of. I don't think Ambassador Kohler knew anything about it either, until - I can't remember whether it was Saturday. No, it was Sunday, October 21st, I've got it down here - we received from the State Department the text of the President's speech that he was going to give the following day at 7 P.M. Eastern Daylight Saving Time, his famous speech on the discovery of the Soviet missiles on Cuba. And we were instructed to deliver the text of the speech under cover of a letter from the President to Chairman Khrushchev to a high official of the Soviet Ministry for urgent transmittal to the Chairman at precisely 6 P.M. on Monday evening, simultaneous with the briefing of Dobrynin. Dobrynin was going to be given a copy of the speech by Dean Rusk in Washington.

So at the same time, parallel with that, we were to deliver.

There was only one problem, and that was that 6 P.M. Eastern Daylight Saving Time was 1 A.M. Moscow time the following day, and we had all this fuss.

So we talked about this, and finally it was decided that I would go over and see the deputy head of the American Section of the Foreign Office - a fellow named Sergei Kudriyavtsev, who subsequently became Ambassador to Cuba, he served in Asia in various places and had a very good career in the service, and he was a fellow I knew as well, perhaps even better, than most of the guys over there, he had even been at our apartment, which was very unusual, he and his wife, for dinner, and I kind of liked him, he is a very clever man and very flexible by their standards - and it was agreed...Ambassador Kohler and Jack McSweeney, the DCM, said "You go over, and without intimating to them that you are really going to have anything to deliver, talk about this problem in general terms: what are we going to do if we get an important message that has to be delivered after the mailroom closes at 9 P.M. and before it opens again at 9 A.M.? This is the middle of the 20th century, and we can't be dependent on bureaucratic habits."

Of course the whole thing had been just the opposite when Stalin was alive: they never started work over there until 6 P.M. in the evening, and they worked until 4 A.M. in the morning, because Stalin worked all night long, Stalin slept all day long.

But now they were back to normal hours, and nobody was going to make them break them.

So they said, "Talk about this in general terms." And I said okay.

I went over and saw Kudriyavtsev, who was very understanding, and I said, "Look, this is ridiculous. If something should come in, if there should be an emergency, we should be able to call somebody and deliver something, if need be, in the middle of the night, if it's really important."

I said, "Look, don't worry, we are not going to be sitting over there trying to figure out reasons and pretexts for coming over here in the middle of the night. Not at all. We don't want to do it, but if we have to there should be some arrangement."

Well, he made no commitment - this was Monday morning - but he said, "Well, we'll look into it."

So that evening - meanwhile during the day we had the text of the note typed up, and of course by that time already there were rumors back here and some word on the wires, an atmosphere of crisis and this that and the other, so they were forewarned to that extent, although they didn't know, I think. I think we did. I think we had the advantage of surprise...

So at approximately 5.30 or so I called the duty officer, because by that time the offices were closed.

Well, it was after the offices were closed, between 5 and 9. I called him and I said, "Look, I will have a note to deliver to you. My instructions are to deliver it at 1 A.M., which is 6 P.M. Daylight Saving Time. Will you come down to the front door and receive it?"

He said, "Yes, I'll be there." I forget his name now. He was a nice young fellow who worked for Kuznetsov, the Deputy Foreign Minister, who was Deputy Foreign Minister for years, and now is president or one of the chairmen of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet or something like that, who incidentally worked in Pittsburgh in the steel mills in the 1930s, and was trained in the United States.

So at 1 A.M. I took the note over there with the President's speech, and this very nice young fellow was there when I arrived and he received it, and he was quite concerned, it was clear. He was very polite, and he said, "Oh, this is bad news you have for us."

I said, "You'll have to decide for yourself, but it's serious business."

Well, that was the beginning, at 1 A.M. on Tuesday morning, and it was a very satisfying week, needless to say. It was the most pleasant time I ever spent. I got practically no sleep, but we had them on the run from the beginning, we were in complete control of the situation.

Seymour Topping, who was the New York Times correspondent, came in along about Wednesday very disconsolate and he said, "Dick, this is a terrible situation. I can't get any stories in the paper, because everything is happening in Washington, and no sooner do I get something written and sent in, it's been overtaken. They call me from New York and say, we can't use that, Sy, because there has been this and that."

Needless to say we were all pretty concerned because it was a serious business.

I don't know whether you remember, but I think it would have been on Tuesday - or maybe it was a little later in the week - that again a U-2, or an American plane at any rate, blundered into Soviet air space, but it was obvious when that happened, when we heard about it - that was the

occasion when I think the President made the statement, "There is always some poor dumb son of a bitch who doesn't get the word" - it was obvious that the attitude of the Soviets was totally different from that they displayed on the occasion of the plane that violated Soviet air space on August the 30th. They played it down, they were very concerned not to make anything of it. One could envisage the instructions that had gone out when they got word that this unidentified aircraft was approaching. They undoubtedly ordered all the aircraft gunners and missile people to be kept a minimum six feet away from their weapons, don't shoot it down!

They were scared to death. They were scared to death. So it was very satisfying.

Then on Tuesday, I guess it was, we got the instruction on the blockade, the order which we had to deliver, and there was a provision for certification of the vessels. There was this list of forbidden items - offensive weapons, beginning with missiles and aircraft and various other types of weapons systems and offensive munitions, which were contraband, were forbidden - and I took this over to the Foreign Ministry. It must have been at 6 A.M. in the morning, and they received me there. They were there, and the lights were burning late and early over there, just as they were in our chancery.

There was a provision for inspection of a cargo by officials, by officers of the Naval Attache's Office.

If an American naval officer were permitted to go aboard a ship in the harbor from which the ship was about to sail, and make an inspection at the time just before the hatches were closed, then he could write a naval certification - a nav cert - which said that it contained no contraband, and with that naval certification the master of the ship would be passed through the blockade. Of course this was high impertinence, but I took the thing over there and said, "We'd like to make arrangements."

This was before we knew whether they were going to respect the blockade. I said, "We'd be glad to make arrangements for Captain So-and-so" - I can't remember the guy's name now - "and for his subordinates in the Naval Attaché's Office to go up to Leningrad or down to Odessa or to Vladivostok."

Of course they never let us into the harbor areas in any of those places - certainly not people from the Naval Attaché's Office - but I explained this with a straight face to them, and they took this all in and asked some questions, and I left it there.

About an hour later I got a phone call, and they were never so polite. That week was such a pleasure, because they were so polite. They would call up, and in great contrast to the usual brusque - at best brusque and often rude - treatment that they gave everybody, they were gushingly polite. They would call up and they'd say, "Mr. Davies, how is Mrs. Davies? How are the children? How are you feeling? Is everything all right? Are you happy in our country?"
(laughs)

And at that moment I was very happy there, so I had no problem.

But they called me up about an hour later, very politely, and said, "Could you come back over? We know it's an inconvenience, but could you come back over here again?"

I said certainly, what is it about?

They said, "Well, it's about this document you left an hour ago."

I said, sure, I would be right over.

So I went over there, and they gave it back to me, very politely. They said, "We are sorry, but we can't accept this."

And of course it was a bit insulting - I mean from their point of view - that we were telling them that we would be glad to inspect their ships and let them through, and that was the only condition under which their ships could get through the blockade. (laughs) And they didn't recognize the blockade.

It was on one of those trips over there - I think it may have been on that one, I can't remember - and it was early in the week, Tuesday or maybe Wednesday, and I forget which floor the American Section was on - it was the 10th or 12th, and with these rickety old elevators they had - but they always met you at the door and you were always escorted inside the door, and I was escorted up there, and just as we got off the elevator a man who walked very fast - he was almost running - passed in front of the elevator. We stepped out, and this fellow from the American Section who was with me looked neither to right or left as he was heading for the office to which he was conducting me, but I saw this guy, and this guy had a gas mask on. It was an old, sort of World War Two canister type hanging at his hip, you know, a gas mask, and it looked as though they had gone down in the basement, maybe not in the building, but in some basement - it was rusty, you know - and found some of these old, disused gas masks. Maybe it was just an empty can, I don't know. But quite clearly - I had no doubt of it at the time, but even less now - it was staged for my benefit, because inevitably they knew that I had to go back to the Embassy and report it.

Well, you know, they were getting on the war footing in the Foreign Ministry. They were taking this seriously.

Of course this was a response to the fact that we on our part were very much getting on a war footing and making no bones of it. Troops were streaming into the Southeast, SAC was on the alert, the submarines, POLARIS's, were at sea sending their messages in clear back and forth.

Q: On purpose.

DAVIES: On purpose. And they didn't dare do anything like this, because they were afraid, and with great justice, I am convinced, that there would have been panic in the country.

So how to respond to this, without really being able to respond to it?

Well, so when Davies comes over the next time you have a guy with a gas mask, an old disused gas mask, disappearing around the corner, so don't give him too good a look at you, but...(laughs)

So of course I went back, and we were supposed to send...Golly, what was the acronym? Anyhow (we were supposed to send) a flash message, any indication of preparation for hostilities. There was a certain name for it, but I have forgotten it now. (CRITIC)

Q: They change every few years.

DAVIES: They change every few years.

Q: It's the maximum.

DAVIES: The maximum kind of thing. So I sent that. I mean I had to, because according to the regulations...

Q: It fitted them.

DAVIES: It fitted exactly, I had to send it, but at the same time we sent also flash precedence, a message saying that well, this was so obviously staged that that should be taken into account. Or maybe this was in the same message.

Nevertheless that was...

And of course they did many things. For example we had people traveling in the country, and they ordered all foreign diplomats to return to Moscow, again in an effort to show that they were serious, but without unnecessarily alarming their own people. We had the Robert Shaw Chorale traveling there - a wonderful success they had. Among other things they sang the Bach B Minor Mass, and it was the first time since before the Revolution that the Bach B Minor Mass had been sung in the Soviet Union, and my gosh, we went to Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow and it was packed with people sitting in the aisles, just jammed, following the score - there were a lot of music students with the score - and many people just weeping over it. It hadn't been performed in nearly 50 years, 45 years.

So the Robert Shaw Chorale was going around, and we had one other thing. What was it? We had another traveling orchestra or something, and they didn't bother those attractions that were taking place.

Oh, the New York City Ballet - George Balanchine - for the first time was there. Those two. Enormous success, of course. For the Russians to see what had happened to ballet in the West...

Theirs of course was, and still largely is, a museum of ballet - ballet frozen as it was in 1910. No development.

Q: A set thing. Certain set things.

DAVIES: Certain set things which had been carried out. There are some new ones, like The Red Poppy - so-called revolutionary - and Spartacus, but basically it's the classical pre-World War One, the classical 19th century ballet that they have preserved there. And Balanchine very correctly said when he came, "I can't understand this adoration of Soviet or Russian ballet. We in the West are the ones who have developed ballet." And he said this to everybody. Of course it wasn't published in the papers, but...

So that was an enormous success. There was no interference with either of those presentations, because they were following schedules, they were going to different places in the country, they had been sold out for months, there were no tickets to be had - the tickets were going at fantastic prices. In fact most extraordinarily they scheduled an extra performance of the Robert Shaw Chorale in Moscow. They had to find another theater, but the demand was so enormous for people to see these things.

And at the same time you had this fantastic crisis going on. You would have thought that the people would have (stayed away). But no, people came, they were applauding.

In the press and in the Soviet media they were doing everything they could to play down the immediacy of this thing.

It was an enormous debacle for Khrushchev, and it was certainly the beginning of the end for him, no doubt about that. Thereafter it was two years I guess, but it was all downhill as far as he was concerned.

There were many other things involved, but that was the principal thing: he lost the gamble, and this gave an opening to his enemies, of whom there were many, and he just didn't last that much longer.

Q: What was Khrushchev specifically ethnically? He was not a pure Ukrainian, was he?

DAVIES: No, he was Russian. He was born, like so many - you know it's a very mixed area - in a village which is on the borderland between the Ukraine and Russia, he worked in the Ukraine in a coal mine. But again it was a mixed region. But he was a pure Russian. The name is a very ancient one. There was a noble family, Khrushchev, which the last major representative of - they were counts or barons, I don't know which - was living in Rfo. A count. And presumably Khrushchev's family came from one of the estates belonging to this very well known family, and that's where he got the name.

Q: Khrushchev's manners were a matter of style then, weren't they?

DAVIES: A great actor.

Q: He wasn't a rough-hewn peasant who didn't know how to use a fork?

DAVIES: Well, he was, he was very coarse and could be even coarser if he wanted to, and he did frequently want to. As I think I mentioned, his wife - Nina Petrovna - was not from the gentility, but she was an educated woman and she worked on him and tried to refine him a little, but he was so exuberant that he was hard to refine. He had very little formal education. All the education he got was in party schools after he had joined the party.

Q: What about his use of language? Was it just prosaic or was it pretty colorful?

DAVIES: Very colorful.

Q But not erudite?

DAVIES: No, not at all, not at all. He was a very intelligent man, and he was nobody's fool, by no means, but very colorful and coarse. I think I mentioned to you when he was speaking with Nixon the barnyard language that he used that so embarrassed the interpreter who came from a refined, aristocratic Russian family. He could do that, he could carry on the way he did at the U.N., pounding on the desk with his shoe. But these were calculated things. A great deal of that was calculated. He was a very excellent actor, and of course you have to be if you want to be a Soviet leader, to survive you have to be able to put on a front. As for example he did with Eisenhower in Paris. That was a great Academy Award winning performance, calculated again.

Q: When he first met President Kennedy in Vienna wasn't that a bulldozer performance?

DAVIES: Oh, without a doubt. He attempted to cow him, and he did cow him, or at least he thought he'd cowed him. It was a combination. I mean he attacked him on the Bay of Pigs ferociously, and to the point that Kennedy really finally said, "It's been a terrible mistake." And he wouldn't let go of it, because he was intent upon establishing this psychological superiority, gaining the psychological upper hand. They put a great deal of importance on doing that. And he did. He got the psychological upper hand over Kennedy, and it was a terrible mistake that somebody - I don't know who might have done it - didn't warn Kennedy.

Q: That this was a ploy?

DAVIES: Well, that it's a ploy and you've got to go in there.

But of course Kennedy wasn't that way, he was quiet and understated and self mocking, kind of, when he was dealing with somebody so different.

From that meeting Khrushchev took away the idea that this was a man who could be cowed. I mean he had the Bay of Pigs evidence - "Well, you know, a guy who doesn't really understand these things, he won't go all the way..."

Q: "He'll cave..."

DAVIES: "He'll cave." And then he had the evidence in Vienna, "Well, this young fellow, you know, I can master him."

Because of course the Soviets at that time were very much weaker than we. They did not have the power, they did not have the missiles, there was a missile gap, but in the opposite direction. They were very much weaker than we, and that was why Khrushchev tried to put intermediate and medium range ballistic missiles on Cuba.

Yes, Khrushchev. Well, he was a gambler, and he gambled and lost.

But that whole Cuban missile crisis was such a beautifully conducted crisis management operation, right from the outset.

Q: Following one that was so badly managed.

DAVIES: Following one that was so badly managed.

Q: Who were some of the people who get credit for pursuing it in such perceptive detail?

DAVIES: Well, I think Bobby Kennedy had a lot to do with it the way I read it. You know, when you read the accounts - I don't claim to have read them all...

Elie Abel wrote an excellent book. I spoke with him. I was back by then, and he interviewed me and he talked with everybody. I thought it was the best account.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. wrote a very good account. Of course most of the time - that is beginning October the 22nd, the Monday, when Kennedy gave his speech - he was up in New York working with Adlai Stevenson, so he wasn't there the week of the crisis itself. He was there before that. But then again he wasn't a member of the executive committee.

Ted Sorenson's book is very good. And Elie Abel's. And Bobby Kennedy's book itself is excellent. But they were all parti pris, they all had preconceived opinions. Inevitably they couldn't be objective. You can't be, particularly when you are involved the way both Sorenson and Bobby Kennedy and to a lesser extent Arthur Schlesinger were.

Then Elie Abel came along and wrote, and he put all this down I thought very well, as somebody who was outside - a correspondent - but close enough.

But I think out of that come two or three things: Bobby Kennedy forced these high officials to really look at the options. Two parties formed. There were two parties: one that believed in going in and doing the bombing, and the other which believed you should start with the blockade, which I think was clearly the right thing to do.

As it was it's remarkable when you look back on it. There was a lot of skepticism - the British press, and the world press generally was very skeptical of the American position - because we didn't go out with photographs immediately. If we had come out with photographs I think it would have made a big difference, but nobody thought that that was necessary, until it became clear that for example in Britain there was a lot of skepticism.

Then in a couple of days you remember Adlai Stevenson used them up at the U.N., and they were published in all the papers. Then a lot of people were convinced, as they should have been.

I think Bobby Kennedy, (Robert) McNamara - I mentioned Tommy Thompson (Ambassador Llewelyn Thompson) and I think he played a big role. Dean Acheson was always for going right in there and bombing.

Q: Did the military?

DAVIES: The military wanted to do that, too, you know.

Q: Were there any less-than-hardliners among the military?

DAVIES: Well, I don't think so. Paul Nitze was a hardliner, as you would expect, although finally when the decision was made I think it was he who worked very closely with Ted Sorenson or Abe (Abraham) Chayes (State Department legal counsel) - I can't remember who it was - drawing up the blockade declaration.

But you know I think everybody who played a role in it comes out of it pretty darn well, even though there was a lot of backbiting afterwards.

Stevenson in particular was accused of having wanted to sell out and give them the missiles, the Jupiters in Turkey, and give them Guantanamo. And he did mention these as possibilities to the President at some point.

But I think everybody played a pretty creditable role.

And finally the President.

I mentioned Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy kept saying, in contrast to the hawkish position I thought he displayed at the outset - "We'll have to invade them, if we don't invade them this year we'll have to invade them next year..." - he argued from the outset against the bombing, saying that we cannot be the ones, it's not in the American tradition, we can't be the ones who go in there and..."

You know, you talk about surgical strikes. Well, it turned out that when they pinned the military down they said, well, of course, between 10,000 and 25,000 people... will be killed, and they won't all be Russians, either, there aren't 10,000 to 25,000 Russians there. So it will be a lot of Cubans who'll be killed.

Bobby Kennedy said, "You can't do that. This President can't do that. We can't be the ones to mount a Pearl Harbor. We may have to do it sooner or later, but we've got to start with something that is not so threatening and build up to it, if we do, gradually. We just can't first crack out of the box and go in with bombs."

So I think that spoke very well I would say for what he'd learned in the short space of one year, because I am not at all sure he would have felt that way if all this had been happening a year earlier. I don't know.

Q: So it sort of...

DAVIES: Yes. The way the whole thing was done, judging by the accounts one reads, was very intelligent, I thought. Getting the principals together - getting the principal people together - and making them argue this thing out, until really finally when the President decided that the blockade, or the preventive quarantine or whatever they called it, was the way to do it, all the rest were pretty much in agreement. There were still those who felt, well... Dean Acheson for example never reconciled himself to anything less than the bombing, and I think he was wrong. But you know, he was a crusty old coot. A wonderful man, but thank goodness he didn't prevail on that occasion. And then of course he did a beautiful job of going and talking to DeGaulle and Adenauer.

So I think... I don't know...

None of it was planned. Jack Kennedy did not like big meetings. They only had one meeting of the National Security Council, one formal meeting just before - I can't remember now whether it was on Sunday or Saturday - to ratify the decisions that had been taken by this executive committee as they came to call it.

But certainly the way the whole thing worked was a model of the way - anyway from our vantage point in Moscow, as Seymour Topping said, those people were way behind the curve throughout the whole thing, scared to death, literally scared to death, afraid that they had been caught and that they were going to be very heavily punished, which they weren't in fact.

Khrushchev had talked about a meeting with the President, and he said he had told visitors there - including a lot of Europeans who visited there - that he would come to the United Nations after the American election, and he told us that nothing would be done until after the American election. And then of course he did intend to spring this. I think he would have come first to see the President, and as somebody somewhere wrote - I think Michel Tatu, in the famous beautiful book that he did, because there are two books I think, Elie Abel's and Michel Tatu, and Tatu has a long treatment in his book Le Pouvoir en URSS (Power in the Kremlin, as it was translated here) on the Cuban missile thing. He and I were there, he was in Moscow, and we spent a lot of time afterwards talking about all this. He has a beautiful treatment I think of that whole thing, seen from the Soviet angle.

Well, Michel said that as it turned out Kennedy showed the pictures of the Soviet missiles in Cuba, but Khrushchev's plan was that he should show the pictures to Kennedy, (laughs heartily) at that meeting presumably in November.

Q: His pictures or our pictures?

DAVIES: Well, they would have been his pictures, not our pictures.

Q: Yes.

DAVIES: It would have been his pictures, and he would have shown the pictures and said, "Well, Mr. President, this is what we have there."

Q: [Inaudible]

DAVIES: That's right. "And now can we talk about Berlin?"

And again I think it's Michel Tatu - or maybe it's Elie Abel, I can't remember now - who says that they were put there not to be used, but to be traded for something. And the trade would have been for something in Berlin. That was what Khrushchev wanted, and of course he failed to get it.

So it was a great gamble on his part which failed.

Q: The Vienna meeting had occurred before.

DAVIES: Oh, yes, that was the year before.

Q: When Khrushchev had sized this guy up as a weakling or a pushover.

DAVIES: He thought so, yes.

He told Robert Frost - Robert Frost came there about a month before all this, in the fall of 1962, it must have been September, a wonderful man, my gosh, we met him there -

Q: A white-haired man.

DAVIES: Yes, you know. Another great actor, obviously. He loved to have people sort of sitting at his feet.

I think he went down to the Crimea to see Khrushchev - I can't remember now - and Khrushchev told him, he said, "Oh, you Americans are too liberal to fight."

And Frost was very disturbed that this was the perception that Khrushchev had. Of course none of us realized then that what was in his mind - in Khrushchev's mind - obviously that was part of it.

He formed this incorrect perception, and he tried to exploit what he thought he saw to the limit. Certainly it was a turning point in the postwar era. A turning point in a way which...

After this was over, on November the 6th, Kosygin gave the annual speech just on the eve of the November 7th holiday, and it was clear, in that speech he talked quite clearly about the necessity for building up Soviet strength, and that was the beginning of the buildup that has resulted in the

present balance of missilery. I can't remember now whether it was before that or after that that Spike Dubs (later Ambassador Adolph Dubs, assassinated in Kabul) the head of...

The political section was divided into two parts - internal political and external. We used to call them "intolerable" and "extraneous" or something like that. But in and ex were the abbreviations.

Well, Spike Dubs was the head of the external political section, and he drafted a telegram - I think it was perhaps after Kosygin's speech, which I thought was excellent, and we tried very hard to get... and Jack McSweeney agreed to it and we tried to get Foy Kohler to send it and he wouldn't - proposing a summit meeting on the heels of this experience. We thought that, at such a summit meeting, the American President would have a great deal of clout, and that he'd be able to make some proposals about disarmament, and control of nuclear weapons.

Well, of course a year later...

No, it was two years later, in the summer of 1964, that we got the first test ban agreement, but we thought then that it would be possible to make some proposals on control of nuclear weapons and strategic arms.

Q: This was thinking ahead of his time, wasn't it?

DAVIES: Well, it was. We didn't really know what you could do, but we said from the political point of view we've got them now at some disadvantage, and if we were able to put this politically in a way that would attract public attention...

You remember that Bertrand Russell had been very active during the crisis itself, making all kinds of crazy suggestions for summit conferences, and we said okay, let's follow up on this, and try to turn some of Earl Russell's anti-American suggestions - because they were primarily anti-American - to our advantage for a change.

But Foy Kohler wasn't prepared to send those out. I don't quite know why: he just felt that they wouldn't get very far.

And when I got back to Washington a year later - in the summer of 1963 - I spoke with David Klein, who was then in the National Security Council staff working on European affairs, and he'd been very much involved at the working level - not at the policymaking level - in the missile crisis and in the aftermath in particular. And I told him that we'd drafted this message and wanted to send it in and we couldn't, and he said that it wouldn't have made any difference because everybody here was so relieved, because they felt we'd come so close, everybody was so relieved to have the thing over that nobody was prepared to contemplate any kind of major political initiative at that point.

And it was only a year later that President Kennedy made his American University speech. Of course that was again... You look back on these things and...

He began his Administration with a rather aggressive stance - no place we won't go and nothing we won't do, in defense of freedom. Laudable sentiments, but...

And then by 1963 he had, as a result of the Cuban missile crisis, come to the view that he expressed in the American University speech, which was one of recognizing that you have to try to find some political settlement of these problems.

So there was kind of an evolution there.

But that was a matter of what, four months before he was assassinated, so that that was the end of that initiative.

It's a big problem in our country: four years - and he only had three years - four years is not enough for a President to introduce a policy and carry it through. And yet if he has to run for re-election, that takes six months to a year out, so I don't know.

Well, it was a fascinating thing to live through.

There were people in the Embassy who had their bags packed, and we really kind of laughed at them, and we said, "You know, where you are going if anything happens you won't need to take a bag with you, you'll go straight up (laughs heartily while speaking) no baggage! Your baggage will be vaporized!"

Spike Dubs was a very religious guy.

Q: Was he? He was later killed in Afghanistan.

DAVIES: Yes.

Q: He also served in Yugoslavia?

DAVIES: That's right. He was kind of the heart and soul of our little (group). There was a Catholic priest there - an American Catholic priest, an Assumptionist Father.

Q: Wasn't that Father Bissonette?

DAVIES: Yes, Father George Bissonette, a wonderful man. And then we finally got a Protestant chaplain there, and Spike was really the heart of the Protestant group. He played the piano beautifully, played the organ, sang very well, wonderful.

But after the crisis was over he and his then wife and my wife and I had a small dinner, the four of us. I'll never forget, he began by saying grace, very eloquent, just giving thanks that we had all survived it, that it hadn't happened.

Q: Was he a Protestant?

DAVIES: Yes, his family came from the Volga. They were Volga Germans.

Q: Was he a Lutheran?

DAVIES: I suppose Lutheran, I don't really know what precise denomination he belonged to. Perhaps even Mennonite. But they were very devout people, and they had emigrated from there in the early years of the century.

Q: With all your years in Moscow, what is your opinion of the caliber of foreign diplomats there? Because the Soviet Union was a superpower did Japan, Italy and everybody else send their best people, or did some country say, "What a drag, we'll just send anybody to Russia?" I mean were there really top-notch people there from all countries, or didn't they impress you that way particularly?

DAVIES: By and large they were good people. Yes, by and large they were. Other countries did have good people. The Canadians have always had excellent representation. In fact Ambassador Ford - who has been there now for... I think he is now in his second term - they arrived shortly before we left, in 1962 or 1963, so it's really 18 years or something like that. It's fantastic. But he is a real expert.

Q: They once had a man called Wilgress, didn't they?

DAVIES: Yes: (Leolyn) Dana Wilgress, very good. Now I am trying to think of the name of the guy...Arnold Smith. Top-notch. He was there the first part of the... He then went to be Secretary of the Commonwealth. You know they set up a kind of a commonwealth committee or council in London, a sort of permanent organization for the commonwealth, and Arnold Smith who went there was picked to be the first executive secretary. Just an outstanding man. I suppose he is retired now, but really outstanding.

The Norwegians have always had good people there. The Finns, outstanding people. The Swedes... I don't know.

The Ambassador who was there for so many years...

You know, it's a mistake - I don't know how Ambassador Ford... By and large it's a mistake to keep people for such a long period of time. They get into ruts, I think.

I believe very strongly that if you have experts, if you build a service with regional expertise as a principle, you should not leave people too long. I'd say three years or four years is the maximum. Then take them away, use them somewhere else, take them back to the capital, send them to another area, and send them back after between five and ten years.

Q: That's what you did, isn't it?

DAVIES: Well, it is what I did. And you know there is always a temptation to think that the way you did is the right way, but I have seen just too many cases of people who retired in place. After

you are there for a while you've seen it all. There is this terrible attitude of deja vu, you know. Sort of "Yes, well, of course, but it really doesn't mean anything. They always talk that way. It's all propaganda," or something like that.

You've got a hundred reasons for not being serious about what happens or analyzing it carefully, and unless the home office is very demanding - and you know the way bureaucracies are - you fall into a rut. So I think that there should be a constant process of rotation. I mean you do need fresh blood, you do need people coming in and taking a fresh look at the place. And it's important of course too that the people who come there have some background, whether they served there before or not - you can argue it either way - I think it's useful to have a mixture, a certain number of people who have served there before together with younger people who haven't served there before, so you get different points of view expressed.

But other countries? The Japanese, very good, outstanding. They you know have huge embassies, they are very highly specialized, and they do very well.

The Chinese I suspect are also quite good, if rather narrow from some points of view. They were good in Warsaw. They do develop experts and keep sending them back. They rotate them between the country in which they are an expert and Peking.

The British of course have a long tradition. The French, the Germans - I would say by and large good.

The Latin Americans are very mixed. It's such a political thing...

Q: It's not quite so important to them.

DAVIES: It's not quite so important, although even there you find some people who are pretty good.

Some of the Southern Europeans, a little mixed. The Italians usually pretty good. The Greeks - well, they had a good man there at that time, when we were there.

Q: What about the caliber of military attaches? Did everybody try to send the top people?

DAVIES: Yes, very good.

Q: Who would learn everything they could?

DAVIES: Yes, very good, really excellent. We had some top-notch people there, and so did the others, at least the major powers.

Q: Did they compare notes?

DAVIES: Oh, yes, they were constantly meeting. And indeed the Western Ambassadors, the NATO Ambassadors, had a regular meeting. In fact there were more meetings of the

Ambassadors, the DCMs, the political counselors, the economic counselors, everybody was getting together, and they still do there, because you can have a division of labor and pool the results of that division of labor very effectively. And there is a lot of work to be done, a lot that can be learned. Travel is terribly important, so when somebody goes out and makes a trip it's useful to find out what they saw and what their impressions were.

Well, one thing that came out of this whole Cuban missile crisis of course was - I started by talking about the difficulties of delivering notes - one thing that came out of it was the hot line, and that came out primarily because the White House and the President got very disturbed by the length of time it took to get the notes that we received back to Washington.

Typically we received - as I said and as Sy Topping pointed out, the initiative was with Washington, and we kept giving them communications, to which they responded, only much later, so that it wasn't until Tuesday afternoon - the President gave his speech on Monday evening and it was late Tuesday that we got a response from them. It was 5 or 6 o'clock. And that was the typical pattern. They weren't able to get us anything during working hours, the pace was so hot and rapid.

Then all the Russian language officers in the Embassy would get the different notes. They were in Russian and they were lengthy, and we'd parcel them out, a page or two to each officer, and he'd go off and translate them, and then we'd get the English translations together, and two or three of those who had had the most experience with Russian would sit down and try to edit the thing into a more or less unified document.

It would take three or four hours to do that, and it would be nine o'clock - maybe ten o'clock - before the telegram would get out, and there was already an eight hour or more time difference. So it took a long time for those things to get back, and the White House was very upset by this.

I never felt the slightest guilt. We were criticized in fact publicly. The President expressed his displeasure with this slowness. I never felt the slightest guilt, because when we got the darn things we translated them as quickly as we could. On the other hand, these were important documents, and you don't want to make a mistake in handling a document like that, so we did check them twice before we sent them out.

And I never felt in the slightest apologetic for the way we did it.

But the President said, "My gosh," and this again is a kind of a 19th century hangover.

And of course then towards the end of that week the Russians were using all kinds of alternative channels. You remember that John Scali who used to be an AP correspondent was used at one point, and they were getting messages through.

But towards the end of the week they were going on the air almost simultaneously with their delivery of the note to us, and broadcasting the text in Russian, which was then being picked up by monitors in London and translated there and wired back to Washington. I don't know whether they managed to beat our time or not.

We were getting the notes. It was interesting. The notes that came to us towards the end of the week - in one case I remember the guy delivered a note and there was no seal on it, and ordinarily there is a rubber stamp, without which nothing is valid, in the European tradition, and he apologized profusely. In the first place it's completely unprecedented that in a capital the Foreign Ministry delivers a note to the Embassy. No, they call you up and ask you to come over and pick it up. But no, they were sending them around, and these guys were not coming from the Ministry. And this young man, when he delivered the note to me he said, "Please excuse the fact that there is no stamp, no seal on this, but I came right from the Kremlin, and I was instructed to come right here and not to bother to go by the Ministry and have the seal put on it."

And it was even more striking I think in the famous note of Friday, when it was all jumbled up: there were corrections made in green ink, in the same hand as that of the signature, N. Khrushchev. Ordinarily they were most meticulous, as everybody is - you type it, it's clean, no mistakes, no erasures. But no no, here words were crossed out, and other words written in. Obviously these things were being edited and changed right up to the last minute, and they didn't have time to retype them.

And the young fellow who brought that again was very apologetic.

And these guys were really rather admiring. "You are really keeping us moving very fast." (laughs) A little pressure on them.

So that was the origin of the hot line. The President said after this whole thing was over, "We can't go through this kind of thing again."

Q: Wasn't it also the origin of... in addition to the hot line didn't he say, "Now look around quickly. Who can distribute these cables faster or better," or something, and so State relinquished their communications overseas to the CIA for the actual communicators and so forth, and State maintained their communications records, but the people doing the machines and everything were the Agency, and that persisted up until about now, when State is trying to get back, because there were many debates about the privacy of communications, and what guarantee did an Ambassador have if he had just an exclusive message...

DAVIES: Well, I have never understood.

The way it works now, Peter, is that the communicators are Agency people, but the code clerks are State.

Q: That's true, but...

DAVIES: There is no question of privacy, the message is encoded by a State...

Q: Before it even goes into the machine?

DAVIES: Sure.

Q: But somehow I think some people felt that it wasn't as private as they thought, and I know there's a debate going on now, and...

But anyhow, to get back to your point, the time that Kennedy pressed for the hot line he also made this particular pitch.

DAVIES: He did? Could be. I wasn't aware of that.

Q: But that was the first of the hot line?

DAVIES: That was the origin of the hot line.

Q: Which is exactly what?

DAVIES: Well, the hot line is a terminal in the Pentagon, and there are terminals in State and in the...

Q: White House Situation Room.

DAVIES: White House Situation Room. But the principal terminal is in the Pentagon, and initially there was just...now let me think, I think there was just a land line, yes. Well, it went by cable, an undersea cable, and across Finland, and as a matter of fact a couple of times it was cut by farmers in Finland, I don't know how, plowing or some damn thing.

But now there is a satellite link as well. There is a redundancy there, so that if you haven't got one you've got the other, and it is not a telephone. People sometimes have the impression that it's a telephone link, but of course there is no point in having a telephone link because 99 times out of 100 there is no common language, so there is no question of Brezhnev talking with Carter.

But it is a teletype machine, which probably is scrambled on the way. There may even be a code.

Q: With a mutual...

DAVIES: Oh, yes, so that... But it comes out here... I've been at the machine, you know, and they send test messages on a regular schedule - once an hour, I don't know - and they transmit it. The Russians send English, and the Americans send Russian, something like that. And they have transmitted all the Russian classics seven times over now, and the Russians have sent Jack London - I don't know - several times over.

Q: But it is a way for Carter and Brezhnev to talk to each other on urgent matters?

DAVIES: Absolutely, yes, without having to go through... Each terminal is manned by language trained personnel, our terminal by people - Army military personnel - who know the language.

Q: And it's strictly an emergency thing? It isn't used for holiday greetings or anything of that kind?

DAVIES: No, it's strictly an emergency thing, and it has been used a number of times.

Q: Now if President Carter felt very indignant about Afghanistan he might use that to express his indignation, or would he go through more conventional channels?

DAVIES: Well, it would depend upon the urgency. If it were something that "we've got to get this over to Moscow right away" he could use that link. If it's something for which 24 hours or 48 hours aren't going to make that much difference, then you don't use it, because you are supposed to reserve it for time urgent situations.

Q: And it's really only for chiefs of state, isn't it? I mean people on a lower level can't...

DAVIES: No, no. It's reserved strictly - in fact the agreement provides, the agreement sets out in great detail who will use it. It's messages between the top leaders on either side.

Q: Now is that a completely exclusive thing, or does West Germany have a hot line, to Moscow?

DAVIES: I don't know, I don't think so, I think it's just between the superpowers, and it arose because there was a recognition then - I said how scared they were and we were in Moscow, and Dave Klein told me when I got back here how scared everybody was there, and with absolute justice, because we did come within an ace...

You know, two or three funny things happened.

I mentioned the airplane, and that was a great revelation to us, how the Soviets took that, they were very careful not to let that disturb them in any way, shape or form.

But we had - I forget whether it was a UPI or an AP ticker in the office there, and along about Wednesday on this ticker there was a little three or four line item from London that said, LLOYDS OF LONDON HAVE INCREASED THEIR INSURANCE RATES FOR SHIPMENTS TO THE CARIBBEAN BY SUCH AND SUCH A PERCENT. (laughs heartily)

Oh, you are darn right! Lloyds was taking it seriously too. But you know, typical - Lloyds of London had increased the insurance rate in the midst of all this.

But I think it was a close-run thing.

We were waiting, and of course those ships were steaming closer and closer to the line that had been designated to the Soviets, and finally of course the word came that they were hove to in the water, steaming in circles.

And eventually they turned around and went back.

Boy, oh, boy.

We felt that a lot of it was bluff on the Soviet side, but you can't be sure.

Of course the idea of the hot line is that if you ever get into a situation that is as close-run as that again, you will not be constrained by the difficulties of transmittal.

One thing we were never sure of - because our stuff went through the Soviet post office. I mean we had a wire from our communicators - several wires, telephone wires - to the post office, and they'd sit down and play these things out on a code machine and it'd come out, and now we had the punched tape, and that's put into the machine, and that's transmitted to the post office. But we were never sure how rapidly that went through, whether they didn't hold it up for a period of time. You couldn't be sure, and I am still not sure. I think at least one of those messages may have been held up in the post office. It wasn't clear to me.

So this obviates that. This is an instantaneous thing. Or nearly instantaneous, because obviously there is a certain lapse of time, but you can be almost immediately in contact and you don't have to worry about language problems, because you have got language trained personnel at either end, the link is constantly being tested, the language capabilities of the people at either end are constantly being perfected, so in effect you've got as close to instantaneous communication as you can have between leaders who don't have a common language. It's not like the President talking with Margaret Thatcher or Giscard d'Estaing, who speaks beautiful English, or with Schmidt, who speaks beautiful English.

If something happens it won't be because you are not able to get through.

Q: It might be, "This is it, Joe."

DAVIES: Yes. (laughs) Well, that was a fascinating episode.

Well, nothing really so interesting occurred during the remainder of my stay there.

Q: You stayed there how many more months?

DAVIES: That was in October, and I stayed until July or August, and then Mac Toon came and replaced me as political counselor.

SAMUEL G. WISE, JR.
Consular Officer
Moscow (1961-1964)

Samuel G. Wise, Jr. was born in Illinois on May 11, 1928. He received his BA from the University of Virginia in 1951 and his MIA from Columbia University in 1953. He served in the US Marine Corps from 1946 to 1948. His career has

included positions in Italy, Russia, and Czechoslovakia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: You finally got off to Moscow in '61?

WISE: I went there in March.

Q: You were in Moscow from when to when?

WISE: Sixty-one to sixty-four. Still the period of Khrushchev, but still a very tempestuous period since they were Missile Crisis years, the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was also the time of the big flurry over a Soviet spy named Oleg Penkovsky, who was apprehended by the Soviet authorities and executed for dealing with the Americans. From what I've read about it, he apparently was a fairly important source for us. The whole Embassy was caught up in this thing when it happened.

Q: Tell me, what was your job when you went out there?

WISE: I was in the Consular Section.

Q: How big was the Consular Section at that time?

WISE: Three Officers and one secretary and I think three locals.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

WISE: Again, there was somewhat of a variety. Mainly, visa work - not immigrant visas primarily. It was visitors to the United States. If you look at it on a volume basis, it wasn't very big, but all the cases were fairly complicated in those days, so you spent a lot of time on them. And there were some immigrant visa cases. There were death cases, some defector cases, including the man who shot Kennedy. He came out there before I was at the Embassy. He, as I was told and have read since, went to Dick Sneider, who was head of the Consular Section, and said that he wanted to give up his citizenship and live in the Soviet Union. Sneider talked to him and asked him to come back. For some time, they went back and forth. They were trying to stall him, because they'd had previous cases like this. A number of them in which people came over and said they wanted to give up their citizenship and the Consul had said "Alright" and taken the oath to give it up. And then the person had found themselves in limbo, because they couldn't get Soviet citizenship. And, very often, they were disturbed, cooky sort of people that the Soviets didn't want, so the U.S. ended up taking them back. When Oswald walked in, they'd had a bunch of these cases, so they stalled him off. And he eventually left Moscow, without giving up his citizenship and went down to Belarus, where he married his wife and had a child. By the time I arrived on the scene, he came back to Moscow, having decided that he wanted to go back to the United States. He came into the Consulate and to Sneider, who I think was still there, and we conferred with Washington, and he eventually got his passport. He also asked for a repatriation loan; he didn't have any money. So I processed that, but all this was sort of routing. Eventually, he went back to the United States. I was in Trieste when Kennedy was assassinated and, when I heard the name, I just about fell over. I remember him as a very arrogant person; arrogant in the

sense of demanding his rights. I mean, here's a person who wanted to give up his citizenship, but he was certainly not humble or on his knees when he came in to get his passport. He was demanding that we do this and that.

Q: What was the spirit of the Embassy at the time? It was a difficult time. Let's talk about before the Cuban Missile Crisis. Who was the Ambassador?

WISE: The first Ambassador was Llewellyn Thompson.

Q: Did you have any impression about how he operated?

WISE: He had a very, very high reputation. He was one of our Senior Ambassadors at the time. Very gentlemanly, very polite, clearly very bright, not terribly close to the staff, at least at the junior level. I had the impression not up the line. He had a much more sprightly wife, who was more friendly. But everyone considered him a good, solid professional, who was in charge of the Embassy. I had one occasion where I had a strong difference with him. I had an incident I was involved in: as a Consular Officer, we would get these calls from people who thought they had a claim to American citizenship or otherwise wanted to come in and visit the Consular Section. That wasn't easy in those days, because they had Soviet guards ringed around the Embassy and, to get into the Embassy, they had to run the gauntlet of these guards. One of the ways that we could get people in was that somebody would call and we'd say, "Okay, we'll meet you outside at such and such a time." And we'd go outside, the Vice Consuls, and go past the guards. The person would come up (they'd tell us what they'd be wearing, so we could recognize them) and we'd shake hands and then turn around and take them into the Embassy. And this worked for quite a while. But then, evidently, the orders got changed one day, and I was out there to meet someone. When we came back up into the Embassy, the guards - two or three big, beefy guys - just stopped in front of us and said, "He can't go in." I said, "Why not" and we had a big argument there. It ended up that there were some fists flying and they eventually dragged him off and I went back in the Embassy. I was just furious and, of course, reported it to the DCM and the Ambassador learned about it. We recommended that some sort of comparable treatment be done to the Soviets, in Washington or somewhere. But this was not the view of the Embassy. They felt that there were other irons in the fire and that we shouldn't react to a situation like that, except in a very mild way. I think maybe there was some sort of a protest to the Consular Section, to the Foreign Ministry. Anyway, as a young Officer, I was a little upset.

Q: He was replaced by Foy Kohler. What was he like? Did you get a feel for him at all?

WISE: Yes. He was certainly more outgoing. And he established early on a policy in making his initial calls to Soviet officials of taking an Embassy Officer with him. And this extended all the way down to the Junior Officers. It would be the job of the Officer accompanying to take the notes and draft a cable afterwards to Washington about what occurred at the meeting. It was a chance to meet the Ambassador, riding in the car over there and back, and engaging in a little personal talk, as well as professional. He seemed much more approachable in that sense.

Q: Obviously, at an Embassy such as Moscow at that time, although you were in different sections, all the Officers are pretty much sewn together, aren't they?

WISE: Very much.

Q: Did you find that you were having problems with security, being bugged or enticed or anything like that? Was this a problem?

WISE: The assumption was that everything was bugged, including the Embassy, except for one or two floors up at the top - the floor where the Ambassador and the DCM and some others were. It was assumed that everything else was open to eavesdroppers. Of course, we found out subsequently that even the areas we thought were secure were not always secure. But this was true the apartments as well. The very sophisticated (for those days, '61 - '64) equipment could penetrate through the windows of your apartment and pick up conversation. So the only time we really felt safe in talking was when you were out on the street. Very often, you'd save your most sensitive conversations for that sort of venue.

Q: How did the Officers feel about Khrushchev at that time? Was there a sort of an Embassy that you were getting, particularly from those in the Political Section?

WISE: I don't know this is an assessment of the Political Section of the Embassy or not. I think that Khrushchev was considered a colorful character - certainly an improvement over Stalin, and the revelations that he had permitted to come out about Stalin and the Stalin Era made him certainly a step ahead of Stalin. But he was a convinced Communist, still running the place in a way of a convinced Communist. He was also considered, being colorful, somewhat unpredictable. I think that caused people a lot of concern.

Q: How did the Missile Crisis play out? How did it hit you all?

WISE: It didn't hit me directly in the Consular Section, except that my wife and another wife of an Embassy Officer were traveling in the Caucasus when this thing broke out. They were mysteriously hustled back to Moscow, without being told what happened. They said that something was happening and certainly scared them a little bit. My main memory of the Missile Crisis was in dealing with some of the Officers in the Political Section. A Political Counselor, a fellow named Richard Davies, he and I were fairly close. As you said before, it was a close Embassy. We were all sort of hemmed in so, socially, we knew each other quite well. I remember, being in his office quite a few times, that he had delivered one or two messages to his counterpart in the Foreign Ministry during the course of the Crisis. A couple times, I remember, big sighs of relief because such and such a message had been received in such and such a way. There was, overall, a tremendous tenseness at the time. Certainly, we all had the realization that, if there were a nuclear exchange, we'd be wiped out by our own people. But there's not much you can do about it.

Q: Would you go out to the market and wander around and get any feeling for what was happening at the time? Was this part of the work of all types of Officers, to go out and almost take the temperature of the crowd?

WISE: Yes, that was very much the case. I recall doing it less in Moscow. I guess my wife did most of the shopping in Moscow. But even she said that when she'd go to a market, she'd be followed. They followed all the Americans. I did most of that sort of thing when we'd take trips. The Embassy had a policy then, which I think was an excellent policy, of whenever an Officer could be spared for a period of time, to take a trip to some part of the Soviet Union. We'd always travel at least in pairs; they didn't want anybody going alone. We'd go to Central Asia, (Samarkand, Tashkent, and Bokhara). There was a visitor from the Department who was along at that time, too. We would go out to the markets and talk to people and get a feeling for the place. We'd go to the bookstores and do all sorts of things that would expose us to how the place ran. We would concentrate less on meeting officials. It was more of an orientation to the society. It was very useful, I think.

Q: By the time you left there, what was your impression of the Soviet Union?

WISE: I thought it was, as I said earlier, a run down place. The contrast between the general state of the place as you saw it and its might in the military fields, its nuclear abilities, didn't seem to jive somehow - except by draining all of its economic resources in one direction, they could produce this military thing. Naively, I thought that this could go on perhaps indefinitely. My feeling was, "I can't see how they'd done it now, but if they've done it, I guess it can go on indefinitely."

Q: Were we looking at the nationality problem in the Soviet Union, as far as being a potential device...

WISE: It was certainly being looked at in an academic way. But I don't think that people made any plans that the country was going to break up because of the nationality problem. And that's exactly what happened. It didn't break up because of the nationality problem so much as because of the economic problems. And then the nationality realities came out. But I certainly didn't get a great sense of nationality unrest in traveling around the country. People were afraid to talk to us. They just don't come up and say what they really think. If they thought they were being oppressed, they didn't do it because they knew we were being followed and that anybody who came in contact with us was going to be questioned. I remember one particular case, that I must say was a contrast. It was a very touching moment. I was traveling with, I think, Bill Watts, down to Rostov on the Don. We arrived overnight and we went in the hotel and started talking, two or three Officers from the Embassy. This cleaning woman came into the room and said, "I want to clean." We said, "Well, go away." We were trying to prepare ourselves for some meetings with some officials. She insisted; she came back. She pointed up to the ceiling; she was telling us that we were being listened to. Well, we assumed we were, too. But, for a Soviet citizen in those days to stick their neck out, to tell foreigners (the so-called "enemy") that they were being listened to was a rather touching little thing. So, you did see very occasional glimpses of decency.

Q: How did your wife respond to life in the Soviet Union?

WISE: I think she found it a very fascinating experience, difficult in terms of shopping, trying to raise a family and keep things going. We had a son born not in the Soviet Union, but while we

were stationed there. She went to Helsinki to have our son. So, after his arrival, we had three children there. Two of the children, the girls, went to a Russian kindergarten. They would come home and sing the praises of Lenin, all the little songs the children had to learn. We took it with more amusement than anger, but they did learn some Russian. We liked that. They had a cultural life, of course, in Moscow and other major cities that, as foreign diplomats, we had almost unique access to, so we could go to the Bolshoi, or the opera or the ballet, even things like their famous circus, museums. So, that was a good part of the experience. You felt under a tremendous pressure, which you got used to after a while. You didn't feel it in your day-to-day operation. You were careful about your conversations. You knew you were being followed. But it became part of the routine. The only time that you really realized how heavy it was was when you left the Soviet Union. We occasionally would go to Helsinki, to Finland, to accompany a diplomatic pouch, or for a shopping trip or something like that.

ROGER KIRK
Public Affairs Officer, Soviet Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1961-1962)

Russian Language Training
Garmisch, Germany (1962-1963)

Consular/Political Officer
Moscow (1963-1965)

Ambassador Roger Kirk was born in Rhode Island in 1930. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and entered the Foreign Service in 1955. His career included positions in Italy, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam, and ambassadorships to Somalia, Romania and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Austria. Ambassador Kirk was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in May 1991.

Q: You finally got to Moscow after that, did you?

KIRK: Yes, after the meeting in Secretary Herter's office I went down to SOV on the public affairs side. That is preparing press guidance. I did that for a little over a year, worked for David Klein who was the head man for the press. Then he went over to the NSC staff with Mac Bundy. I then took over that job. It was Jack McSweeney who was office director. Dick Davis was the Deputy Assistant Secretary. Of course, we started at the beginning of the Kennedy administration. The basic marching orders were that there was going to be a new look at American-Soviet relations, and it was going to be a good deal more positive than it had been under the Republicans. Some of us, myself included, were a little skeptical about this. The words were somewhat more positive, but the degree of positiveness became strained by such things as Cuban Bay of Pigs, and then the Cuban missile crisis.

I had not been involved in the Bay of Pigs business when I was working for Secretary Herter, but

I knew there was a project going on. People were dealing directly with him, not going through the staff aides.

Then I went off to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, the Russian area and language training facility run by the Department of the Army for their people. Its part of their so-called fast program which involves a year's study at Monterey, a year's study at an academic institution, two years at Garmisch, a year of further training, and then you're ready. That was the fast program. The Department of State had a somewhat different version -- you had nine months at Garmisch and then went to Moscow. It was excellent training because you were supposed to have a working knowledge of Russian before you went to the school. The military had a years' training beforehand. All of your class discussions, your term papers, your reading was all in Russian. You lived it in the language for eight or nine months. When I first went, even though I'd spoken Russian pretty well, I had not used it for eleven years hardly at all.

Q: And that's a language you forget.

KIRK: And I had forgotten a good deal. I could still read pretty well, and understand reasonably well, but speaking was very difficult, coming up with anything. We had a grammar exam at the beginning and I put together the declension and conjugation tables by remembering various songs in Russian. Every time I would come to a word I knew what the word was. If I could ferret which case it was in, I'd fill in the ending for that word, and that gender in that case, like a crossword puzzle. It was very good training in terms of the instructors who were there, who were all people who had operated in Soviet society. It was in Europe originally because these people came out of the DP camps. Most of them had backgrounds that made them totally ineligible for entry into the United States -- members of the communist party, members of the police, members of the Army. But that was fortunate, of course, and what made them valuable. That experience was very fine. That included two bus trips into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; one the northern route and into Moscow, one the southern route into Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Yugoslavia. That was in the fall of '62 and the spring of '63. It gave me my first taste of what we then called satellite countries, the basic message from that trip having been that the countries in Eastern Europe were quite different even then, in their character or their outlook, from each other. Some things that have become very apparent today.

After the year at Garmisch, or Oberammergau -- we lived in Garmisch and went to school in Oberammergau -- we drove to Moscow, myself, my wife, our four children and a nursemaid in a mid-sized American station wagon. We drove up to Stockholm, over to Helsinki, and then down into Moscow, the objective being to reduce to the extent possible the amount of time we were driving behind the curtain in case of any accidents. We arrived safely and well.

I was assigned to the consular section for my first year in Moscow, and the political section the second year. Two weeks after we arrived there was the signing of the limited test ban treaty in Moscow for which the Secretary of State and a variety of other dignitaries arrived for the formal ceremonies. Betty and I, even though very junior, were assigned to Senator and Mrs. Fulbright, he then being the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to take them around Moscow and show them what was there. I, of course, as I say, had been there a total of two weeks though I had been there in 1949 and 1950. I quickly learned that the thing to do when

asked, "What's that building?" was to give an answer even though I hadn't the foggiest notion, because to say, "I'm sorry Senator, I've been here two weeks, I don't know," was highly unsatisfactory. Whereas if one said, "Post and telegraph," or "Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry," he would forget immediately, as we all would, and they came away at least satisfied that the embassy knew. So we did that, and we went with the Fulbrights up to Leningrad, and enjoyed their company very much I must say. They're both very fine people. He already at that point was struggling with the question of the relative balance between giving large amounts of assistance abroad and the needs of his home state of Arkansas and places like that in the United States. It was interesting to see this great internationalist's mind at work trying to balance these different priorities. For my mind, who always the thought internationally primarily, it was an interesting insight into the other side of the use of our resources. Not to use them just for foreign aid, because we had a real obligation to our own people. There are some very poor places in our own country.

The Consular Section in Moscow was a reasonably routine place. There was a consul and two vice consuls. My tour there was enlivened by the fact that it was during that time that we negotiated the consular convention with the Soviet Union. I was chosen by the Political Counselor, Mac Toon, to be his assistant in that respect. So the better part of that year we went once or twice a week to the Foreign Ministry to negotiate that convention. I was essentially preparing the papers and listening while Toon and his opposite number on the other side spoke. His opposite number was the deputy legal advisor of the Foreign Ministry, Oleg Khlestov, who interestingly enough was my opposite number in Vienna as ambassador to the UN organizations there some 20 years later.

Q: Which is one of the practical fascinations of a career in the Foreign Service that you have known these people.

KIRK: Absolutely. Those contacts you think you won't see them again but you do time and again, your own people, your own nationals, but especially foreigners. We often swapped tales about that time. We were at the interesting position -- we, the Embassy; and we, the Department of State -- of wanting maximum protection for our consular officers and personnel in the Soviet Union, recognizing full well we then would have to give maximum immunity to Soviet consular and personnel in the United States, something the FBI and others were not at all enthusiastic about. So we had a dual negotiation going, one with Washington, and one with the Soviets. We and the Soviets, to some extent, being on the same side in the question. They, of course, wanted maximum protection for their people. The negotiation went quite well. We were nearly done and our ambassador, Ambassador Kohler, was about ready to go back to the United States on a visit. The Political Counselor and I thought that it would be nice if he could go back with this agreement concluded, or at least initialed. So we told the Soviets we'd like to finish within two or three weeks. And immediately they began to stonewall. They obviously felt we were under some pressure to conclude the agreement. They went back on some of the suggestions that they had made, and it took us a full six months of simply -- well, not quite that much -- let's say three months of simply showing no interest in these meetings whatsoever, making no phone calls, before we could get back to where we had been.

Q: But this is great training.

KIRK: Absolutely. And to tell the Soviets that all we wanted to do was give our ambassador something nice when he went home, of course was totally rejected by them as unworthy of consideration as a reason. But I've often thought of that. If you seem to be under pressure, they, or maybe some others with whom you negotiate, will immediately up the ante.

Two other things in the consular section. There were a number of American Armenians, some of whom came from the Soviet Union, from Armenia, in the 1930's, or '20's, or even before. Some of whom were born in the United States to the people who had come out during the '20's or even a little earlier. They had gone back to the Soviet Union. In 1945 one shipload went back, and in 1947 another went back. They went back in response to the Soviet propaganda they were building a new Armenia and the sort of euphoria of the post-war alliance. And once back there these people were never allowed to leave even though many of them were American born citizens. And during the time that we were there -- that I was there in the consular section -- the first one of these was allowed by the Soviets to make contact with the embassy. I remember one of the most rewarding moments of my life was reissuing American passports to an Armenian family who had gotten Soviet permission to leave, and could leave as Americans and come back to the United States. It was not easy because the Department queried as to why they had not been in contact with the American embassy all these years if they were so anxious to come back to the United States. We reported that one had tried and spent ten years in prison as a result. We thought that was a little too high a standard; it was quite a disincentive. So the Department eventually relented and, of course, since then thousands of these people have come out. Even under Stalin's time they preserved their American customs, they played baseball, they preserved their knowledge of English. They did some really quite heroic things in that sense, and that was nice.

The only other thing, I suppose, of any eventfulness was we had one of these prisoner swaps where we were exchanging a Soviet spy for someone the Soviets had alleged was a spy, or someone they had held for many years. And there was a man called Father Ciszole. Father Ciszole had been taken prisoner by the Soviets in the early '40s I suppose. There was one person in Soviet Affairs... Virginia James, who remembered Father Ciszole. No one else seemed to know him, as they had come to SOV long after he'd been taken. And when the time came to look for two people to swap with the Soviets -- one was obvious, I've forgotten who he was -- and she said, "How about Father Ciszole?" So sure enough we put his name on the proposal for the exchange. The Soviets were quite puzzled but eventually did find him out in Siberia somewhere. He has since described how he was on his 20th year, or 15th year in Siberia when he got word to come to the camp office, was given a new set of clothes, a shave and a haircut, and was told he was going to the United States -- to his total astonishment.

Q: Just because one lady...

KIRK: Just because one lady remembered his name. Otherwise he never would have gotten out. We realized at that point how dependent we were on the local staff. We had to prepare the American visas, and in a couple of cases American passports, for these people without the local staff knowing. This whole thing was very hush-hush, and it was very difficult to find the seals, find the ribbons, knowing where to sign, just the mechanics of getting things together. We were,

as I guess most of us are, totally dependent for that kind of clerical help in the consular section. I often thought of that when I heard the Soviets had denied the locals access to the embassy from one day to the next. The consular section in Moscow must have been in a hell of a mess, along with everybody else.

Q: We were in the same boat in Budapest and in Sofia -- much more so in Budapest actually.

KIRK: And, of course, some of those locals had been there for many many years. There were a couple who had been there when I was there in 1949 and were still there. They knew very well what was going on.

Q: his is one of the thorns in our side. Theoretically, you could say, well we'll do nothing but have our own people there who will have the language, but you lose an awful lot by doing that.

KIRK: Oh, I think so, and there is no way that you can keep a consular section where you have visitors come, where you have people actually come to get there visas, no way you can keep it free of bugs because anyone can come in to get a visa and plant a bug under a chair. I'm a proponent of the theory that you have certain areas of the embassy, or certain buildings, that are free from locals getting in. I think that is a good idea, but in the consular section, the USIA library, or residences, you don't try to keep them out, and you accept the fact, or at least the hypothesis, that everything you say is being listened to.

Q: Do you have any particular comment about Foy Kohler who was your ambassador the whole time you were there, wasn't he?

KIRK: Foy Kohler was our ambassador the whole time we were there, and he was actually DCM in Moscow up until the time my father came to Moscow. Just coincidentally, there was a change of DCM as well. I therefore had seen the Kohlers for a couple of days in '49. But during the period I was in Moscow from 1963 to 1965 Kohler was the ambassador. I thought very highly of him. He was a very good person to work for; he was very fair. You knew that he would stand up for you, that he would demand good performance, but that if you did good performance, that would be reflected in your record, and that if for some reason there was some mistake, then he would stand up for you. I made some stupid mistake in a note to the Soviets and it could have been trouble but he took full responsibility and backed us up wholly. And in the consular convention business he was a tower of strength. Very approachable, very human and humane person.

The second year in Moscow, I was in the political section working on external affairs, Soviet-American relations basically, but also Soviet relations with Middle East and Africa -- I can't remember now; Soviet-American relations primarily. I was also the travel officer, which meant I assigned myself as many trips as possible. That, of course, was one of the most fascinating...

Q: You had a priority to keep the traveling going.

KIRK: We worked very hard to keep the travel going. You always had to have two people going, and you were occasionally looking for someone to go along with an officer. And I had traveled a

good deal even in 1949 and '50. I think it's very important in that kind of country, where you're very isolated from people, to get out, because once you're outside the capital city, you have a little more chance to talk to people. The Soviets, at least in those days, would not necessarily give you a compartment by yourself even though there were two of you traveling. The compartments were for four people, and there would often be two other people in the compartment, not necessarily KGB people -- sometimes they were, but not always. And in the course of several days on the train that you would often spend, you got a chance to chat with people. So it was very rewarding.

Q: Did you ever have anything spectacular in that sense of picking up any interesting information?

KIRK: Oh, nothing really spectacular. I suppose at the time that we created the most trouble with the Soviets quite unknowingly, was when shortly before my departure from Moscow in 1950, the first time I was there, I had said to my father that I really wanted to see Siberia before I left. He agreed that that was a fine idea, and he would like to as well. So my father, Dick Service, who was our Far Eastern specialist, and myself, took a trip on the TransSiberian just as far out in Siberia as we were allowed to go. It was on the shore of Lake Baikal, a small village called Sludyanka. And then we turned around and came back for about a day and a half or two days on the train until we came to a city where we were allowed to change to an airplane. We spent over a week on the train going out and several days coming back. When we arrived back at the airport in Moscow, the DCM, Wally Barbour, met my father with the news that North Korea had invaded South Korea a few hours before. And I often thought of the Soviets trying to figure out why the American ambassador to Moscow, for no apparent reason, suddenly took it into his head to spend a week on the TransSiberian just when they were moving supplies and things for the North Korean invasion of South Korea. But when I think of the trains we must have derailed, and the schedules we must have thrown out of commission, it was quite a trip.

On Moscow then, the second time that is, in the mid-'60s, what else does one say? Oh, yes, Khrushchev fell during that period. The embassy did not expect it to happen, and we did not have foreknowledge of it. When people ask me about that, I say, "That is certainly the case," but I also point out, "that Khrushchev didn't know either, and that his sources of information should be somewhat better than ours" -- the American embassy's.

Q: That's a good answer. All that is fascinating. Well, I think probably we better be...

KIRK: Close it up? One final point on Moscow would probably be enough. One of my jobs in Moscow was to mingle with -- it was Vietnam time, we were starting to bomb Vietnam -- and the Soviets were organizing demonstrations outside of the embassy. We wanted to get some sense as to what the mood of the demonstration was. So I, because my Russian was fairly good I suppose, and because I was doing Soviet-American relations, was elected to be the person to go out and mingle with the demonstrators. So I would put on my borrowed Russian hat and put on my overcoat and go out and mingle with the crowd. I came away with two or three conclusions. First of all, what the embassy security people said, that is to say, "the best defense is to show no sign of life in the embassy whatsoever," is absolutely correct. Because when you're outside and people were throwing stones at an embassy, if someone sticks their head out and yells at you, it

simply incites the crowd. It gets a dialogue going, it gets them excited. It's much better to present a completely impassive face, if a window breaks, a window breaks, that's just too bad. The crowd was quite orderly, but reasonably enthusiastic about seeing how many windows they could break, who could throw the furthest. I carefully should add, truthfully, I did not throw a stone, tempting as it might have been just because of the enthusiasm of the moment. But no one bothered me. I'm sure the KGB knew I was there and were watching. Someone did come over one time and said, "Where did you get those shoes? They don't look like Russian shoes." And I said, "I got them abroad," and moved away. There was no real hostility towards me.

In the final demonstration the Chinese students at the Soviet University joined by prearrangement. They were much less docile than the Russian students. They actually tried to run through the police lines and there were some ugly moments. A water cannon truck was brought up. I remember I was quite close to this truck when it came up. It was interesting to sense the mood of the crowd change as this truck came up. They became much more hostile. The driver was a very friendly, personable, outgoing guy. He leaned out of the window and kidded with people, and joshed with them, and defused this potentially difficult situation. They never used the water but again one got a sense as to how the mood of a crowd could change. The Chinese, as I say, were somewhat obstreperous, and the Chinese then made a big fuss later about the Soviets having beaten up their students. That was the last demonstration. The outrage of the Soviet people against American barbarism stopped suddenly. But the reason, of course, was that the Soviets were having trouble controlling the demonstration. They were always very wary about demonstrations.

Anyway, so much for that Moscow interlude.

PETER S. BRIDGES
Assistant General Services Officer/Political Officer
Moscow (1962-1964)

Ambassador Bridges was born in New Orleans and raised in Chicago. He attended Dartmouth College and Columbia University and served in the US Army in France. He entered the Foreign Service in 1957 and held positions in Panama, Moscow, Italy, and served as Ambassador to Somalia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

BRIDGES: So I came back from my trip in June and then my family and I had home leave. We left for Moscow in September 1962.

Q: You were in Moscow from '62 to '64. When did you get to Moscow in 1962?

BRIDGES: It was in September, might have been September 10th.

Q: That's an important time. Before we get to the little problem between the United States and Soviet Union, what were you doing?

BRIDGES: Well, I was to be the assistant general services officer, which was certainly not the job I wanted; I wanted to be a political officer. But they said they just didn't have enough spaces for two of us who would be political officers; we were assigned to administrative jobs. I was assistant general services officer and Jack Perry was the personnel officer. So I was assistant GSO for a year, and not a terribly good one; certainly not an enthused one. The chief GSO was James Moran, who ended his career as a senior admin officer and then ambassador to the Seychelles. I did my job 40 hours a week, but after hours I read all I could in Soviet modern literature and culture because I was hoping that the second year I would get into the political section.

Q: How did the Cuban Missile Crisis hit you? What happened over there?

BRIDGES: I don't remember the first news we had, but of course we heard about it very quickly in October. It was worse. We understood the danger, but it was only two years later when we came back the United States, in 1964, that we understood for the first time how scared people had been in the United States. The difference was the media; the American media had been scaring the people, and of course the Soviet media was not scaring the Soviet people because there was no advantage to them doing so. Our mood was, I would say, one of concern. As assistant GSO I was not privy to all the communications to and from the Department, but the ambassador generally informed us as to what was going on. There were a couple of funny incidents. One Saturday, my wife and I - we were told to stay inside the compound, so that there wouldn't be some kind of provocation - I said to my wife, "Let's leave the kids with a sitter and go for a walk." So we went for a long walk through town and were coming back down the Garden Ring on which the embassy sat. About a mile short of the embassy, I said, "Look, there's no traffic on the Garden Ring," which is a very wide boulevard. We couldn't quite figure that out, but we got towards the embassy and we could see there was a crowd in the street outside the embassy. So we began to understand what was going on. I'd seen a real mob in Panama; this was a contrived mob. The Soviets had gotten together, I suppose, two or three hundred factory workers, God knows who they were, and made placards saying "Hands off Cuba" and "Down with Imperialism" and so forth and so on. The incensed demonstrators were standing in the streets holding up their placards but not doing anything, but they would occasionally be told to chant some slogan and so they would. There was a line of sawhorses between the mob and the sidewalk and the people were all carefully behind the sawhorses. So Mary Jane and I walked up the sidewalk and looked at the so-called mob on the left, and the policemen. We walked into the embassy and at this point we found that the DCM had said staff should go to the upper floors just in case they started throwing rocks at the windows and things like that. We lived on the eighth floor, so we went upstairs, and soon enough - maybe they had been waiting for the two of us to get back inside - the demonstrators were given the signal and they threw some ink bottles and a few rocks at some windows and did some minor damage. But it was such a contrast between the real mob in Panama and these demonstrators.

Q: As assistant GSO didn't you feel like going out and saying, "For God's sake don't throw ink..."

BRIDGES: Well, we didn't see the ink as we walked past; they were not showing the bottles and

we did send a note later to the foreign ministry demanding payment for the damages done. I don't recall that they paid us but anyway it kind of made me mad because I had to get all the stuff washed off.

Q: I was in Belgrade at the time. Our ambassador was George Kennan, and I recall some serious things, but I don't recall running for cover or anything...

BRIDGES: It was only in subsequent years that I understood how the American people were frightened to read of the exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Q: What were you picking up when you arrived at the embassy about Khrushchev?

BRIDGES: I can't remember too well, the early signals about Khrushchev. I can certainly remember what we were thinking and seeing in 1964. In '63 I finished my year in general services and I was assigned to the political section and was given what to me was the best job in the embassy. The political section was divided into an external and an internal side; the internal side was following developments inside the Soviet Union. There were three of us: head of the internal side was Kenneth Kerst who was a Civil Service officer from the Bureau of Intelligence Research who was given a Foreign Service Reserve commission and sent to Moscow for two years. So he was my boss. The second ranking officer in internal affairs was Bill Morgan, who has since retired, after a very good career later in the consular field. My job was to follow developments on the cultural side, developments in religion, developments in nationalities, and maybe a couple of other things. It was a great job, it was a hard job.

In 1963 there was a disastrous harvest in the Soviet Union. It didn't rain, they didn't have grain reserves. Khrushchev had foolishly embarked on a so-called virgin lands campaign, basically to plow up marginal pasture land, a lot of it in Kazakhstan, and grow grain. It worked for a year or two, I can't remember when he started the campaign, but in '63 they had a disastrously tiny harvest and it was after that they first decided they had to buy grain from the United States. Not a proud accomplishment for Khrushchev. We could also see that Khrushchev was not liked much by the top Soviet military command. He was reducing the size of the Soviet armed forces, not drastically, but there were indications that the Soviet marshals and generals didn't like that. His cultural policy was sort of a mess, you might say. At the end of 1962 I was reading the Soviet literary journals when I stayed after hours when I was in General Services, and in late 1962 the journal Novyi Mir, or New World, which was the best known literary journal, published a novella called "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a totally unknown writer. That was a bomb going off in the Soviet intellectual world, that something like that could be published. Solzhenitsyn published a couple of other things after that, not so quite interesting as his account of labor camp life. There was all this ferment; and I got to know some interesting people in this field; for example a young writer, he was my age, born in 1932, named Vasily Aksyonov. He was the best known, best liked younger Soviet writer who could be published. There were a lot of writers in the Soviet Union who basically wrote, as they said, for the drawer, because what they wrote they couldn't publish.

Q: Was the Samizdat business going on?

BRIDGES: Well, it was going on but not to the extent that it was later in the '70s or '80s. Our ambassador had a deal with Hollywood where he could get new American films from the U.S.A. So he would have a film showing every month or two at his residence. And we all had to suggest interesting people he could invite, I was a reader, among other things, of a journal called *Inostrannaya Literatura*, foreign literature. I read two or three things in that by a writer named R. Orlova on American literature, and it was pretty straight criticism; it was not propaganda but it was pretty good stuff. So I suggested that we invite Orlova to a movie at the residence. I met her - her full name was Raisa Davydovna Orlova - and we had a good talk, and a month later we invited her to another movie, and she said, "I'm not going to come again unless you invite my husband." I said, "I didn't know you had a husband." She said, "Oh, yes, he is a literary critic, too, his field is German literature." So he came, and it turned out that they were willing to come to dinner occasionally at our apartment if the invitation was sent through the Union of Soviet Writers. His name was Lev Zalmanovich Kopelev. We got to know them fairly well, we'd have them over as often as we could, they were always talking about having us out to their dacha, but it never seemed feasible. We understood why they would not want to do that. We knew they were both Jewish, we knew that he had been an army officer in World War II, and had spent eight years in a Soviet labor camp starting soon after the end of the war. There were limits to what we knew about their lives; they both came from bourgeois families, they were certainly not proletarian by birth. It was only soon after I left the Soviet Union that I learned that it was Kopelev who had taken Solzhenitsyn's manuscript of *Ivan Denisovich* to the editor of *Novyi Mir* and urged him to get the approval for having it published. Kopelev had in fact been a fellow prisoner of Solzhenitsyn in a labor camp for several years, and in fact Kopelev appears in Solzhenitsyn's novel *The First Circle*. I can't think of his name in that novel. It's the one about the prison where they put scientists and the like. We decided that Kopelev and Orlova must have thought that since I was in American intelligence - but I was not - we knew all about them. But we didn't. Anyway, they were interesting people; we were very pleased to have a chance to see them. Kopelev, later, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, wrote a very strong letter protesting the invasion. It was published in the Austrian communist newspaper. He was expelled from the Soviet writers' union and he and his wife emigrated to western Germany where later he got the big German literary prize; he has died since then. As I mentioned in something I wrote, I think my book *Safrika*, years later I read Orlova's memoir in which talked about how she had had to report to the KGB on their contacts with foreigners. I said in my book that I hoped that she had ended that practice by the time we knew them; but I doubt it, I'm sure they had to report on foreigners.

Q: This was the expected...

BRIDGES: Kopelev also wrote a memoir, *Memoirs of a True Believer*, and he describes very graphically his part as a young Communist in the collectivization drive in Ukraine in the 1930s, and how they were taking grain away from peasants who were obviously going to starve to death as a result. It was a very frank confession.

Q: So often in the Communist world the artistic side has been given a certain amount of freedom with regards to contacts and all that. I take it this was happening in a way. You had much better access to them then you would have if you were a political officer or some other part of the society.

BRIDGES: I have to say that these Soviet writers were brave people to be willing to have contact with such a person as me. I was sometimes surprised that I would get to see them. These were not the only writers or intellectuals that I saw. There was a young Russian named Andrei Amalrik who had been expelled from Moscow State University, and who had pretensions of being a writer. I got to know him and on Saturday mornings sometimes Mary Jane and I would pick him up and he would take us out to see an unorthodox artist or two. That was fun, and we would occasionally buy a painting for not very much. Again, there was a certain amount of bravery involved on these people's parts. The artists were not members of the official Union of Soviet Artists but they managed to make a living selling to foreigners. They were also selling to Soviet scientists. Soviet scientists were to some extent patrons of unofficial art in the Soviet Union.

Q: How about poetry? Was poetry a strong element in the literary or intellectual field?

BRIDGES: Oh, yes, very much. These were the days in which a young Yevgeny Yevtushenko was reaching his heights; I knew him, though not well, he came to dinner one time. He asked me if I was an intelligence agent and I said, "No", and I then asked him if he was, and he said, "No", and we went on from there. His nickname among the liberal Soviet intellectuals was Zhenya Gapon, which takes a little bit of explaining. Father Gapon was an Orthodox priest who was also a police agent, and who in 1905 led a mob of demonstrators to the Winter Palace, where they got mowed down. And Zhenya was the nickname for Yevgeny. So his nickname suggested he was in cahoots with the police.

Q: Did you sense in the intellectual community that you were dealing with a strong Jewish element?

BRIDGES: The Jews had been purged after World War II, they'd been hit very hard in the late years of Stalinism. There were still a lot of Jewish writers and artists. Aksyonov was half Jewish; his mother was Yevgenia Ginzberg, and her memoir of the purges and labor camp was smuggled out and first published in Italy in the late 1960s. One of the artists we went to see was a man named Oskar Rabin, who was half-Jewish and who emigrated later to France. There was a lot of official anti-Semitism. The people at the top of the official Writers' Union were all ethnic Russians and not Jews as far as I can remember.

Q: Was the writers' union... was there sort of a Stalin apparatchik top level...

BRIDGES: There sort of was. I can't tell you that I got to know a gamut of Soviet writers, I got to know quite a few of them and some of them were old Stalinists; I remember surprising one of them, I can't remember who but in writing my masters at Columbia I had read probably a hundred post-war Soviet novels. Once or twice I would surprise these old Stalinist hacks who were still around by saying, "Oh, yes, I read your Red Star in the East." And he'd say, "My God, you did?" I'm forgetting to say that the most fun I had as a political officer was when John Steinbeck came to the Soviet Union in October 1963. I had not long before then entered the political section. Steinbeck agreed to the suggestion of Leslie Brady, to pay a visit to the Soviet Union; he had not been there since soon after World War II when he had gone there with Robert

Capa, the photographer, and they had done a book about Russia rebuilding. Steinbeck said that he would go if a younger writer would come too, so Edward Albee agreed to come and arrived a little bit after Steinbeck. Steinbeck said that he wanted somebody from the embassy who spoke Russian and could come along and keep him out of trouble, and that turned out to be me. So it was fun, and Steinbeck's wife Elaine, who died not long ago, came too, and Mary Jane traveled along with us when she could, she had not long before become manager of the embassy commissary. So she did some of the traveling but most of it was the Steinbecks, their Soviet Writers' Union interpreter, and me. Albee came, and his escort officer was William Luers, who had joined the embassy a year after I did. Anyway that gave me a number of additional insights into the Soviet intellectual world and a few more contacts.

Q: If I recall, Steinbeck was a big darling of the Soviets at one time. The Grapes of Wrath was representative of showing how awful things were.

BRIDGES: Sure. And before that the novel immediately before *Grapes of Wrath* had as a hero a union organizer in California who as I recall was a Communist. So the Soviets looked at him as sort of a progressive, and when he had gone to Moscow with Robert Capa in 1947, they produced a book that was very favorable to the Soviet Union, about Russia rebuilding after the ravages of World War II. That was in '48, now it's fifteen years later; they didn't understand that Steinbeck's politics were certainly not left at this point, he was supporting the American effort in Vietnam very strongly, his son served there. He was a Democrat; he was a strong supporter of Kennedy and later LBJ. He was not the sort of progressive writer the Soviets hoped he would be. Frankly, though, before he came, I was a little bit dubious to what his politics might be; I had read this postwar book that he and Capa had done and I was worried that part of my travels with Steinbeck might be having to tell him that it's not the way you think it is, it's worse. But he was not at all deceived and we got on fine and he was great to travel with, and we stayed in contact for several years after that. He was very kind to me, and in fact he and Elaine very generously gave me the use of their Manhattan apartment for two months in the fall of 1965, when I was working at the United Nations.

Q: I read this story - I don't know if it's true or not, but at one point they were showing the movie The Grapes of Wrath to show how the poor people were, and people would say, "Look, they have a car." They had this old rickety truck in the movie.

BRIDGES: He had written the Moon is Down during World War II, basically about occupied Norway although the characters have Anglo names. The Soviets put that on as a play and took him to see it and he was mad as hell, because first of all they hadn't asked him about it, and secondly, at this point the Soviets weren't paying royalties. He did not need the money but he was angry that the Soviets did not agree to take part in and sign the International Copyright Convention, and he gave them a pretty hard time on the subject of royalties. Incidentally, the biography of Steinbeck called The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer by Jackson Benson has a lot about Steinbeck's 1963 Soviet visit.

When we got to Kiev, our Embassy phoned me to say that the Foreign Ministry had told them that I would not be permitted to travel onward to Tbilisi and Yerevan. I told Steinbeck, who wrote a paragraph saying that if they would not permit his friend and colleague Peter Bridges to

travel, then he wouldn't travel, either. I said that that was flattering but he shouldn't do such a thing. He told me to send it to the right place in Moscow. I cabled the text to Smirnovsky, the head of the USA section in the Foreign Ministry, and the next day the Embassy called me again to say that for reasons they didn't quite understand, the Ministry had relented and said I could continue on the trip.

Q: What was your observation of the interchange between Steinbeck and Russian people he would meet?

BRIDGES: He got on fine, but the question was how to get away from the apparatchik element and see good writers. For example, when we went from Moscow to Kiev, John was to be the guest of the Ukrainian branch of the Union of Soviet Writers. He wanted to see some honest writers. There was one writer living in the Ukraine who had published a diary of his trip to the United States; it was well read, pretty frank. So he wanted to see him and we made that clear, and the two of them finally got together.. Then I told the Soviets that Steinbeck wanted to see a number of younger writers, and Steinbeck said, "Give them some names if you can." So I gave them some names. The head of the Ukrainian writers' union finally put together a boat ride on the Dnieper river one afternoon, on somebody's big launch, together with some of the big-name Ukrainian writers. To their credit, they also produced about eight of the younger writers, who were almost completely cowed and wouldn't say very much. Finally Steinbeck said, "Well, you don't want to say too much to me, so I'll talk to you." So he talked to them for hours, and I think it must have been encouraging to them. I wondered later what happened to some of them; one was a young poet named Vingranovsky, and it was fun to meet him because he had starred in a recent Soviet film about World War II, though he wasn't a professional actor. Mary Jane and everybody agreed that he looked like my twin brother. Not too long ago I looked on the Internet to see if I could find him and I found that he had indeed he had been made, not many years since, after the fall of the Soviet regime, a member of the Ukrainian Academy. So he is still alive, and I hope well.

Q: What sort of things were you using as contacts? Was this a matter of sort of letting this group know that we cared or did we get anything from them, or what was the purpose of the visit?

BRIDGES: The purpose of the Steinbeck and Albee visit was cultural exchange, to put prominent American writers in touch with Soviet writers and try to promote the cause of liberalism in the Soviet intellectual field. They were limited, most of them, in what they could read and we could help them only a little on that. I should add that the United States Information Service had a marvelous Moscow chief named Rocky Staples, Eugene Staples, who had gotten an arrangement with U.S. publishers of paperback books. They would provide the USIA with copies of recent American paperbacks which were then shipped to the embassy in Moscow. I guess we had some thousands of copies of these paperbacks, so whenever we would go traveling I would always take an extra briefcase full of paperbacks, and on a train I would pull out a paperback and sometimes there was a fellow passenger who knew some English, and I would say, "Here, you can have this, I have another copy at home." I remember a particular trip I made to the Western Ukraine with an officer of the Australian embassy, and they took us to see the local branch of the writers' union in Chernovtsy. There were three local writers there: one was Ukrainian, one was Russian, and one was Jewish and his name was Melamud. And I said, "Mr.

Melamud, I happen to have in my briefcase two or three books by the best American writer, whose name is Malamud.” And he said, “Oh, with that name he must be my cousin.” Anyway, I really made his day; I gave him three copies of Bernard Malamud’s recent novels. So that was one thing we were doing, promoting cultural exchange in small ways on our own if we couldn’t get a big writer to visit the Soviet Union. Secondly, we were reporting to the Department and Washington on what was going on in the Soviet intellectual world which had some relevance to the overall nature of the Soviet regime and governance in the Soviet Union.

Q: The Russians intellectual side seemed to play a much stronger role than it does in the United States. I somehow think of all these people sitting around drinking vodka around the kitchen table in deep conversation. Were there currents that we were able to pick up of concern about their society?

BRIDGES: Yeah, I won’t exaggerate. I’ve never reviewed all the reports I did. I did some years ago put in a Freedom of Information request so I could get copies of the reporting I did during Steinbeck’s visit. One of the interesting currents was in 1962 and ’63, the Soviet unorthodox artists had been given some additional freedom. There was a sort of opening in culture, a writer like Solzhenitsyn got published and artists found that they could paint and sell things at work. Unorthodox artists; they were not socialist realists. There was an exhibition of contemporary Soviet painters at the Manege, the old riding hall just outside the wall of Kremlin. It seems that there were some right-wingers in the Soviet leadership who insisted that Khrushchev go see this exhibition; they expected that he would explode when he saw this stuff, and they were right. He made his famous artistic judgment, that the paintings looked like droppings from a donkey’s tail, and then there was a crackdown; there was a limited crackdown on art, there was only one member of the Union of Soviet Artists who was expelled. His name was Kropovniksky, and he was the father-in-law of Oscar Rabin, the artist whom we used to visit on Saturday.

Q: How about the movies? Were they pretty much, boy meets tractor, tractor and boy live happily ever after?

BRIDGES: Yes, with some exceptions. I didn’t see all the new Soviet films but every now and then we went to the movies. There was one that was really fun, it was a comedy about a World Organization of Youth convention in Moscow; there really was such a convention around 1960, but the story of the film is that a gang of pickpockets gets together and decides to make hay while the sun shines during the congress. It was a genuinely funny movie about the Soviet underworld, which the Soviets in general didn’t admit existed.

Q: In your travels did you ever have problems with the KGB?

BRIDGES: I was lucky; I wondered in fact why they didn’t hit me when they might have. It was probably in 1963 or ’64, Jack Perry who had been our personnel officer was now working on the external side of the political section, and I on the internal side. One day Jack told me that the cops were after Betsy, his wife, that they were following her everywhere and sometimes just a couple of feet behind her on the sidewalk. They were trying to cow her, but also we guessed that they had a theory that she was maybe an intelligence officer. And it was very unpleasant. So Jack at one point said, “Let’s the two of us have lunch and then after lunch we’ll go for a walk, and

somebody will be after us, I'm sure, and then at a particular corner, you go left and I'll go right and we'll see which way the follower goes." And we did that, and the follower followed Jack. But in Moscow I was not often bothered, not always aware that somebody was on me. Traveling was much more onerous, and I've written a little about that too. I wrote an article called "May Days in Siberia," that was published in an anthology called Tales of the Foreign Service by the University of South Carolina press, I think in 1978. I mentioned there how the cops had been on me and my traveling companion. We tried to take a boat upstream to an island near the Chinese border and they simply kicked us off the boat which for once was honesty on their part.

Q: Was this when they were having trouble on the Ussuri?

BRIDGES: Yes, there had been troubles in 1961 and '62 and this was in the spring of '63. I traveled to Siberia with an Australian colleague named Bill Morrison, who was then number-two in the Australian embassy in Moscow. He later left diplomacy for politics, and became Australian defense minister. Anyway, the Soviets were not about to let an Australian and an American diplomat go up to the Chinese border, but we thought, nothing ventured nothing gained. We went to the local Intourist office when we got to Khabarovsk, and asked what they could do for us. We said we wanted to go for a ride on the river. They told us that there was no traffic on the river, there was ice on the river. Well that was a lie, and we knew it. Maybe there was ice further north but not at Khabarovsk in May. So we walked down to the river and there was the boat station, and probably three or four of these passenger boats that were a hundred and fifty feet long. We knew that in Moscow you could go on a river boat and buy your ticket on board. We went to the ticket office, but the ticket window woman saw us coming and shut the window, so we just got on the boat. The sign indicated it was leaving soon to go somewhere upstream. The young mate came up and said, "You have your tickets?" And we said, "No, we'll buy them later", and he walked off. The conventional wisdom was that the KGB officer civilians wore green fedoras because the color for Interior Ministry troops was green on their uniforms. So the story was that KGB boys wore green fedoras. We had already seen a guy in such a fedora once or twice in town. Well anyway, we were on the boat, waiting to buy our tickets and up comes the guy with a green fedora with a colonel of the Soviet militia. And the colonel said, "Where do you think you're going?" And we say, "On a ride." He said, "You're not going anywhere. Get your asses off the boat." So we did, protesting, but at least he was honest because they were terrible liars, but this guy was straight and direct. So then we took a taxi out of town. The understanding was that in any city you could go up to 40 kilometers from the center, 25 miles. So we got in a taxi and said, "Take us down the road toward Vladivostok. We want to go to 38, 40 kilometers, when you get to that point, turn around." We got about ten kilometers, there was a fork in the road and there were two soldiers in the fork and they waved down the driver and walked up to him and said, "Show your documents", and he did. They didn't even look at us. And they said, "Go back to town, your brakes don't work." We were stymied; they wouldn't let us see anything. We wanted to see a factory, they said there was no factory, and we wanted to see the writers' union, there was none, no collective farm although we had seen some from the plane. So we finally left a day early and went back to Irkutsk.

Q: Did you get any feel for the nationalities' divisions?

BRIDGES: It was clear to me that the nations in the Caucasus - I got to Georgia and Armenia -

that the Georgians were sort of doing their own thing, with limits, there was a strict police regime everywhere. But they were doing a sort of Georgian thing. There seemed to be a sort of permissiveness in Georgian culture that was permitted, as far as the KGB permitted, probably in part because the top cultural people in Moscow in people didn't know Georgian. They maintained their individuality in many ways. Very few Georgians spoke Russian, in contrast with people in probably every other Soviet republic. Almost all Armenians, many Central Asians, most educated non-Russians, spoke fairly good Russian. People in the Baltic states spoke it well even though they didn't want to. But the Georgian census of around 1960 showed rather few people speaking Russian. The Baltic states certainly had not been absorbed the way the Soviets wanted to absorb them; the Latvians and Estonians still had, for example, national singing festivals every several years that were occasions for nationalistic expression.

Q: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were off limits to you?

BRIDGES: No, they were not; not entirely. I never got to Lithuania. I got to Latvia, but you could only visit the capital city, Riga. So I got to Riga once with Raymond Garthoff, who was later ambassador to Bulgaria. At the time he was an expert on the Soviet military - and probably still is. His wife was Latvian by origin. He was visiting Moscow, but he wanted to go to Riga to see it. I'd not been there, so we went and spent a weekend there. You had to fly to Riga, you weren't permitted to take the train. I visited Tallinn in Estonia, four times I think. You could not fly to Tallinn, but you could take the train from Leningrad. Every time I went to Tallinn I'd go into a café, which was a very un-Russian sort of establishment, they were European style cafés, there were people sipping coffee and drinking their brandy. I think that any time I sat down in a café in Tallinn it took about five minutes until someone at the next table would tell me how much they hated the Russians and so forth and so on. Their sentiment was very strong.

Q: You left in 1964. Khrushchev was kicked out in '64?

BRIDGES: Yes, and I wrote in my book *Safirka* I published a sort of confession. The question, in August and September 1964 was whether Khrushchev was going to last. The Chinese were making fun of him and there were a lot of problems internally. The Soviet military had problems with him, the harvest, the economy was not working, the intellectual world was a problem. He had competition; he was not the strongest leader, he was not the leader that Stalin had been. It came to me to draft a telegram on whether Khrushchev was going to stay or go. I think my main argument was that the Soviets couldn't afford to get rid of him because of the Chinese, which is really not good argumentation. My draft went up the line to the counselor for political affairs and then to the DCM and to the ambassador, and when it was all agreed upon, the cable was sent. That was around Labor Day 1964. I left later in September, and probably in the beginning of October I was on home leave in Chicago and my brother-in-law came to town from New Orleans and asked me to come to lunch with him and his company's Chicago agent. We had a two martini lunch and I was probably into my second martini and lunch was coming when the public affairs system of this private club said, "Sorry to interrupt but the press is reporting that Nikita Khrushchev has been kicked out." I said, "Excuse me," and walked off. My brother-in-law told me years later that he and his agent had thought that I had gone off and telephoned Washington. Well, in fact I had gone to the men's room. It was really not a very good time for the author of the telegram explaining why Khrushchev was not going to be kicked out should go and call the

Department.

Q: Well, then where did you go?

BRIDGES: Back to Washington, where my orders said I was to spend four years. My first two years would be spent on detail to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Q: Before we move on, talk a little bit about your wife and living in Moscow with the family. How was that?

BRIDGES: As far as my wife was concerned, she is a very hardy type. The years we were there we had three young children. The oldest, our son, entered first grade there, the older of our two daughters started kindergarten there, and our youngest was not yet in kindergarten. So we had one, then two kids in the Anglo-American school, which was not a bad school, housed in what had once been the house of Kropotkin, the 19th century thinker. Most of the children came from western embassies; I suppose there were more Americans and British than anything. The second year we were there my wife managed the embassy commissary which was a fairly big enterprise, we depended heavily on the commissary for food. Its turnover was something around a million dollars a year, which in 1964 was big money. When we could, we'd get out and go west for a bit, especially in the summers. It was interesting in Moscow, though; there were a number of things to do. The year that Mary Jane was the commissary we decided we had to have an au pair. So in the summer of 1963 we went to western Germany on vacation, me for two or three weeks and then my wife and kids stayed for another month. She advertised in the Munich newspapers for an au pair. We initially hired a German woman who was probably about 40 years old and was working for the Siemens company and who basically thought she could take a leave of absence for a year; she really wanted to see the Soviet Union. But in the end she decided she would rather not do it; her name was Elizabeth von Rundstedt, and she was the niece of the field marshal. She was afraid that they might not receive her too well. So instead we hired a young Canadian girl who was 21 or 22 years old, who was making a living teaching English, and she was great fun; she was a very good skater so the children first learned to skate with her. And that was our winter sport, skating in the little rink behind the embassy and at Gorky Park. The park was great fun because they would spray all the sidewalks and there were three rinks in the park, too, so you could skate all over the place and they had speakers with waltz music and it was a great outlet. The Canadian left us, but for the last few months we were there we had a marvelous Danish girl working for us.

SOL POLANSKY
Office of Soviet Affairs
Washington, DC (1962-1966)

Ambassador Polansky was born in New Jersey and raised in New Jersey and California. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Russian Institute, New York City. After service in the U.S. Navy, he joined the Department of State in 1952 and was commissioned Foreign Service Officer in

1957. A Russian specialist, he served in Poznan, East and West Berlin, Moscow, Vienna and Sofia, Bulgaria, where he served as United States Ambassador from 1987 to 1990. In his tours at the State Department in Washington, D.C. he dealt primarily with East Europe Affairs. Ambassador Polansky was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: You then moved back to Washington. You were with Soviet affairs for four years, from 1962 until 1966. How was Soviet affairs set up? Where did fit, in those days, in the Department's scheme of things?

POLANSKY: Yes, I was in the Office of Soviet Affairs. It was part of EUR and Eastern Europe was a separate office within the Office of Soviet Affairs. There were essentially two parts. There was a bilateral section. I think I had my choice of going into the bilateral or multi-lateral section and I decided I would go into the multi-lateral section. That essentially, not an extension of what I was doing in Moscow, but it was working with different geographic bureaus on Soviet foreign policy issues as they affected us. For a fair amount of the time, I had that part of the office that dealt with European affairs. The idea was to provide the Soviet element with whatever issue was coming up between us and a western or eastern European country. I had also the Far East and southeast Asia, less so Africa and Latin America, although they were there and important.

Q: Who was the head person as far as Soviet affairs were concerned?

POLANSKY: Bob Owen was Director of the Office of Soviet Affairs at first and Herb Okun was his deputy and for awhile Vlad Manoff was in charge of multi-lateral affairs and then Phil Valdez came in after Vlad. I'm sorry, Mac was in charge of the Office and Bob was in charge of bilateral affairs.

Q: Were you there in time for the Missile Crisis?

POLANSKY: Yes. It was handled above us however. It was not an issue with which we became fully involved at our level.

Q: What were your main concerns during this period from 1962 until 1966?

POLANSKY: There was concern about Germany and about Soviet/German relations and how that had an impact on us.

Q: Did we feel that West Germany was solidly in the western camp or did we feel that if the Soviets made the right moves they could nudge them towards a neutral position?

POLANSKY: There was some concern about that, but it was not overwhelming. The Russians couldn't offer Germany anything at that point that could induce it towards any kind of neutrality.

Q: Did we feel that there was much for the Soviets, either through their surrogate Communist parties in Western Europe or as a military force to mess around in Western Europe?

POLANSKY: Nothing really pops out.

Q: Khrushchev left the scene in about 1966.

POLANSKY: Yes, but I remember more about when Malenkov and Kosygin left the scene. I remember more about the business of Khrushchev secret speech about Stalin, which we didn't know about until later. It was the 20th Congress speech.

Q: How about the speech that the CIA eventually published all over the world. I remember, I was in Saudi Arabia, and I was happily spreading copies around to very disinterested Saudis. It was the first time that Stalin and his regime were attacked in this so-called secret speech. Do you remember how that played when it first came out.

POLANSKY: There was some skepticism about whether it was for real or not and how it was smuggled. It became clear, fairly soon, it seemed to hang together and made a lot of sense and tended to confirm what people in Western Europe and the United States had known about the early parts of the Stalinist regime. I think after the initial skepticism, there wasn't much doubt about the authenticity of the speech.

Q: Was there any difference between how your office, the State Department was looking at the Soviet Union?

POLANSKY: I don't think there was much of a feeling that somehow they had a better insight into the Russians and what they were up to than we did. I don't think the analyses of what the Soviets were doing in different parts of the world were terribly different. In some ways, they had individual sources that were helpful, but I think they were more inclined to generalize about a particular development from an individual source, than we would have been. I don't recall any major disagreement about analyses.

*Q: Were you getting any feel about the China-Soviet relationship?
Were we still talking about China and the Soviet Union being together?*

POLANSKY: Yes. I don't think when I was there that there was much of a feeling that there was much of a wedge that you could drive between the two of them.

THOMPSON R. BUCHANAN
Intelligence Research Specialist
Moscow (1962-1964)

Soviet Affairs
Washington, DC (1968-1970)

Political Counselor
Moscow (1970-1973)

Thompson R. Buchanan was born in Beverly Hills, California in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943-1946. Mr. Buchanan's Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, France, Russia, Burundi, Gabon, and Norway. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 15, 1996.

Q: So, you went to Moscow in 1962 and were there until when?

BUCHANAN: Until 1964.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

BUCHANAN: Foy Kohler. I arrived in time to accompany him on some of his courtesy calls on his colleagues. After being offered cognac at 10 in the morning, he commented once that what you needed to be an ambassador was a modicum of intelligence, but above all a strong stomach.

Q: I would like to talk a little about the embassy first.

BUCHANAN: Well, I took over from Spike Dubs in Moscow. As I said before, I arrived with the arrogance of youth, and of a professional with more continuity in Soviet affairs than most Foreign Service colleagues. But that was my only advantage. I had to learn from scratch what had become old hat for most of my colleagues, namely, how to write a cable, protocol issues, how to make a call on the foreign ministry, etc. But it was an exciting time. Within the first two weeks, I went on a book buying trip with the publications procurement officer, Bill Morgan. We went to the Caucasus, first to the Baku, where the KGB agent watching us, slipped and fell on his face in the first heavy snow the city had in 25 years. Security kept getting tighter and tighter. We were placed, in effect, in a closet with clothes hung all around us as we flew into Yerevan. We were allowed, however, to take a train along the heavily guarded border with Turkey, with its ploughed areas and border guards on horseback. On the high hill above Tbilisi, Georgia, near Stalin's statue, we suddenly read on a wall poster that five of our Embassy colleagues had been PNGed. The Soviets had finally caught our spy, Colonel Penkovsky. Lovely Tania, our Intourist guide, showed us around town, explaining how a radio commentator, who was a direct descendant of the Kings of Georgia, had recently married a girl of the same noble lineage. At the airport, Tania managed to get our 40 boxes of books onto Aeroflot, despite the glowering presence of two huge thugs, in green felt hats and comically wide pants, standing over us...Hollywood casting...

Q: Penkovsky was a famous CIA and British agent.

BUCHANAN: My old colleague and neighbor in Moscow, Bob German, was almost PNGed too because the Soviets thought initially he was part of the CIA group working with Penkovsky.

Q: Could you talk a bit about what a book buying trip is?

BUCHANAN: We had an agreement with the Soviets that each of us could buy books of interest

to our respective governments, and had officers in our embassies with that function. You would go usually to what was then the union republic's capitals, and visit the main bookstore, look at their list of books and select those you wanted. You would sign a chit and they boxed up the books. What sometimes happened, though, you arrived and discovered that "by chance" it was "inventory day." That was usually a sign that every book store in town was closed to you. If book-buying wasn't always successful, it allowed you to travel and get some insight into the country.

Q: You had been dealing with the Soviet Union for really a considerable period of time, from 1948-62, after being there were there any shocks or changes of attitude about things?

BUCHANAN: Of course, Khrushchev was in power. It was a period of so-called thaw. There was hope and excitement in the air. Unorthodox books started being published, one called, for example, "Not by Bread Alone," by Dudintsev. During my first tour at the embassy we were fortunate to live out on Leninsky Prospekt, alongside Soviets and East Europeans, not in an American ghetto. On my first taxi ride into town I asked the driver how things were now compared to Stalin's day. There was the same nostalgia we hear today. The driver replied: "Ah, must worse. In Stalin's day you could buy a bottle of vodka for two kopeks," a gross exaggeration.

It was an exciting period because Khrushchev was a very lively leader and he had no compunction about visiting with foreigners. I remember I was at a businessman's reception and I got into an argument with some KGB type from the Ministry of Commerce. He finally grabbed me (he had had a few drinks) and said, "Here is a man who can answer our argument," and started dragging me across the room. Good grief, he was dragging me to Khrushchev who had just entered. So, it was an exciting time.

Q: Were you there during the missile crisis over Cuba?

BUCHANAN: I was. We were in many ways much more insulated against the panic and fears that one would have had if one had been in Washington. We didn't have the newspapers and TV to alarm us every day. The Soviet press was pretty bland on this issue. I was personally not very heavily involved, the negotiations were very closely held by the ambassador, the DCM, Jack McSweeney, and Dick Davies, Political Counselor. But I also came to Russia with a strong belief that the Russians huff and puff but then retreat. They are not adventurous, but conservative in their policies. So, I was not inclined to be scared.

It was an interesting time on another level. The Robert Shaw Chorale was in Russia at that time. They sang the Bach B Minor Mass, which the Russians had never been allowed to hear. It was a very moving experience. We were present when a young Russian artist, who had managed to get a second black market ticket, and spent all night painting a picture of Christ, rushed up to present it to Robert Shaw the following day after the concert. Shaw told us that the Russians in Leningrad had asked him if he would agree to serve there as choral director, an honor he declined.

Q: What was your impression of the embassy, how it operated, the morale, the ambassador, the

staff?

BUCHANAN: It is a very different embassy than now. We didn't have professional area specialists, for example. The most interesting area in those days were in Asia, particularly Laos. So as head of the foreign political section I made myself "the Asian expert," not really knowing much about Asia. I remember once Kohler saying, "I hope you know something about Laos, Tom, because no one else does." The Brits also didn't seem to know a great deal.

On that score, one of the more amusing incidents was in the summer of 1963 when Harriman came to discuss Laos with Gromyko. Gromyko started his usual diatribe, Harriman listened for about a minute and then ostentatiously turned off his listening aid, so Gromyko was talking to himself for 20 minutes. Afterwards we had the usual VIP lunch at the Foreign Ministry guest house. Bill Sullivan and Mike Forrestal, Harriman's aides, were there. Both of them regaled Gromyko by saying that the governor was called "the crocodile." Gromyko was quite amused, but not the governor.

Q: How did you find morale there?

BUCHANAN: I thought that it was good. Any situation where people feel themselves under pressure and isolated, brings out their inner resources and feeling of comradeship. These feelings extend to officers in other diplomatic missions during my first tour, the diplomatic colony remained small enough so that there was a good cross section of diplomats from all parts of the globe at social events, in contrast to the 1970s when parties tended to be regionally segregated. Morale was better in the 1960s than later, but that may simply be because I was a younger, more lighthearted officer. To hear the old hands speak who served in Stalin's time, that was truly the *belle époque* of service in Moscow.

Q: What was the view of Khrushchev during this particular time?

BUCHANAN: To some extent the feeling was that this was someone with whom we could do business, and in fact, of course, we did. We negotiated the nuclear test ban treaty and kept up a dialogue. He was a very tough negotiator and a highly erratic human being, so you never knew which way he was going to jump. But, he certainly was the most interesting leader that we had to deal with, and there was some hope.

Q: How was the death, the assassination, of President Kennedy treated?

BUCHANAN: Well, I was at the French commercial counselor's smoking a large Cuban cigar, which was making me increasingly green when the Agence France Press correspondent went to the phone and came rushing back and told us the shocking news. I was happy to be able to dash out of the room at that point. The Russians treated this as though we had killed their leader. In a certain sense he was, for he was their ideal, the sort of young leader they would have liked to have had. So, there were recriminations from people in the streets, how could we have allowed this to happen. Khrushchev came and signed the condolence book at the embassy. It was a very moving period.

Q: Was the Oswald connection...?

BUCHANAN: Consular affairs, of course, had a flap to find out what they could on Oswald, pull out the file. But the Soviet press didn't publish it for obvious reasons. We on the political side never thought this was a KGB plot to kill Kennedy. We just thought Oswald was a nut.

Q: Yes, because we dealt with these nuts in our business so much that you know that they are out there. Did you and your family have any interesting experiences with the Russians?

BUCHANAN: Let me give you a few examples. Our daughter and a pretty French friend of hers visited us in the summer and very quickly attracted the attention of two nice looking young Russians, obviously children of the Nomenklatura living in our area. The Russians used to take them out to Gorky Park, where they would sneak into restaurants by the back door, and obviously have fun. The boys would turn up their coat collars to avoid being recognized as they walked by the militia outside our entrance when they came to visit us, but they stood out because they were much better dressed than the American kids.

I took my son to Central Asia during his Easter vacation and we visited Frunze, now called Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. It was memorable in part because the police were so obnoxious, blocking everything we wanted to do. It was so bad that when we went see the Imam (religious leader) of Kirghizia, who had invited us to come and have a real Kirghiz meal, and we saw a car with four toughs sitting outside his door, we told him that another time would probably be better. He was visibly relieved. So instead, we went to a restaurant, with a good jazz band, where a fight broke out between a well-dressed group of Iraqi air force pilots and a drunken Kirghiz, who was almost knifed.

A young Russian, who was accompanying the Iraqis, then attached himself to us, or rather to the attractive, red head teacher from the Anglo-American school who was accompanying us. We said we were going to church because it was Easter. He said he would like to come along, claiming to be an ex-MVD officer who was now studying to become a surgeon. In any case, we got to the church through about a foot and a half of mud, pouring rain and women milling around trying to get into the church. It was the best show in town on a Saturday night, so all the young Komsomol thugs were trying to push their way into the church, and being thrown back down the steps by muscular *babushki*. It ended up with our self-appointed guide and I standing on steps, helping the ladies. Finally, our "friend" pulled our teacher into the church. She had the impression that he really did want to see the service. At that point the little old ladies all turned on me, assuming that I was a militia officer, saying "aren't you ashamed of yourself allowing these hooligans to behave this way?" When I explained who we were, they apologized, put their umbrellas up over us, and then asked: "Is it true that in America the Easter service is broadcast over television?" Word of the West had traveled even here to the Afghan border.

One of our neighbors on Leninsky Prospekt was Victor Louis, a notorious KGB agent coopté. He tried to ingratiate himself with us by introducing us to Oskar, a dissident artist. When we went back to Moscow on our second tour, we found that he had moved up in the world, with a house in Peredelkino, a fashionable artistic suburbanite. He had his own ski lift, a Mercedes and Jaguar. We had finally given him a visa to visit the US An American, whom he had visited, told

us that Viktor had asked him to ship back \$1,000 worth of miscellanea that he had bought at Hammacher and Schlemmer. Basically, Viktor was a 19th century buccaneer, who knew how to use the Soviet system to the best advantage of himself and his English nanny wife, Jennifer, who regularly attended Sunday church service with their children at the English Embassy.

Q: Wasn't he also sort of used by us as someone we could talk to?

BUCHANAN: He used us and we used him, to hear what Viktor had to say. It was often interesting, something the Soviets wanted us to know. On one occasion, he basically told our Administrative officer that Khrushchev had been overthrown, but the officer did not appreciate what he was being told and waited a day before passing on the information. The Soviets used to send Viktor off to places like Israel, where they did not have relations, to sort of sniff out the terrain. He claimed to have an in-law in Copenhagen, who was in the rug business, to explain how he was able to bring back large quantities of rugs for all of his *Nomenklatura* friends. As I said, he knew how to work the system.

You asked about morale. I think where morale wasn't very good was among the children. It was a very difficult post for children. The only place they had to play was in a sort of little playground next to the garbage dump. They were always getting into trouble for obvious reasons. One time they set a fire in the chancery's only elevator. So, it was difficult. Our son went to the Anglo-American School there which was run jointly by the two embassies. It had some good teachers, but later he said he wished in a way he had gone to a Soviet school. Some people, who sent their children to Moscow schools, found it was a good experience and we had thought about it. But, Campbell had been in a German school in Frankfurt and came away with a heavy German accent in English; then he had been in French school and left feeling more French than American, so we said no, we didn't want him confused again.

My two years flew by and the time came for the April Fool sheet. As I mentioned I had become hooked on Africa and applied to go to a French-speaking, Sub-Saharan post on the water. From a career standpoint obviously, I would have been smarter to have tried to stay in EUR and get involved in "important" political-military affairs. But, I was always more interested in doing what I enjoyed than what might professionally advance my career.

Q: That is one of the great fun of the Foreign Service. You can sort of pick an area of the world and say, "Gee, I would like to go there," and there is a reasonable chance if you try hard enough that you can go there.

BUCHANAN: Exactly. I was thinking about being on the water, Dakar or Abidjan, but I couldn't fault Personnel when they sent me to Bujumbura on the longest lake in the world, Lake Tanganyika, French speaking, sub-Sahara.

Q: Before we move to Burundi, while in Moscow you dealt with Soviet foreign affairs. What was the Soviet policy towards the rest of the world?

BUCHANAN: Khrushchev's offensive into the Third World was still continuing. He was having problems because so many Third World states were becoming disenchanted and the Soviets,

themselves, were becoming disenchanted with their greedy “allies”. Foreign aid was about as popular in Russia as it is in the Middle West of the United States, with all sorts of anecdotes...”If we get one more ally we are going to go broke.” Nevertheless, Khrushchev was an activist and it didn’t matter whether you were talking about Asia or Africa, his diplomats and his KGB types were out there, trying to weaken our influence and promote Soviet interests.

In the area of bilateral relations, as I mentioned, we began to do business. Khrushchev was an impressionable person, in the sense that even though he was an ideologue, who felt that by going back to some of Lenin’s policies he could revitalize the Communist Party, he was open to outside influences. He was tremendously impressed by his trip to the United States and, of course, very impressed by what we could do in the area of agriculture. He also, I think, genuinely got along very well and had personal respect for General Eisenhower. So, from that standpoint the U-2 incident was a personal disappointment for Khrushchev. It was also a great embarrassment to him to have to admit that the Americans had been able to overfly Russian territory for years and take photographs, and the Soviet military hadn’t been able to do anything about it. I think his apoplectic reaction in Paris was basically embarrassment, and an effort to protect himself politically. In retrospect, of course, he was under greater pressure internally than we realized at the time. To be sure, there were rumors that he had his problems, that there was an opposition. A variety of names kept surfacing as potential rivals. But, when he was actually bounced, I had already left, we were more relaxed because that year there had been a very good crop. The previous year, 1963, when we were in Russia, there had been basically a famine. Bread to the Russians is very important and some of the bread you bought in shops was almost inedible. It was a very difficult time. So, logically we thought if Khrushchev was going to be bounced, that he would have been removed in 1963.

In a sense we all found him an interesting person to deal with, yet he made us somewhat nervous because he was, as the Russians accused him, subjective, volatile, and erratic. And quite arbitrary and impulsive. He decided for example, that since the Americans had such success growing corn, it should be grown all over the Soviet Union. It did not matter whether local conditions favored the growth of corn or not. His huge program earned him the name of “Nikita Kukuruznik”, the corn grower. He began a similar massive campaign to grow vegetables. He got into much greater political trouble, however, when he decided to split the regional Communist Party organizations into urban and agricultural sections, thereby depriving powerful Party officials of part of their fiefdoms. When he undertook a serious program of arms reduction, cutting the armed forces by over a million men, many coddled officers found themselves sent out to collective farms to become collective farm chairmen. By the time of his ouster, Khrushchev had managed to alienate virtually every powerful group in that population. That made it easy for Brezhnev to topple him.

I went back into Soviet affairs, on the desk, and became de facto deputy to Spike Dubs.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From 1968-70. I arrived just when the Czech crisis was coming to a head.

Q: Explain this crisis.

BUCHANAN: It was the Prague Spring when Communist Party leader Alexander Dubcek, challenged Moscow by a program of radical change in Czechoslovakia aimed at the creation of a "Socialism with a human face." Spike Dubs and I were impressed by the *sang froid* of the old Soviet hands, Chip Bohlen and Mac Toon, during the tense weeks that led up to the Soviet invasion. While we bit our nails, wondering if Moscow would react, they went off and played golf, convinced no doubt that there was nothing that the US could do, realistically, that would affect Moscow's decision. It was during this period when Spike continued to smoke his three to four packs of cigarettes a day, and I increased my intake from a maximum of ten to a pack and a half, that I made my decision to stop smoking. I have not smoked since.

Q: From the desk, how did we view the Soviet Union during this 1968-70 period?

BUCHANAN: As an assertive, muscular and somewhat unpredictable power. The proclamations of the so-called Brezhnev doctrine, in connection with Moscow's invasion of Czechoslovakia, whereby the Soviets asserted their right to intervene wherever a Communist regime was threatened, introduced an element of increased tension into East-West relations. We felt that we must demonstrate that we were not going to be pushed around whether in Berlin or elsewhere. But we were also concerned to probe and determine what agreements we could reach with the Soviets that were of mutual benefit. I was head, at the time, of the Bilateral Section in EUR/SOV. The travel program whereby we monitored the travel of Soviet officials in the US, authorizing travel on a strict reciprocity basis, depending on who was allowed to travel in Moscow, and what difficulties they encountered. I inherited the program whereby our two sides exchanged chancery sites and agreed on the terms of construction. There is a general impression that the State Department gave away the store in allowing the Soviets to build their new chancery on Mount Alto on Wisconsin Avenue. I learned that this was a distortion of what happened. In fact, the Soviets had tried to purchase two other estates, Tregarin and Bonnie Brae, before agreeing to Mount Alto. In each case, neighbors objected strongly to having a Soviet Embassy nearby. It was finally agreed that we needed to find federal property, over which we had full control, if any exchange was to take place. The only obviously suitable federal property was the old Veterans hospital on Mt. Alto. Initially there was little understanding among diplomats on either side, I suspect, of the intelligence value of being on high ground. Eventually, of course, Soviet technical experts doubtless reassured their diplomatic colleagues that they had made a good deal, and we, on our side, realized that we had made a mistake. If Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson had been briefed about the potential of radio intercepts in Moscow, he might not have so cavalierly rejected Stalin's offer of some 15 acres of land on Lenin Hills, but he thought at the time that Stalin was trying to isolate the Americans, away from the center of town. We ended up, therefore, with a property next to our old embassy on Tchaikovsky Prospekt, which was dominated by higher buildings all around. The Soviets then rejected our request to build a chancery building thirteen stories high, and we had to compromise with eight stories.

I recall being very much concerned with the issue of security in constructing our new embassy. My thought was to try to have everything built off site in Denmark, Germany or in the United States. But our hands were tied because the head of the Federal Buildings Organization (FBO) had been basically nominated by Wayne Hayes, who headed the Appropriations Committee in Congress. Hayes had been told years before that the embassy would cost \$36 million, and no one had had the guts to tell him that that figure was totally unrealistic, particularly if we tried to build

much of the embassy off site. To some extent, therefore, concern to try to keep our budget somewhere within the projected figure took priority over concern for security. But we were also arrogant in our belief that we could take care of any “bugs” that the Soviets planted during the construction phase. After all, we were technically more advanced!

A major issue was who should be allowed to carry out the actual construction. We insisted that we should be allowed to bring in our own workmen, and do most of the construction ourselves in Moscow. The Soviets argued that this was “humiliating;” that they were perfectly competent to do the construction for us. I recall the present Russian Ambassador to Washington, Vorontsov, who was then Deputy Chief of Mission, saying to me: “But Mr. Buchanan, why should you object? After all, we don’t insist that Cubans build our embassy here. We are prepared to let your construction people build our embassy. I can assure you that your FBI is no less clever than our KGB.” Well, actually I don’t think it would have made any great difference even if all my plans had materialized, because none of us foresaw the skill with which the Soviets introduced listening devices into the great steel girders, which we would probably have considered much too expensive to import.

Q: At a later date, the ‘80s I guess, it became quite evident that the new embassy was riddled with listening devices and that...

BUCHANAN: They were so sophisticated that to this day I am not sure we know entirely how they work.

Q: And it has been unusable more or less. I don’t know what has happened to it.

BUCHANAN: Well, it should be used, it could have been used. In fact, when I went there in 1992 for Humanitarian Aid, I thought what we should be doing is putting all the unclassified aspects of the embassy -- AID, USIA, Commerce -- should have all been put in that building. They didn’t need any classified section. But we continued to have different technicians working inside the embassy to uncover the damage, and it remained unused. Finally, as you know we seem to have decided what we are going to do with the building, but it has been a long story.

Another big issue on my plate involved the exchange of consulates between Leningrad and San Francisco, notably the definition of our respective consular districts. Our last consulate in the U.S.S.R., in Vladivostok, was closed in 1948. This was an effort, in a sense, to get back to the era when we had some consular listening posts. My major problem was how to define our consular district in the Baltic states without seeming to acknowledge Soviet occupation of the area in 1940. Under the final compromise, the capital cities of the Baltic states, Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius, were placed within the Leningrad consular district, but the remainder of the Baltic territory was the responsibility of our Embassy in Moscow. To avoid appearing to accept Soviet rule in the capital cities, we developed a whole protocol for our visits. When I was Consul General, I was authorized to meet officials up to the Deputy Minister rank, but not above; and I could fly the flag but not when I was visiting an official building like the Foreign Ministry. The local population seemed to appreciate my flying the flag in driving around town, as a symbol of our interest in their future. My French colleague in Leningrad, who was not allowed to visit the Baltic States, with obvious envy, accused us correctly of “hypocrisy.” After the agreement on the

exchange of consulates was concluded, I accompanied a CODEL to Moscow, where I was embarrassed to see our representatives silent in the face of Soviet vituperation, on the principle apparently that guests should not talk back to their hosts. They did not understand that Russians only respect people who stand up for their principles. On the way back from Tashkent, where I let the delegation go on to a Parliamentary Union meeting in India, I stopped off in Leningrad to try and identify consular property that would meet our various specifications. I thought at the time that we must have owned Embassy property before the revolution, and I thought that it would be fun to try and rent the same property, if appropriate. I discovered, however, that we had never owned property, that our ministers and ambassadors had always rented their residences and chanceries, depending on their pocketbooks. The 1914 Baedeker listed our chancery at 11 Million street behind the Hermitage. Since the collapse of Communism, the street has reverted to its pre-revolutionary name. I thought that it would be appropriate for the great Capitalist power to be lodged on Million Street, but unfortunately the building was too large, too many people would have had to be evicted. As it was, the Soviets offered us property on Petra Lavrova, almost opposite our last chancery site at No. 24, as I requested in the note I wrote upon my return to Washington. The Soviets told my predecessors that our last Embassy had been in a building which housed a "wedding palace" on Petra Lavrova. But my research showed that not to be the case. George Kennan made a photograph of our former Embassy when he visited it in the 1930s to recover Embassy archives that had been left there by the Norwegians, who represented American interests after we broke relations following the revolution. This search for our former chancery properties became a hobby when I was stationed in Leningrad.

Q: Had we reached a point as far as sort of the way we thought that the Soviets might launch an attack on Western Europe?

BUCHANAN: I was always very skeptical of this scenario. I am not the one to ask. Many of my colleagues were more concerned than I that if we showed weakness the Soviets would attack. I think a greater concern, and one more generally shared, was what was called "Finlandization" -- a term which I consider an insult to a very brave and diplomatically adept nation. The fear, of course, was that, through pressure tactics, the U.S.S.R. would so intimidate the countries of Western Europe that they would not have the courage to stand up for their national interests, if they conflicted with Soviet interests.

Q: Having come out of Personnel I guess you would still have an eye on personnel. Our Russian specialists had always been an elite. Was this still the case?

BUCHANAN: Yes, we continued to look to our Soviet hands to staff our key posts in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. In Leningrad, Culver Glisten was the first Consul General, opening the consulate in July 1973. He lived in the Astoria hotel with his Swedish wife, cooking on a one-burner stove for the whole staff for several months. In the daytime, the staff would go and look at the walls of our future consulate building to spot the wet concrete where the KGB had tried to install its listening apparatus the previous night. It was Culver who had the sense of style to select the very handsome residence that we now rent. It was originally a gift from the uncle of the Tsar, Konstantin Konstaninovich, to a ballerina friend. The fact that it was a kindergarten during the blockade of Leningrad helped save the building. The Hermitage agreed to restore it in the style of a typical building of the mid-19th century. My first time into that building, I watched

a young girl, who looked as though she had just been milking cows on her collective farm, doing intricate relief work on the ballroom ceiling. In fact, the Soviets selected the best of their construction teams, usually girls from the collective or state farms, to work on the construction trusts responsible for the restoration of historic buildings. I must also thank Culver for having conned the Art-in-Embassy program under the very tough Mrs. Llewellyn Thompson to make an exception and provide the consulate residence with paintings from the National Gallery, in view of the imminent arrival of President Nixon in Leningrad. We had four Catlins on loan, plus some wonderful American natives and a huge abstract canvas for the library. When I arrived in the fall of 1977, I began a rear-guard action to delay the return of these wonderful paintings to the National Gallery. Of course, I eventually lost, and the National Gallery was furious with the way the Hermitage had packed our large abstract painting.

In Leningrad, we had a succession of old Soviet hands. Bob Barry and Garry Mathews worked with Culver, as I recall. My successors, Chris Squires, Bill Shinn, Edward Hurwitz and Charlie Magee were also Soviet hands, as were their successors. So it was kept very much within the "Soviet family," for the obvious reason that we needed officers with fairly fluent Russian and a working experience of the U.S.S.R. Did we look on ourselves as an elite? Probably, after all, we were dealing with Enemy No. 1. In fact, of course, we were probably no more an elite than the hard language specialists who staffed our posts in the Near East and the Far East, or for that matter, any other part of the globe. Perhaps it was our compensations for a life style that was substantially less pleasant and relaxing than that in most other parts of the world.

Q: You left the Soviet desk in 1970. Where did you go?

BUCHANAN: Then I was sent to Moscow as political counselor.

Q: You were in Moscow from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From July, 1970 to June, 1973.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

BUCHANAN: The ambassador was Jake Beam. For quite a bit of the time the DCM was my old boss, Boris Klosson. Spike Dubs was later DCM and Chargé for a long time.

Q: What were the political developments during this period?

BUCHANAN: When we arrived, relations were very tense because of Vietnam. We had periodic demonstrations, the usual Soviet, carefully planned demonstrations. You probably remember the story of the demonstration outside the British embassy. The British Ambassador went out and asked the policeman how long it was going to last. He looked at his watch and said another half hour. The crowds were always well controlled for the good reason that any damage to our embassy had to be paid for by the Soviets. So they were very careful. They might throw some ink at the embassy, but that was about it.

On one occasion, however, the Chinese students from Moscow University and Lumumba decided they would show these bourgeois traitors, the Russians, how to run a really good anti-

imperialist demonstration. They came and broke windows and threw things at the embassy, and we ended up with a great melee outside where we watched the Soviet cops beating up on the Chinese students to our great delight.

In 1970, when Boris Klosson was Chargé, we had one of these cases where a plane with some American military, including a General, flew by error or was lured across the Turkish border into Armenia, where it crashed. They apparently wanted to show the General Mount Ararat near the border. We had great difficulty in sending an officer down to Armenia to repatriate the bodies.

It was in this period that President Nixon and Kissinger were developing their strategy for dealing with Russia, using the opening of relations with China as leverage to persuade the Soviets that they needed to protect their flank by becoming more cooperative with the United States. Unfortunately, the Embassy played the role largely of a bystander throughout this period. My only substantive contribution was a lengthy analysis of the politics of detente within Soviet leadership circles that Sonnenfeldt passed on to Kissinger. Kissinger would flit in and out of Moscow, and, as he was departing, would phone Ambassador Beam to tell him what he thought he should know about the meetings that had taken place with Brezhnev at the guest house on Lenin Hills. This was a highly embittering experience for Beam. The culmination, of course, was the first Nixon Summit in Moscow in May, 1972.

The White House advance party setting up the meeting was typically aggressively obnoxious and rude toward the ambassador and our whole Embassy staff. It appears to be a congenital disease with these parties regardless who is President. Our little chore involved counting the number of steps in the Kremlin that Nixon would have to take to walk from his apartment to where he would meet with Brezhnev. As part of the many agreements that Kissinger wanted to sign with the Soviets, to link them to the United States, I was asked to check the text in Russian of an agreement on the protocol of polar bears, which I had never seen before.

The high Point for all of us was the dinner held, as usual, in the vaulted hall of the Kremlin Palace of Facets. I think anyone who didn't know the players and looked at our two leaders would have concluded that the man who passed expressionless, stiff legged along the reception line, as though wrapped in a glass cage, was the Communist; that the red-faced jovial soul, slapping backs, shaking hands like the mayor of any American city, was the Capitalist, the American. Despite my very negative feelings and impressions of both Nixon and Kissinger, I voted for Nixon in 1972. I was impressed that, perhaps for the first time, we had such a thoroughly articulated foreign policy, with a program of stick and carrot in dealing with Russia. But what happened. The carrot was supposed to be trade and once again American domestic politics got in the way and we were left with primarily the stick. Under the Jackson Amendment, the carrot was linked to the number of Jews who were allowed to leave the Soviet Union, and this reduced substantially our flexibility. I know the amendment complicated life for many Jews in the Soviet Union and did not necessarily help them to get out.

A little footnote on Kissinger. He was always very well informed about what his colleagues were doing in the bureaucracy, and he evidently learned that when Secretary of State Rogers had come to Moscow he had never bothered to come to the embassy and see the rabbit warren conditions in which we worked, and this had caused some unhappiness. So, in a rather

typical move, he made a point himself of coming to the embassy on one of his trips. He met with us in the secure “box” and said, “Of course, there is nothing I can tell you, you are the experts.” And, he, of course, didn’t tell us anything.

One of the nicer aspects of detente. Perhaps because I was still involved in authorizing Soviet travel in the US, advising the Soviet desk whether to approve or deny travel depending on how we were treated in Moscow, or perhaps simply because it was the year of detente, the Soviets decided to honor a long-standing request from my wife and me to ski on Mt. Elbrus in the Caucasus, the highest mountain in Europe. We were the first foreign diplomats, to my knowledge, to be allowed to ski there. The Austrian Ambassador had tried, as I had, in the 1960s, and again now as Ambassador. I suppose the facilities were not quite up to Ambassadorial standards, and he was also not American. Our first night in the A-frame hotel at Itkol near Elbrus, a young ski instructor had obviously been given orders to put on a good party. He invited all the golden youth of Moscow and Leningrad in the area, and later, learning of Nancy’s interest in art, introduced us to a local Carbadinian artist, who, as it happened, hated Russians. I should note that we were in the Balkar-Carbadinian Autonomous Republic, an area from which the inhabitants had been exiled to Central Asia during World War II, and only amnestied after Stalin’s death. Well, our ski instructor had obviously gone beyond his instructions, and we did not see him again, and only briefly the artist who had spent all night pounding out a metal bas relief of a leopard rampant, the symbol of his people, which we still treasure. We were then put in charge of a senior Party official, an engineer who was building all the hotels and ski lifts in the area. He had spent two years in the Antarctic, and ten years on the Soviet downhill ski team. We actually became good friends, as much as one could in Russia where one always wondered whether one was being set up. For example, after one late party, we found the hotel locked, and ended up sleeping in their bed, waking up to find people sleeping in the apartment, whom they barely knew. Such was Russian hospitality in a resort area. Was this all by accident? We will never know. We used to exchange dinners later when they came to Moscow. And when I went to Russia in 1994, his very attractive wife, now divorced and married to an American in Yukon, Oklahoma, arranged for me to go to the Caucasus, where she still had contacts. She claimed that she had refused to cooperate in the old days when the KGB had requested her to report on our meetings -- which, I, of course, do not believe.

On the social side, life was, of course, very busy. Unlike our first tour in Moscow we lived now in a representation apartment in the Chancery building. Our guests had to pass the scowling guards at the Chancery gate, and we were also more exposed to microwave bombardment, living permanently in the Chancery.

Q: Will you explain what you mean by microwave ?

BUCHANAN: When I was on my first tour I heard of something strange called TUMS, it appeared that the Russians were bombarding the embassy with microwaves apparently to disrupt certain types of communications in the embassy. At least we think that was the purpose. When I was there in the ‘70s, it was still not general public knowledge. Once it became public knowledge, it became policy that anybody being assigned to the embassy would be briefed and given an option of going to Moscow, or not. It became very controversial. Many of the women and wives, particularly, felt there was an undue high incidence of breast cancer resulting from

living and working in the embassy. To this day we will never know whether the leukemia that killed Ambassador Walter Stoessel was provoked or aggravated by the microwaves, as his wife certainly believes.

Q: Could you just give me an idea at this time how political officers, yourself and other officers in the political section, went about doing their job of political reporting?

BUCHANAN: We were under constant pressure from Washington to analyze the Soviet reaction to virtually any development of any import occurring around the world and within the USSR itself. This left us less time to explore the Moscow scene and meet with Soviet contacts than we would have liked. The Soviet press, radio and public lectures remained important sources of information. Depending on the official at the Foreign Ministry, access had improved. I could have a civilized dialogue with Fedoseyev in the USA Section; I always wondered how he managed to survive among acerbic colleagues like Komplektov. We tried to travel as much as time and travel restrictions allowed. When we did, we asked to meet with the local Party or Government officials, and to visit agricultural and industrial projects in the area. Time usually prevented our trips from being as well researched before departure as we would have liked. Our military colleagues would also ask us to keep our eyes open for specific information of interest to them, and we would return the favor, asking for their assistance when they traveled. On that score, when I arrived in Moscow I found that the political section and the military were not talking but rather spitting at each other. Fortunately the new Defense Attaché and I arrived at about the same time and we both agreed that this was nonsense. We went out of our way to set up briefings so that members of the military would feel more at home in an embassy, and when we traveled we would consult each other in an effort to try to improve the mutual take. Relations warmed somewhat.

There were certainly differences in evaluation between the embassy and Washington. The Pentagon and Washington had often what we considered an exaggerated view of the Russian military threat and what the Russians were doing. From our viewpoint, we saw a great deal of inefficiency and internal weakness. For example, Washington was convinced that the Russians had set up a vast underground civil defense program that was going to be able to save millions of Russian lives in case of nuclear attack, providing them with real leverage in a crisis. We accordingly attended local lectures on civil defense and we looked for underground civil defense installations, but apart from the Moscow subway, which of course had extensive antiblast and radiation doors, we didn't see the evidence for this extensive network. We also thought that, given the inefficiency of the system that it was unrealistic to think that literally millions of Russians could be evacuated in a crisis.

Our ability to gather information varied, not only depending on the target, but from region to region, the farther you went away from Moscow. When you went to Siberia, for example, and you talked to people you often got a much straighter story. The Siberians were rather more like our Westerners, more open. You could ask a question and get something closer to an honest answer. When I traveled with Ambassador Toon to Khabarovsk in the late 1970s, for example, we were both impressed by the self-confidence and frankness of the regional Party secretary.

Q: Was the art of Kremlinology still weaving the exquisite changes in the major newspapers, or

had things opened up a little more and a little broader than they had been?

BUCHANAN: It was certainly broader. We had access, of course, to many dissidents, and some of them offered insight into attitudes and intrigue in Communist Party circles. A disproportionate amount of our time continued to be taken up with the issue of Soviet Jewry. Our contacts with leading Jewish dissidents provided an interesting, but not always balanced view of what was happening in Soviet society. What was unfortunate was that the various dissident groups, in rather typical Russian fashion, did not cooperate with each other. If the Jewish, Sakharov and other critical strains of Soviet social life had managed to be less parochial, and more willing to work with one another, they might have been able to exert more effective pressure for reform, at least in the field of human rights. Soviet officials remained very sensitive, of course, to the appearance of knuckling under to outside pressure, whether from abroad or from within their own dissident community.

Kremlinology was less important, but it continued to be a helpful tool of analysis. It was not by chance that one prominent official would be named ahead, or behind another official in the press; or that the portrait of one leader would be placed ahead or behind that of another. Differences in wording and emphasis between the public statements of Party or government officials also provided us with esoteric clues to what was really happening behind the facade of Party unity. I was not always privy in Moscow to some of our most highly classified intelligence sources. I only became aware after my return to Washington that we had been listening in on the conversations in Brezhnev's limousine. It was certainly thanks to the revelations of Colonel Penkovsky that we became aware that the publicized "missile gap" was much over-blown, and the Soviets much weaker than we had feared.

The longer one worked in the U.S.S.R., the more convinced one became that the Soviet mania for secrecy, and concern to limit our access to other than the capital cities of the union republics, was intended to conceal, not so much military information, as the sheer backwardness and internal weakness of our "super power" competitor. Soviet officials were ashamed to reveal the extent to which Russia remained an undeveloped country, with enormous disparities in living standards between the capital cities and their hinterland. And afraid that we might conclude that Russia was a giant, with feet of clay.

Inevitably when you deal with a country as long as all of us have, you develop a certain instinct, a certain feel. You could tell a little bit about the political atmosphere simply from the attitude of your contacts. I used to meet with Victor Matveyev, for example, of *Izvestiya*, a very sophisticated journalist. I remember we were discussing Somalia and Ethiopia one time and he finally said with a smile, "You know Tom, we have Somalia and you have Ethiopia. Maybe tomorrow it will be the other way around. Relax." What was certainly true in my day is that the Soviets, like ourselves, were becoming increasingly aware of how we were being played off against one another by the Third World states as suckers. In my reading of Soviet theoretical writings on the Third World, it was interesting to see how analysts, like the present Russian Foreign Minister Primakov, were hinting that blind support of Third World states was not always in the USSR's interests, just because they happened to be anti-American.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to cover during this tour in Moscow?

BUCHANAN: I don't think so.

Q: Oh, just one other question. What was your impression of the American press?

BUCHANAN: The American press was pretty knowledgeable, particularly about the dissident community. The embassy was criticized for not being sufficiently in touch with that side of life. We thought, however, that they exaggerated the role of the dissidents. Hedrick Smith's "The Russians" is based on very much the same dissident sources and research as Bob Kaiser's "Russia: the People and the Power." Smith got his book on the market a couple of weeks before Kaiser, and received the Pulitzer Prize.

I feel, in retrospect, that I did not take as much advantage as I should have of the old timers among the press corps, who had married Russian women and lived for years in Moscow at a time when Stalin would not allow Russian wives to leave the country. While Ed Stevens had won a Pulitzer Prize in 1948, for his series of articles on the USSR in the Christian Science Monitor, he had lost much of his drive by the time that I had met him. He and his shrewd and energetic Russian wife, Nina, had moved from one of the lovely three story log houses, that Khrushchev was tearing down in Moscow as unsuitable for a modern capital, to a large house and garden nearer to the area where Westerners lived. Their frequent salons for the diplomatic corps, and operations in the dissident art world encouraged speculation about their KGB affiliations.

Then there was Henry Shapiro, who was sort of the Dean of the American press corps. His lovely Russian wife, Ludmilai, used to show mine around town, pointing out the handsome old buildings that were still to be found in the back streets of Moscow. Like Ed Stevens, Shapiro remained quite close-mouthed about sensitive issues in Soviet society, always concerned not to jeopardize his relations with Soviet officials. Shapiro claimed, for example, he had had a 4-6 hour interview with Khrushchev, which he had never published. When Shapiro finally retired to Wisconsin, an old friend of ours, Mark Hopkins, a former VOA correspondent, who was giving a course on the USSR at a local university, used to ask Shapiro leading questions and tape record his answers, to get him to open up to the students. So far as I know Shapiro never wrote any memoirs but I heard only recently from a former Moscow journalist that there is an oral history that someone extracted from Ed Stevens. These old-timers had so much more to say than most Western journalists, who focused on the dissident communities.

There were, of course, in addition extremely knowledgeable non-American journalists, with good connections in leftist circles, like Michel Tatu of Le Monde. It took intervention at the highest level in the French Government to persuade the Soviets to let Tatu leave with his Russian wife and child, typical petty harassment of a vocal critic of the regime.

There were other long-time residents of Moscow outside the circle of journalists who were good value for their insight into the local scene. The Greek employee of the Canadian Embassy, Kastakis, who assembled one of the finest collections of avant garde Soviet art in the world, comes to mind. After years of negotiations, he was allowed to leave with perhaps one-third of his collection, donating the balance to the Tretyakov Gallery. We had a variety of sources to which to turn for information, but all suffered from the same difficulty of obtaining accurate

information in a closed society.

Q: You seem to believe that the activities of the dissidents made for good headlines, but these people by their very nature were not as well plugged in as others.

BUCHANAN: Absolutely. It is sort of like saying the protesters of the '60s were all typical Americans. Dissidents were even less typical in Russia. To be sure, many educated Russians like Gorbachev, held many of the same critical views of Soviet society as the dissidents, but it would never occur to them to articulate these views outside of a small circle of friends. Some probably even admired the dissidents, but considered them "nuts." "Why stick out your neck" in a society known for chopping off heads? In short, the views of the dissidents were perhaps more representative of the views in critical intellectual circles in Russia than their behavior. In this sense, dissidents were a useful source of information.

When Bill Schaufele was ambassador to Poland he told one of his staff that he never understood why Buchanan turned down a post in Africa to go to Leningrad, but it was a decision that I never regretted.

Q: Well, Leningrad is big time.

BUCHANAN: Yes. I had some fifty-five people in the consulate. Leningrad was the main game in town with my background. I suppose in the back of my mind I thought perhaps after Leningrad something would come up. But, by that time all of my contacts in the African bureau had gone, and when I talked to the new Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Bill Harrop, after Leningrad he said, "I understand you don't want to go to a post in Africa." I said that that was not quite accurate. It was just that the posts at the time did not compare in challenge and interest with Leningrad.

Q: You were in Leningrad from when to when?

BUCHANAN: I arrived in Leningrad around October, 1977, after doing several weeks brush up course in Russian at Garmisch, which was a great experience. I understood the shock that all our language officers who go to Garmisch must have experienced when they go from this idyllic little mountain resort, with a view of the Zugspitze out their apartment windows and arrived in Moscow in a grimy apartment. Garmisch is a beautiful spot, with a great school run by former dissidents. All the lectures were in Russian. You wrote in Russian. It was a very good brush-up course for me and a very pleasant break. The work in the African bureau had been pretty tiring, and it gave me a little vacation before going to Leningrad.

I arrived pretty much in time for the Marine Ball. At the Marine Ball the most attractive couple there was the young Russian lady who worked in our general services office and her husband.. She was the daughter of the leading cultural honcho of Leningrad. She arrived in a very décolleté Western dress with her husband, supposedly a scientist, in white tie and tails. She made a pass at me during the party and I realized I was back in the old Russia. She was, I suppose, one of the arguments that our security people made for getting rid of Russian employees. At the same time she could be very helpful, and you knew with whom you were dealing. You just had to be

careful. When we got rid of Russian employees, we hired a lot of Americans about whom we knew very little. I would prefer, myself, to deal with Russians who give you some feel for the country and what is happening, because over time many Russian employees developed a little bit of mixed loyalty. They liked working for Americans and they liked working in the embassy or consulate. You got to know them and could ask them provocative questions to get a feedback. With Americans, you never knew with whom you were dealing, and some of them were certainly good bait for the KGB because they were just there for the money. We have seen in the Walker case, and other cases, that American patriotism is skin deep sometimes.

Q: And also there is much more the ability to get into trouble. This would be true anywhere. The local employees belong to the country and you know who you are dealing with. I found this in Yugoslavia. When you get an American clerk you get an American clerk who is a fish out of water and either needs a lot of hand holding or taking out of trouble or are much more susceptible to outside pressures.

JAMES A. KLEMSTINE
Consular Officer
Moscow (1963-1965)

James A. Klemstine was born in Pennsylvania in 1930. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree from Yale University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1952-1954 and entered the Foreign Service in 1956. Mr. Klemstine's career included assignments to Germany, the Soviet Union, China (Taiwan), and Korea. He was interviewed by Jeff Broadwater on April 15, 1993.

Q: I want to ask you a couple of questions about the time you spent in Moscow. You went to the Soviet Union in 1963, and stayed until '65. What did you do there?

KLEMSTINE: Consular work. The first year I worked in the section, the second year I ran the consular section in Moscow. There were some interesting things, and in some respects it was probably a valuable experience, though at that time I sort of felt shunted aside. Over time I have realized that in some respects I was able to get a better picture and travel around the Soviet Union more than say political officers, or other officers, who the Russians sort of kept on a leash. As consular officer, after they decided I was not CIA or anything like that, I was able to travel around fairly freely and extensively. I've been everywhere west of the Urals, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine, the Baltic states, and places like that. And also I was able to talk with a lot of Russian citizens who came into the Embassy. And I'd go to the Foreign Ministry and talk to the consular people, and it was a more free exchange. There was not the tension or putoffs that sometimes I think political people would get, because they wanted visas, for certain groups who they wanted to get into the States. I mean the Soviet officials wanted things to run smoothly in this area, and so they were rather accommodating.

An interesting thing happened when I was chief of the consular section, and that's when I

learned about the invisible economy, the black market. This is an interesting story, its nothing of high politics, but sort of a sidelight on human interest. There were a lot of Armenians in the United States who had immigrated to the Soviet Union after World War II. Stalin gave them incentives, and a lot of them thought to go back to the great homeland. And there were also a lot of Americans who went over there in the '30s who thought this was the future. By the 1960s all of these people were disillusioned and wanted to get out.

I always remember one poor old lady, an American, who had gone down to the Ukraine with her family, and unfortunately she had renounced her citizenship. And she'd come up once a year just to talk to Americans. She was still a convinced Marxist, but she'd always say, "This is a terrible place because all these people are a bunch of peasants, and they don't really know what Marxism is," and things like that. We'd have long talks.

But getting back to the Armenians. One day a group came in and they had a suitcase. I mean not a valise, but a regular suitcase. They opened it up in front of me, and it was filled with 100 ruble notes. This is one of these that you see in the movies, a suitcase full of money, stacks about that high. I don't know how many thousands of rubles were in there. At first I thought, "Boy, this is one of these KGB things." I thought, "This is pretty stupid." That's when I learned in Armenia about this underground black market economy. And these people were making money hand over fist down there. They were able to immigrate because a lot of them had kept their American citizenship and after a time the Russians would let them go, and they wanted to take their money with them. They wanted me to change the money to dollars. Well, in the first place I didn't have money to do this. And secondly, what would I ever do with stacks of rubles so high that it would take me a hundred years living in the Soviet Union, at that time, to ever spend it. Plus, of course, its illegal, but the whole thing was rather silly.

Q: I was going to say, the ruble wasn't convertible.

KLEMSTINE: Well, that's why they wanted me to change it. And the Russians wouldn't let them take the money out. The first case I thought this was a KGB plant, and I said, "Oh, my God." I just said, I couldn't do anything, I'm sorry, blab-blab-blab. Then about the second or third time I began to realize what was going on, and it finally got across to me this wasn't a game that the KGB was playing. These people really wanted to take their money out, and there was no way to take it out. And as a result I came up with one idea and it evidently worked, at least for a while. I told these people to go down to the GUM, that's the Russian department store, and buy fur coats with this money, and they could take it out as clothing -- sables, or fur hats, things like that. At least some of them did it because I remember getting a letter from one of them cryptically saying, "We had a nice fur sale in New York," something like that.

But the point I want to really get across is that in this socialist economy, I learned by talking to these people, that there was a separate economy underneath where evidently a helluva lot of money was being made.

Q: I wanted to ask you. You traveled around and talked to a lot of Russians. What was your general impression of living standards, or quality of life in the parts of the Soviet Union that you visited?

KLEMSTINE: It was low. You can't get around it. The thing that really surprised me in some places were the factory conditions. I thought they looked more to me like what you read in Charles Dickens of the working conditions: the dirt, and the lack of standards and safety than anything that I ever saw in the west; and anything that I ever saw subsequently in the orient.

Q: Did you sense much discontent with the government?

KLEMSTINE: No, this was the '60s, this was Khrushchev's time. This is when the Russian economy was growing. This was when a lot of our own people, including CIA, were fooled. The Russian growth rates were actually a quite good 5-6%, and Khrushchev himself you may remember, was predicting that by 1980 they would reach pure communism, and that they'd surpass the U.S. in production -- more milk and all that sort of thing. No real discontent with the regime that I ever came across, as I said, except for dissatisfied Americans, the Americans that immigrated into the Soviet Union. But most of the Russians, I think, in the 1960s were seeing an increase in their standards compared to the immediate post-war years. It was evidently not until the late '70s that things turned around, and started to go back down as they threw money into armaments.

I went over there just after the Cuban missile crisis, and the Russians had not yet started their big rearmament program at that time. So a lot of money was going into the civilian economy, and Khrushchev in a sense tried to help the Russians out in consumer goods compared to what happened in the 1970s when they started the rearmament, and things were shuttled away from the consumer. So, no, not in the 1960s was there any real discontent, just occasional grumbling.

Q: Were you in the Soviet Union in October '64 when Khrushchev was ousted?

KLEMSTINE: Yes, I was there.

Q: What did you think about that at the time?

KLEMSTINE: Well, it came as a surprise. Any yet a couple of days before it happened...I didn't know what was going on, but things weren't right. I would sense this when I went to the Foreign Ministry. I remember about two days before the ouster, I went to the Foreign Ministry, and at that time I had a sense that something was wrong because they just put everything off. I couldn't get any answers, "Well, come back next week." "We can't really make a decision now," and things like that. And there were some people whose visas were being held up. Their permission from OVIR, that was the office that gave them permission to leave the Soviet Union, they had got it and then suddenly at the last minute canceled. At least I had a feeling that something was going on, but I mean I didn't know what it was, but I just felt that the Russian bureaucracies that I had to deal with at that time, seemed somewhat preoccupied. They didn't want to take any decisions. They wouldn't do anything. And even some of the decisions they had made a couple of days before, they suddenly said no, or wait a week or so. I remember saying something upstairs but there was not really that much to substantiate it. It was more of an impression I got by dealing with these people that they were not in a position to do anything or else didn't want to.

And shortly after that came the coup, which came as a surprise.

Q: Then you left and returned to Washington shortly after that, in '65, and stayed in Washington until '70 and you worked at the Soviet Exchange.

KLEMSTINE: That was a dead end.

Q: What was that?

KLEMSTINE: When I was there it was nothing going on as the result of Vietnam. There was an exchange agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to exchange scientists, artists, agricultural technicians, and others, back and forth. But as a result of Vietnam at the end of '65, the Soviets shut it down. So for about two years I was sitting there doing nothing, or next to that. This was bureaucracy at its worst. Occasionally there would be a few people coming or going, but there was nothing like there was supposed to be under a large exchange program. And as a consequence, I have to confess, I spent most of the time reading books. There was really very little to do. I made myself unpopular by advocating the whole section be disbanded and put on the Soviet desk. Actually, this has subsequently been done. There had been a big exchange program up until '65. I guess they revived it sometime later, but when I was there I was unfortunate in having very little to do except, as I say, a few exchanges in the technical field and scientific fields.

R. KEITH SEVERIN
Assistant Agricultural Attaché
Moscow (1963-1966)

Mr. Severin was born in Texas and raised in California. He was educated at Chaffee College, the University of California at Davis and Stanford University. Joining the US Department of Agriculture in 1951, Mr. Severin began his career as an Agriculture Instructor in American Samoa, after which he served in Moscow as Assistant Agricultural Attaché. In the Department in Washington, Mr. Severin held senior positions dealing with Foreign Agriculture Relations and Grain Export Subsidies. Mr. Severin was interviewed by Allan Mustard in 2006.

SEVERIN: But while there with Dr. Volin in that shop, Stan Brown and Don Krisler and Mil Davis, and I was doing some work on East European agriculture, and at the same time seeing the importance of the Soviet Union and, particularly, having become interested in it because of Dr. Volin, and that all he had done and was doing. I started learning to read some Russian and learned to read *Sel'skaya zhizn'* and that. And, lo and behold, early part of 1963, I was asked whether I would be interested in going to Moscow as the assistant agricultural attaché because the fellow who had been there in that position, Rod Carlson, had been asked by the Soviets to kindly leave.

So in June of 1963 – wait, let me back up just a second. Like I say, I'd begun to learn to read some Russian, but if I was going to be over there, I needed to be able to speak a little bit of it. And so while there wasn't a lot of time for it, I had maybe one month of Russian language, conversational, instruction. Anyway, in June of 1963, early June of 1963, Barbara, Kenneth and Bailey and I showed up over there.

Our son, Ken, was eight years old, and Bailey was an 11-week-old bird dog, German short-haired pointer puppy. And, in fact, his momma, Keck, was already in whelp at the time that we had been asked whether we wanted to go to Moscow. And Bailey was the last of the litter to go, so what the heck, why not? And it was a good thing to do. What great icebreakers Kenneth and Bailey turned out to be.

We rented our house in Vienna and Charlie, Barbara, the fellow who ran the local Esso station bought our old 1956 Chevy station wagon. He took us down to National Airport, Kenneth, Bailey, Barb and I. We got on the airplane that morning and flew up to Idlewild. Bailey was in his pet pack, as it were, so we left him there because, not knowing what the Soviets were going to be doing to us, and that was 1963, Cold War times, didn't know what all we might be subjected to.

We had a day there in New York City, so we went to the United Nations and we certainly went off to the Statue of Liberty, Kenneth, Barbara and I. We got back to the airport late that afternoon, early evening, and went to check on Bailey, and we saw his pet pack was opened. Where is the puppy?

Looked up on the desk there, and someone had taken the pup and put his coat out on the desk there and Bailey was lying up there, sleeping. So, that evening, Barb and Ken and Bailey and I got on Pan Am, first class. That's the way to go, Bailey in his pet pack under our seat. And we took off and we flew and landed in Stockholm, Oslo, the next morning. I've forgotten which and, anyway, just to refuel.

So I took Bailey outside and walked him around the airplane and he emptied out and we got back on the airplane, flew on to Helsinki, not very far away. And then Barb and Ken and I and Bailey spent a couple of days there in Helsinki. We had a nice hotel, gratefully just across the street from a park.

So I would get up quietly in the morning, get dressed. Then I'd wake Bailey up and pick him up, get him across the street, into the park, before he was permitted to put his feet down. Then, in Helsinki, we got onboard a train and, as you know, the rail line between Helsinki and Leningrad, or the Soviet border, Russian border, is kind of crooked and back and forth for one reason. But we got on over there and went straight on into Moscow and went to the *Leningradskiy vokzal* [Leningrad Railstation in Moscow, the terminus for trains from Leningrad -- now St. Petersburg]. And Bill Horbaly was there to meet us, and maybe he was a little bit surprised to see Bailey, but, the heck, I had a diplomatic passport. Doesn't everybody travel with a bird dog puppy, as well as family?

So we went on and got ensconced in the third-floor apartment of the embassy building and we

were on the third floor and there was a balcony off Kenneth's bedroom. And that balcony, our apartment was right over what was the exit. There was one way into the embassy compound and one way out. Our apartment was right over the exit way. It was nice to have that balcony there off Kenneth's bedroom and, yes, we grew a few Kentucky wonder beans and that and it was just a nice place to have some light.

And, incidentally, it was in probably November of 1964, shortly before we left there, that was the only demonstration outside the embassy that there was while we were there, and an ink bottle was thrown through one of the windows in Kenneth's bedroom, just off that balcony. We'd been warned that there was going to be the demonstration, and it was because the Soviets were not happy with some action that the United States was taking in the Congo, if I remember correctly.

But that balcony, too, was also interesting, because Kenneth went to Soviet public school. P.S. 69 is the elementary school, the grammar school, just down the street on the right-hand side, as you come out of Spaso House. But Kenneth would come on home and maybe some of his little Soviet classmates would be with him, and he needed to get something to them, so he would go up and write a note or whatever it was and fold up a piece of paper, airplane, and fly it off the balcony there, and the militiamen would wonder what was going on with those youngsters doing that.

And in this same vein, too – Kenneth was a great icebreaker in that regard, as I've said, and so was Bailey, but Bailey was more than that in some regards, because Bailey had very good ears and our apartment had parquet flooring. And Bailey would sometimes sit around and cock his head, what am I hearing, what am I hearing? Like the RCA Victor dog, Nipper. He was hearing things and, of course, it was Cold War times and so we were very circumspect about what we said there in the embassy, anywhere, anywhere, because you just didn't know what was being picked up.

We saw the reason, certainly, for having stainless steel sinks. You go ahead and write out what you need to say to your wife or to whomever and burn it in the sink. But, anyway, we got there in June of 1963 and almost immediately after we got there, it was one of the highlights, almost immediately it was – I'm sure not later than the end of June – we showed up there, but Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, and his entourage, Dorothy Jacobson, who was his assistant secretary, a lady who also came from Minnesota, as Mr. Freeman did, and Dr. Volin. Grand to see him, not only again, but kind of an old stomping grounds. And then there were Gene Olson and Jack McDonald, too, who was a speechwriter.

I later on saw Jack a long time afterwards in Brazil, where he was the ag attaché in Rio. But, anyway, they came and of course Bill Horbaly was very busy taking care of them and he had a dinner party, I remember one evening, for the secretary. That was fine, because that meant that Barbara and I were able to take care of our good friend Dr. Volin and Dorothy Jacobson and Gene Olson and Jack McDonald.

But that was a good time, and then, after the secretary left – and just for context here, you may remember that it was Orville Freeman who made the nominating speech for John Kennedy to become President of the United States. There was some banter going back, that Mr. Freeman,

who had been in the Marine Corps in World War II and had had part of his jaw shot away. I saw him lots of times thereafter, and what a nice fellow he was, but, anyway, there was some banter going back and forth that in thanks for and in return for that nominating speech, what job would you like within the administration? "Anything except being Secretary of Agriculture," which is where he showed up, of course.

And we had not been in Moscow but a couple of days, until Barbara developed a bit of a tooth problem, and we had it checked out, dentally and all the rest of that before we left, but she developed a tooth problem. Well, what do you know? She got a ride back to the United States on a U.S. Air Force. And so she was able to go back to the United States, go to our local dentist here. It was still Dr. Bosco in Vienna, and get it taken care of and she was back within three days. Well, how did she do that?

Well, an airplane had come in, brought a whole slug of United States senators, including Hubert Humphrey. They came over for the signing of the Test Ban Treaty. Then the airplane came back a few days later to take them home, so Barb hitchhiked a ride back and forth, but it was the signing of the Test Ban Treaty.

One of the fellows, one of the State Department officers, I've forgotten his name, but Bob something. I can still see him, but, anyway, he was the one who escorted Mr. Humphrey and he said it was kind of embarrassing, because Mr. Humphrey would walk up to some Soviet military guy, "Hey, what are you going to do? Y'know, we just signed the Test Ban Treaty. You're going to be out of a job. What are you going to be doing?" But the brashest of the American politicians, all right, fine. That was one of the things that happened early on.

And then, two, you remember what the ambassador's 4th of July parties are. Well, we had a group of veterinarians there on the 4th of July of 1963. We had the head of the – I've forgotten his name, but he was head of Communicable Diseases Center in Atlanta. He was head of the delegation. Dunn, Dr. Dunn, I believe he was head of the vet school in Pennsylvania and then we had the head of the vet school from Illinois, and then there was somebody else from the Communicable Diseases Center who spoke Russian.

But, anyway, those four fellows were there, and three high-powered vets. And so after the 4th of July party, Ambassador Kohler, Foy Kohler, at his place there, Spaso House, we all had tired feet. So we thought that the fellows should be taken care of. I don't think Horbaly was there. Otherwise, I couldn't have gotten away with it, I reckon.

But, anyway, those four fellows all came to our apartment. We took our shoes off, sat down, put our feet up. Well, Bailey at that juncture, Bailey was whelped in March, I believe it was, so Bailey was about four months old and he needed his shots and inoculations and that, and I had all the material there.

So here it is, here are these high-flown vets and we get ahold of Bailey and get him down and these high-flown vets give Bailey his shots. We had a grand time. We just had a grand time, and, again, it's getting along with people. It's working with them and being not only a little bit knowledgeable of what they're about and what they're interested in, but having a sincere

appreciation for it.

Q: There are a couple of things I'd like you to touch on, one of which gets into a little bit of that, and one of which is maybe a little bit more just your historical perspective. The first is crop travel, because agricultural officers typically do more travel out of Moscow and out of the city than other sections of the embassy. And if you could talk a little bit about what it was like doing crop travel in the Soviet Union back in the '60s, during the Cold War, with the surveillance that you were under and what the ground rules were and just your perspective on that.

And then the other thing, of course, is 1964, that was a landmark year because that was the year the Soviets did their massive grain imports.

SEVERIN: No, '63.

Q: Sixty-three, okay, in '63. It was '64 that Khrushchev was thrown out of office for having...

SEVERIN: He made a mistake. He went on vacation down to the Black Sea.

Q: So if you could talk a little bit about both of those.

SEVERIN: Sure. I'll get into it a little bit by the next thing I was going to say, is that it was August and September, I suppose, soon after we had gotten there in June, that I went off for just about a full month on a trip with Floyd Domonie, who was at that time commissioner of the Bureau of Land Reclamation. I think that's the right name, but he was head of it, and he came over with four or five fellows, spent about a month.

And, yes, we went to Tashkent, we went to Andizhan, the Fergana Valley, to Osh and to Baku and through the Absheron Peninsula. Then we went to Yerevan, and we drove from Yerevan, had a fantastic picnic organized by Minister of Irrigation Bagramyan there in Armenia and then drove from there over the mountains to Tbilisi, this whole group. And we were accompanied by a fellow, Sam Ofengenden, and another irrigation engineer, Lyudmila Moreno, and we were taken well care of. But that was my first trip outside, as it were, and so I saw more agriculture, certainly all down in the area that needed to be irrigated and reclaimed and that.

But one of the interesting things about this is while we were in Yerevan, one of the fellows, one of the locals, he was editor of their newspaper, "Kommunist", Eduard. Some way, we got a little bit acquainted. In November, he came up to Moscow and got in touch with me and Kenneth and I took him to a hockey match one evening, and we took him back to his hotel, the Praga. And then we came back to the embassy, and as we came in, Harriet, I think, was her first name, Harriett Scott, the air attaché's wife, came out. And she said, "Keith, Keith, have you heard? Have you heard? President Kennedy's been shot."

When all that took place, Kenneth and I were out with Eduard from Yerevan. And then later on, Ken and Barb and another lady from the embassy took a trip and they went through Yerevan and around a couple of places and Eduard took good care of them.

But on this thing of crop travel, it really didn't exist, and particularly relative to what can be done today, it really did not exist in the '60s, or when I was there. Because, in order to go anywhere, to make any kind of a trip, you had to have permission from the Ministry of Agriculture. You had to have an appointment wherever it was you were going to go. You had to have hotel reservation to wherever it was you were going to go, and you had to have your travel reservations, whether on train or on airplane. And if you didn't have any one of those, you were shot down, or you could have 'em, have your suitcase and going out the door, telephone rings, "Hey, no more seats on that flight," so you stayed at home.

If you traveled anywhere by vehicle, yes, you had to have where you were going, who you were going to see, where you were going to stay. And then, if you're driving a vehicle, what vehicle it is, what's the license number, who's going to be traveling with you. So you were completely at their drop-of-the-hat mercy in any one of those things.

There was no crop travel, as such, really. The way that we got our information, every day we got *Sel'skaya zhizn'*, *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, and then the newspapers from each one of the republics. And if you read one of those good, you didn't have to read the rest of them. You had to have the match flights. They were absolute duplicates as it were. So that was our primary source of information.

But, now, having said that, I was on very good terms with people in the embassy in other departments, and particularly the military. If they were going to go somewhere, they'd say, "Keith, we're going to go someplace, wherever it happened to be. What is it that we ought to see? What is it that you're looking for?" And they'd come back and tell me what's out there now, and what would be different. And, by the same token, hey, we all work for Uncle Sam, if I were going to go somewhere, "I'm going to go somewhere, is there anything I need to be particularly attentive about?"

And that made a big difference, and I'll never forget one night, when there as a party at Spaso House and Jimmy Shapiro, Commander Shapiro's wife, and he later on was head of Naval Intelligence. Anyway, she came up to him when we were talking and she said something about, well, you fellows in the State Department. I said, "I'm not State Department." She said, "I've been wondering why you're so different. I've been wondering why you were so different."

The fellow who was going around with Hubert Humphrey was Bob Bragdon. I was different, and there's another thing, too, that fits this whole picture, is that while we were there, our ambassador was Foy Kohler and Mrs. Kohler, and they liked us. They liked the Severins a whole lot, and when we were getting ready to go home, and it was less than a two-year assignment because we'd come in to fill in for the tail end of Rod Carlson and that, and one day I was going across the courtyard and I heard, "Keith, Keith."

I looked and Mrs. Kohler was in the car and she said, "Come here, come here." She said, "What's this I hear about you and Barbara going? You can't be doing that. You can't leave us."

But the Kohlers expected you to work, and there's a reception and you're going to be there and I don't want to see one of you talking with another American or English-speaking person. You will

work. It was done in a good kind of a way and at the time that we were there, the list of officers in the embassy was on the front of a legal-size sheet of paper.

We parked our American car in the embassy. That's how few of us that there were there, and we all got along so doggone well. Bill Van Meter, who was in the Air office, a Lieutenant Colonel, and we got to know him and Julie quite well, and we stayed with them later on, in Sofia, when he was a military attaché there, but Bill Van Meter and Adolph "Spike" Dubs and I. You had to make your own fun, as it were.

We would have popcorn popping contests. We'd start off with the same number of kernels in the pot and get them popped and how few kernels you'd have left. Spike, sometimes I'd run into him in the middle of the night, down out back, washing the car as the chauffeurs in the car were taken care of. The folks who took care of the car, they were done and gone home and all the embassy cars were cleaned up, and so we'd be down there, cleaning up our own.

Spike was such a wonderful, wonderful man, and he was our ambassador in Kabul. He was assassinated down there, just a grand guy. And another thing I'll remember about him, too, was later on, probably in 1975, maybe '76, Roger Neetz was the attaché then, whenever that was, but under one of the exchange teams that went over, one of the teams that went over on the exchange agreement, they were going to send us off somewhere that made absolutely no sense at all. And so Spike Dubs, who was acting DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] at the time, I believe, and he went with me and pounded the table with Runov and didn't do any good. [Boris Aleksandrovich Runov, former deputy minister of agriculture of the Soviet Union, who spoke fluent English as a consequence of having studied at Iowa State University following World War II, and who was the youngest Hero of the Soviet Union to come out of World War II.]

Then that night, I was there with – I don't know if Art Shaw was along or not, and then there was a fellow, McDonald, from North Dakota. I'd gone over with an inkling that they were not going to let us go wherever we wanted to go. It wasn't Art Shaw. It was Wes Tausig from North Dakota.

I had an inkling that they were going to try to shoot us down and send us someplace we didn't want to go. They never did really receive the team officially, and I'd gone over with the permission to bring the team home, if I thought that that was the best thing to do. Anyway, that evening, after Spike Dubs and I had been talking with Runov. There was a reception at Spaso [Spaso House, the American Ambassador's official residence in Moscow] and the military guys said, "Hey, we're hearing you may be taking our team home. That's good."

The State Department were saying, "Hey, you can't take the team home, that doesn't do us any good with the Soviet relations." Ricki Neetz, Roger's wife, had chewed me out like anything, "You're spoiling our relationships with the Soviets and that. You can't do it." Anyway, we brought the team home. Hell with them.

Q: Well, could you talk a little bit – I want to get into the exchanges, the post-1972 era, at some point, which is when the agreement was signed on exchanges, so I'd like to get into that. But, before we go to that, if we could talk about '63.

SEVERIN: Yes, well, that's exactly what I was thinking. Well, another highlight in 1963, and it was a fantastic one that carried over. The effects of it carried over. Nineteen-sixty-three, the Soviets had a real crop bust and they came to the United States and I've forgotten how much they bought, but I remember the S.S. Manhattan put into Odessa. I think the Manhattan carried 108,000, 109,000 tons of grain. It was immense, just a huge, huge thing, and real big and that whole operation was a Michel Fribourg [Michel Fribourg was chairman of Continental Grain at the time].

Michel Fribourg was the honcho for cotton and grain and exports. What a nice fellow he was, the chairman exports. I've forgotten his first name, Matveyev, but big parties and *priyoms* [receptions] and that there at the National Hotel. The fact that the Soviets came into the market that year, and particularly to the extent that they came into the market that year, just put the international grain trade right on its ears.

If I remember correctly, that because of the fact that the Soviets were in as buyers that year that the grain import food bill for the U.K. was up something like 20 pence per capita, so that was a huge unexpected outlay that the U.K. had to make to feed its people. As a consequence of that, everybody was really wanting to know, what's going to happen next year? Are we going to have another crop bust next year? What's going to happen? What's going to happen?

Well, as it turns out, Horbaly had gone home. Brice Meeker, who was to succeed him, was not there yet. Stan Brown was sent in on a very temporary basis, but basically Keith Severin was the only guy in Moscow, Westerner in Moscow, who knew anything at all about agriculture.

I was on the ground a lot. I was on the trip a lot. The Canadians did not have their ag attaché in there anymore, so they sent Fred Hillhouse in, who was their man from Bonn. I learned a lot from Fred, traveled with Fred a lot. I'll never forget, we were somewhere where I talked about us Americans, or about the Americans, and Fred said, "Hey, I'm an American, too. I come from North America." But, anyway, the Canadians sent Fred Hillhouse in, and, needless to say, the Brits were there, too.

Ted Orchard came in and he was from their INR [State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research] or whatever it is, but, anyway, I traveled with Ted and that was the first time I was ever in Barnaul. We got on out there and it was rainy and it was probably in September, and things were pretty rudimentary and Ted was tired and he'd gone off to his little cubicle, as it were, and I stayed in my little room, which had just some sheets drawn around and the lady came to me and she said, "What do you want to eat?" And I said, "Well, if one is in Siberia, you're supposed to eat pelmeni."

She said, "Fine, I'll call you." So that evening I had about two dozen *svezhiye pel'meni, ochen' vkusno bylo*. [fresh pel'meni, it was very tasty] And I had music, too. They had taped some music off I suppose Voice of America and it was a tape. It would run and it would get through it. It would start over again and start over again. But that was my first trip to Barnaul.

Brice Meeker came in sometime late, I've forgotten exactly when, and I took Brice on his first

road trip and we went – I remember we got to Donetsk, and we were driving. We were driving. We were in Donetsk at the time of the world football match, and they took us in the back of one of the big, fancy, just-for-us-only restaurants and we watched the world football match there.

And it must have been before we went to Odessa, that the car broke down. We were driving a Ford and the car broke down in Rostov, and took it to the same checkpoint that I'd been to in late April, when the car had broken down. I remember the mechanic there said, "Hey, I've seen two of your Fords now. Next time, bring me a Lincoln."

But, anyway, Brice and I, we'd gone to Odessa and we put the car onboard ship, the Abkhazia, and the ship would normally have put in at Sevastopol, but that being a big naval base and that, it anchored some ways out and so they had to lighten the regular passengers and that.

But, anyway, we got our car off board at Yalta, and then we went from Yalta on back up to Moscow. And kind of in the same vein, Dave Schoonover came over to succeed me and I took Dave on his first trip. I will never forget that. We went out to Tselinograd and went up to Shortandy and visited with Barayev. But Dave had a lot to learn, because he had more experience at being treated well by the Russians.

Dave didn't have much experience and didn't take to it too well. I'll never forget that. We were going along and he had his head stuck out the window. And then, also, in 1964, like I said, the Canadian was there, the Brit was there, and that was the year that Ed Jaenke came over, Bill Starkey and Jim – anyway, from AMS [Agricultural Marketing Service] and Roland Blue, Shorty Blue, who was an assistant administrator.

Ed was associate administrator. Ed was associate administrator in charge of production policy for grains and soybeans at that juncture. And I'll never forget, they would not let me travel with Ed and his group.

Q: They being who, the Soviets?

SEVERIN: The Soviets would not. And Stan was there at the beginning of their trip. I want to say Stan Brown was there, because when the crew came in, when those four fellows came in, we took them. They were put up at the Ostankino Hotel. And it was so funny, because all those fellows were tall, big guys, and as we were taking them into dinner that evening, the Russian band there played "When the Saints Go Marching In." What a hoot.

The Soviets would not let me travel with Ed and his crew, and they came through Moscow a time or two, so I took them their mail and I picked up stuff that they had. There was a little short gal who was their interpreter, and she wasn't interpreting. My Russian, it's never been all that great, but I know a little bit, but she wasn't giving them the straight line on some stuff.

I'll never forget the last meeting that they had, and they were the last group of foreigners to come in, and so a big, long table and of course the Americans were always put on the side of the table that had to face the light and that. Ed said that they'd been traveling and they'd seen this and that and they were curious what the prospects were for the 1964 crop. I don't know who it was that

they were meeting with, but they said, "Well, we don't count our chickens before they hatch, and we really don't what it's going to be." So Ed said, "You don't count your chickens before they hatch."

"No." He said, "Well, your 1963 chickens hatched a long time ago. What was the size of your crop then?" And the Soviet responded, "It was such a bad crop, we're embarrassed about it. We don't talk about it yet."

At that juncture, Ed got up from his side of the table, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, all the way around to the other side, and the fellow kind of looked it and Ed said, "Thank you, that's the first honest answer I've heard since we've been here." And that was I think on September the 14th of 1964. The reason I remember that date is because September the 14th is Ed's birthday, the same date as my brother Kenneth, who was killed in the airplane crash.

Ed likes martinis, so we were going to give him a good going away party and the Minsk had just opened up there on Gorky Street. It was the place to go, so we went over there and I took two big thermoses of honest-to-God martinis over to Jaenke's birthday party. So, as I said, I got along very well with Ed Jaenke and it wasn't long after I came back from Moscow that Ed had me working in ASCS [Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service]. And ostensibly I was on Shorty Blue, who was commodity operations. Ostensibly, I was working for him, but Ed had a private line from his desk to my desk.

And then, too, just another thing about when we moved here into this house on September the 1st of 1970, who was it that helped us move out of our house from Vienna, here, spent all day helping us move? It was Ed Jaenke.

Q: Coming back before you left Moscow, you were there for the transition from the Khrushchev era to the Brezhnev era. That would have happened in '64. Were you there when the Central Committee plenum took place and Khrushchev was officially retired and Brezhnev came in? Or were you already gone by that time?

SEVERIN: Pretty well gone, because, you see, he got the boot in November. We left on the 1st of December.

Q: So you were pretty much on the way out at that point.

SEVERIN: We were on the way out. And at that juncture, too, going back about crop travel and how we learned things, one of the big jobs, of course, was the food supply. And so you went to the collective farm market and to the state stores. I would always try to do it on Sunday morning or Wednesday afternoon, do it at the same time so as to get some degree of measure in there. What is the supply? What is the quantity? We would always go and we'd take some American newspaper because you always had to wrap your own stuff.

You only needed two sheets to wrap it in, but you'd leave the rest of the paper there. "Oh, those are good looking potatoes. Where did they come from? Well, what else is going on?" You learned things, and Kenneth was a great help in that regard because he went to the same barber

as the other little Soviet boys and wore the same uniform. He worked up and he had his own contact, particularly in the dairy sections. He would help me remember prices and get prices.

It was as much fun as it was work, but, again, as I put it, it's howdy-doing the folks. It's learning something about them and there were things that happened, so much fun. And Horbaly was gone, clearly, because John Kenneth Galbraith, who was the U.S. ambassador to India at the time was coming through, and he was there.

Ambassador Kohler invited him to lunch, and Mr. Obolenskiy, who was head of agricultural economics at the time and his *perevodchik* [interpreter], Viktor, Viktor Nazarenko. [Viktor Nazarenko was later scientific secretary of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VASKhNiL)].

Q: Who is still alive and living in Moscow. Viktor Nazarenko is still around in Moscow.

SEVERIN: And checking on his right bottle of Tsinandali and all that stuff. I was there. So there were the five of us for lunch at Spaso, and Severin sometimes doesn't show proper judgment, I suppose. But I just had been to the *rynok* [market] that morning. I said, oh, I noticed something really very interesting. This morning, I was at the collective farm market and there were some people from Central Asia there, and they had some really lovely strawberries, a very interesting variety of strawberries. *Kakoy sort? Chemodanchik.*

"What variety of strawberries were they?" Suitcase. That's the way they were brought up from down there, 15 rubles to get there, round-trip ticket, and Nazarenko didn't think that was too funny.

Q: He wouldn't have.

SEVERIN: But, again, you have some fun along the way and you keep your eyes open. Our big burden for Horbaly and me, for our office, was of course, and it's not all that much different, I suppose, is that the econ section, State econ section, thought that they ran the ag section. They know more about it and you can't write anything unless we okay it and all the rest of that.

Well, our big job was having a weekly input to the weekly economic report. So you'd read, you'd talk to, you'd find out what you could and you had your contribution to the weekly economic report. One fellow that was there in the embassy, I've forgotten. He was either the DCM or the acting DCM, I suppose, was Jack Sweeney, or McSweeney, and he was horrible. He was horrible.

I think he had a bulldog and Ken Kurst, they had a bulldog, and Bailey, we had our dogs. But Sweeney, or McSweeney, was absolutely horrible. We had a wonderful DCM later on, Walter Stoessel. He was so good, Walter and Maryanne, his wife, just good folks. And Mac Toon was head of the political section part of the time we were there. [Both Walter Stoessel and Malcolm Toon later served as U.S. Ambassadors to the Soviet Union.]

I had a wonderful time traveling with some of the young State Department fellows, Peter

Bridges, who later went. And then right after Kennedy was killed, I had a good trip down to Kharkov then on to Kishinev with Roger Kirk, and his father had been ambassador there, went over Red Square. And Roger's son was also an Alan Kirk, and Peter Bridges, little guy.

Peter Bridges had a son, also, and he was about the same age as Ken, and he was the one who came running across the courtyard, I suppose it was in January of 1964, just after Barb and Ken and I had come back from going off for a Christmas holiday in Switzerland with Barbara's family. But the little Bridges guy came running across the courtyard, "Ken, Ken, did you hear? Did you hear? Bailey ate the Marines' Christmas turkey."

The Marines had said, when they were up on the sixth floor on the north wing there, they said they'd take care of Bailey. I said, "You know he's a puppy. I wouldn't trust him." Well, Buck had roasted the turkey and left it out to cool while they went to have a drink and came back and Bailey...

Q: Helped himself.

SEVERIN: But Bailey was so good and Ken and I, we would take Bailey for a walk, and we'd be somewhere over yonder. We were tailed everywhere we went, and Bailey would, sniff, "Hey, buddy, what you're doing here? You're normally guarding the gate at the embassy. Get away, get away, get away."

Q: So he made your tail all the time.

SEVERIN: And the Marines one time took Bailey out and there was some grandma there and had a youngster and the youngster came up to Bailey and the youngster had an ice cream cone. The youngster came up to Bailey and Bailey ate it.

But they were big icebreakers, those two. And Kenneth went to P.S. 69, as I say, went in the mornings from eight until noon or eight until 12:30, or something. Well, the embassy, we were closed on Wednesday afternoon, and that was time that Kenneth and I had a wonderful time. We'd take a walk somewhere, or we would take the *tramvay* [Tram, the tracked trolley car used widely for public transportation in Soviet and Russian cities.] somewhere and walk back. We would go somewhere, just poke around, Ken and I, and that, plus going to the collective farm markets, we just had a grand time.

Q: Why was the embassy closed on Wednesday afternoons?

SEVERIN: Well, we were open Saturday morning, so we closed Wednesday afternoons.

Q: Why were you open on Saturday mornings?

SEVERIN: Because we were closed Wednesday afternoon.

Q: I see. We don't operate that way anymore.

SEVERIN: And another thing, too, about Bailey as an icebreaker, where the embassy is located now, that was just a big vacant lot, and that's where the people in that area got together every evening to let their dogs run and jump and play and exercise. And Bailey and I were a part of that crowd. It was just another way of getting to know the folks.

After I'd been gone from that long trip in September, I came back, I was somewhere across town, and a lady says, "You've been gone, mister, you've been gone. Who's been taking care of your puppy?" But those two were grand icebreakers, Kenneth and Bailey.

RALPH E. LINDSTROM
Economic Officer
Moscow (1963-1965)

Economic Counselor
Moscow (1967-1969)

Ralph E. Lindstrom was born in 1925 and raised in Anoka, Minnesota. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and subsequently received a bachelor's degree in government from Harvard University. Mr. Lindstrom entered the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Afghanistan, France, China (Hong Kong), Germany, the Soviet Union, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 29, 1994.

Q: You went to Moscow from 1963 to 1965. How would you describe the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union?

LINDSTROM: Khrushchev was still in power. I'd say the relationship was somewhat improving, but again against the backdrop of the troubles with Vietnam. But Khrushchev himself did visit the United States as you may recall.

Khrushchev was a very interesting leader. I had a chance to meet him several times in connection with American businessmen visiting the Soviet Union. He became very much aware of the economic problems that were beginning to affect the economy increasingly, and wanted to do something about them, but didn't really know what to do. He put, of course, a lot of emphasis, as they did way back to the Czars, on getting more ideas and inventions from foreigners, either buying them, stealing them, or however you could get them. That perhaps would solve some of the problems with the economy. He was, of course, deposed about a year after I got there, and this amazingly created very little stir inside the Soviet Union. I guess he was not particularly appreciated by the people. I went down to Red Square on the night that he had been toppled just to see what was going on, and there was absolutely nothing, no security precautions to speak of, only one militia vehicle, and people coming out of the theaters located in the Kremlin, and talking with each other. I sort of listened in to see if they wouldn't be talking about the major event of the world, and there was not a word about it. They were just talking about the theater,

the weather, and personal things.

Q: When you went there, what was your position?

LINDSTROM: I went there as an economic officer the first tour, and the second tour, which was two years after the first, was back as Economic Counselor.

Q: Let's talk about the first tour, the '63 to '65 one. What was the embassy like at that time?

LINDSTROM: Foy Kohler was the ambassador, and we were trying, despite all the obstacles, to get some contacts with Soviets. It was almost impossible to do useful reporting which was based to a considerable measure on the press, just reading the press. It was a little easier for those of us who were in the economic section. We weren't as harassed by the KGB as the people in the political section, for example. The embassy was well run, comfortable, the same old building as I think we are still using even today, and very much run down now. It was much easier then to have contacts say with the artistic community under Khrushchev than it was later under Brezhnev, when it became more of a crackdown. This was of some interest. I managed to buy a few paintings and get acquainted with a leading painter, my wife and I. She was able to get some entree into the museums and that kind of thing, and go with other American women. She'd had the opportunity to study Russian in Oberammergau as I had. So there were openings there. You had to work at them, and we tried to travel whenever we could. This was useful too. Often when you traveled you had more of an opportunity to meet people, as you could talk to them, and they could talk to you with relative impunity, in a railway car, or even sometimes in an airplane. So we did quite a lot of that, as much as we could.

Q: Here you're in the economic section, and we're now talking in 1994 when what was the Soviet Union, now is a broken up mass, just an absolute economic disaster, and the economic side the cause of disaster. The system didn't work. But trying to go back to the time you were there looking at this, how did we feel about the economic situation and the short-long term prognosis for it?

LINDSTROM: We could see the weaknesses. I made it a point to visit as many factories as I could, and I think I visited a couple dozen factories of various types. It was one of the things they did permit you to do. Of course, they only showed you the relatively nice factories, but even there you could see there wasn't much, morale was very low in the work force. The factories were real safety hazards. Russians are the least safety conscious people in the world, I think. It's something about the character. Typically you'd go around in a factory and there'd be pieces of broken frayed cable on the floors, grease on the floor, and that type of thing. Although everyone was supposed to wear a hard hat, they very rarely ever did. The crane operators were usually women, way up high in these big high overhead cranes. And I remember taking a group of American businessmen into a plant in Leningrad, its very much like the Schenectady plant up in New York, and I asked him why are the crane operators almost always women?

The chief engineer replied to me, without any hesitation, in Russian. "Because they don't drink, so it's a safety measure." And in that time I think Russian women were very sober and did not drink. I understand it has changed quite a bit since then.

Q: What I'm getting at is, that somehow or other we acknowledge all the problems of the Soviet Union, yet we seem to think that here was something that would almost go on forever, and that the controls were such. How did we look at the economy in those days?

LINDSTROM: It was basically a command economy, run like a military institution, and this could go on, and obviously did go on for quite some time without really coming apart. They were beginning to see the weaknesses and the experimentation with economic reform, which Khrushchev encouraged. But they were groping with something obviously extremely difficult. They haven't really worked it out even today, how to reform that type economy and make it work like an efficient capitalist economy. So they started playing around with little indicators, and really didn't get much of anyplace with those.

Q: Were any of the Soviet economists, or the people you were talking to, reflecting any disquiet or asking questions, how does your system work, or something like that, or not?

LINDSTROM: It was hard to get to see Soviet economists. They were beginning to be concerned about it, no question about that. They didn't know what to do either. Some good work was being done, I learned later, out in Novorossiysk and this scientific academy. One of the top economists there, eventually was brought to prominence, I think during the Gorbachev era, but he'd been kept under wraps during all that period. But yet he'd been allowed to continue doing his work, and he was attacked in the beginning for trying to tackle these problems. How can we make this economy more efficient? How can we borrow from capitalism? I still remember once when Khrushchev said in one of his speeches, and again acknowledging the problem they had, he said, "Even after the entire world has gone communist, we'll have to keep one country around as a capitalist country, so we'll know how to set our prices." That was in a public speech, because how do you set the prices in a system like that, and have them make any sense.

Q: There's this old story about they pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work, that type of thing. Were the indicators that it was a very productive work force?

LINDSTROM: No, from what my observations were, they had a lot of problems. Excessive use of alcohol for example, except perhaps by the women, and absenteeism. And then again, it was a so-called planned economy and they would have to towards the end of the month always have a storming -- a literal translation -- to achieve the plan, and then everybody would work twice or three times as hard as normal and somehow or other they would fulfill the plan. So that was another obvious thing. But you could see it too in their growing weakness vis-a-vis the rest of the world in terms of advanced technology. Their aircraft industry was falling way behind. Yet they had one of the largest airlines in the world, for example, Aeroflot. I remember being invited to go on board -- actually this was in my second tour, but I'll mention it, it seems to be relevant -- the IL-144, which was their answer to the Concorde, a supersonic passenger aircraft. They had stolen the plans from the French, and done a pretty good job of copying the Concorde, except they couldn't copy the engines unfortunately, so they had great trouble flying it. But I went on board that plane, took some American businessmen with me, and one of them was from a paint company and he said, "Ralph, run your hand along the side of the fuselage there. What does it feel like?" And I said, "Paint brush marks." And he said, "That's it." So here they are, a supersonic aircraft and they don't even have the technology to put spray paint on it, so you'd see

a lot of things like that.

They were very defensive, of course, about their backwardness. It came up over and over again, and they really were aware of it. Many times when we were turned down for travel it was not because it was a military city that we wanted to go to. It was because it was an area with no paved roads and that kind of thing, and just mud streets and they didn't want foreigners to be seeing that kind of thing.

Q: Well, Foy Kohler was the ambassador. How did he operate?

LINDSTROM: He was a rather quiet man. In those days it was difficult to have very much contact with the Soviet leadership, but he did the best he could on that. And he had good relationships with the staff. One of the things we did in Embassy Moscow, and this went on for many, many years, was to have a press backgrounder for the American press corps, as I recall, was on Fridays. About 20 or maybe more American press people would come by and the ambassador would try to give them a few insights on what had happened. This generated a little bit of information for us as well.

Q: The press would respond?

LINDSTROM: And sometimes, if not during the group, they never liked to talk in front of the other people, some of them would pick up something that was too hot to report that might lead to their expulsion but they would share it with us individually. So this was a useful relationship to maintain, and all of our ambassadors tried to do that.

Q: What about security problems there? Really basic life in the Soviet Union at that time? I'm thinking of surveillance.

LINDSTROM: Surveillance was just terribly heavy at all times. But not particularly heavy for the economic section, unless we did something very unusual and then they would pick up on it almost immediately. But they were just all over the military attachés at all times. I remember a couple times taking trips with people and we always used the buddy system. If my wife couldn't go with me, take someone else, and if that person were more suspect than I was, we'd usually have somebody accompanying us in a rather obvious way. So that was a deterrent in many ways to getting to know what was going on in the country, and that is what it was intended to be.

Security in the sense of theft and that kind of thing was all right. For the most part we didn't even have to lock our doors in those days because, of course, the KGB was every place. I understand that has changed drastically. Once in a while some Soviet embassy cars have been stolen here in Washington, and we'd have tit-for-tat theft of vehicles from the American embassy in Moscow. But that didn't happen many times that I can recall.

Q: You were there at the time Kennedy was assassinated, weren't you?

LINDSTROM: Yes.

Q: How did that play out there?

LINDSTROM: I remember learning about it on the Voice of America. Roger Kirk was living in the same building with me and he came up to tell us that Kennedy had been assassinated. We rushed down and listened to the commentary on Voice of America. And insofar as the Soviets were concerned, Khrushchev personally came over and signed the condolence book in the embassy and was crying. They're very impressed by death, perhaps because at that time they didn't believe there was any place else to go. I think insofar as the man on the street was concerned, I was traveling at that time, and we talked to taxi drivers, and the typical line was that Kennedy had been a great man. They didn't say so while he was alive. But then they'd say that Johnson is a very bad man. No real basis for that, just something they didn't like about Johnson's looks. It seemed to be almost a standard thing you'd pick up all across the Soviet Union. But they clearly seemed to be very sorry to see Kennedy perish that way.

Q: You had to deal with Soviet statistics. How did you deal with them?

LINDSTROM: Basically we'd leave the super interpretation up to Washington and the large number of people we had working on that kind of thing and in all parts of the U.S. government. This was an overwhelming task in trying to make some sense out of those statistics. It's not something we could do single handed. So what we did was just try to get whatever statistics we could get that wouldn't otherwise be available to Washington, and get them into Washington. We'd make a special effort to get an advance copy of the foreign trade statistics, which weren't classified by the Soviets, but which were of great interest to us. So that was our approach in the field to getting information, anything that Washington wasn't likely to learn about through some other means.

Q: I know getting information out of China, for years our China hands got an awful lot from local newspapers in China. How did you find the local press for that type of thing?

LINDSTROM: I would say it was somewhat similar to what we used to do when I was in Hong Kong reading the Chinese press. But we didn't have any large section translating it for us. So we had to do our own reading and analysis of the press, the major newspapers, to the extent we had time. And then, of course, we sent on much more than we could read to Washington for further analysis. This was certainly helpful to follow the workings of their economic reform programs and that kind of thing. We did a fair amount of that. Another thing we did in the economic section was to meet with our western counterparts at lunch, as I recall about every two weeks or so, during which we would just talk business, exchange information on our trips, and what experiences we'd had with the Soviets. We knew we were quite likely being taped, but we didn't care since there were not high grade secrets or anything like that. And I think it was mutually beneficial. We continued that during the whole time that I was there, both my first and second tours. And some of the other countries obviously had a little more entree than we did, because we had so relatively little foreign trade with the Soviet Union. Whereas the western European countries were making a much bigger effort which gave them more of an opportunity to get other insights as to what was really happening in the economy.

Q: You mentioned the fall of Khrushchev, and the rise of Brezhnev. Did you see any curtailment

in certain economic activities and enhancement of others, or anything like that?

LINDSTROM: One thing that became pretty clear was that Brezhnev and his people didn't have much use for the quest for economic reform. They said it hasn't been successful, which was true, just a waste of time, so we'll go on with our military style economy, if you will. And that didn't completely cut off the work that I mentioned before in the academies on economic reform. But he just didn't feel it was yielding any great results, and thought all we've got to do is continue on the old way, and keep up the pressures of one kind or another through the planning system. It was much harder to get close to him, than it was to Khrushchev to find out what was going on. We screened the press as best we could and drew our conclusions from that.

Q: How about agriculture? Khrushchev had made a great deal about opening up virgin lands, areas which had not been under wheat cultivation, for example. What was the impression we were getting about Soviet agriculture during this period?

LINDSTROM: It was also having a great many problems. In the Soviet Union the land mass is not Iowa, and never will be. It doesn't have the same climatic conditions that we have in this country. So they have good years sometimes, and then very bad years, maybe two or three years in a row. I had the opportunity to visit Khrushchev's new lands on a train trip once, which was quite interesting. They took a group of diplomats out there just to show them what a fine harvest they had had that year. And it was indeed a good harvest. I went with our Agricultural Attaché, and he confirmed that. We would try whenever possible to visit the farming areas, and report on what the status of the crops was, which would help the Department of Agriculture make their estimates of Soviet crops.

Q: You then left Moscow for a while. You came back to Washington from '65 to '67. What were you doing?

LINDSTROM: I did a tour in what used to be called the E Bureau, the EB Bureau, working on international finance primarily for Dick Cooper, who later became Under Secretary for Economic Affairs. This was not a terribly interesting area, because we're not the main movers and shakers in the State Department insofar as international finance is concerned. It was more of a liaison with Treasury, releasing their telegrams and going to meetings.

Q: You went back to Moscow from '67 to '69. That's a rather relatively rapid turnaround, wasn't it? How did that come about?

LINDSTROM: Well mainly I was offered the job. It was a class 2 rated job so I did have to get permission from the Department...

Q: This was the old FSO-2, now Minister Counselor.

LINDSTROM: Right. So anyway I got the approval to go there. I liked my first tour and I welcomed the opportunity to go back a second time, and of course could do quite a bit more having the higher rank. One of the most interesting things I did during that second tour was to negotiate the opening of Aeroflot and Pan American service between Moscow and the United

States. This process went on for well over a year with daily instructional telegrams, and I would go back with what the Soviets would tell me. It gave me some insights into the military side of intelligence, GRU, because almost all of Aeroflot was staffed by GRU officers and when I first started going over there they'd be in full military regalia. I had never seen this before. As you may have heard, Aeroflot really started out as just an arm of intelligence, and they never quite broke away from that.

Q: There must have been on both sides very concerned ideas about what route they would fly, because obviously you have to assume that there are cameras going off. Were their routes over the United States very carefully monitored?

LINDSTROM: I don't think we were really worried much about what they might do from that point of view. But I think they were more worried about us. One of the things that complicated these negotiations was their insistence on introducing this new all-jet aircraft rather than the old turboprops that they were using on their own runs, which made them look very backward. They were using these on their run to Japan, and the Japanese press would poke fun at them all the time. It really bothered them. So they insisted on waiting until this Ilyushin 62 was ready for flight, and of course, it had never really flown anywhere. So part of my job was to get the data on this, so we would be convinced that it was a safe aircraft to bring to the United States. This was like pulling teeth. I learned later they had never had to do this sort of thing. They just somehow or other put these planes together without too much testing, what speeds they'd do, this, that and the other thing. So I got these detailed instructions from FAA on what kind of documentation they would have to provide us. This is one of the things that slowed up the process a lot because the man who gave me this nicely printed book on the character, and the qualities of the Ilyushin 62, confessed to me, "We've never done this before." In the meanwhile, Washington suspected that the delay was being called by political reasons, and it wasn't political at all. It was just technological reasons. But anyway, once I got this book NASA said could I have an extra copy and he said, "There aren't any more." I sent that in and that quieted Washington down for a while. So finally they scheduled a proving flight. They had the rights to fly to Canada, to Montreal, and they would go to Montreal and there they would be met by a couple FAA pilots, and then they would go down and make a missed approach over Logan airport in Boston, and then a missed approach over Kennedy, and a missed approach over the Philadelphia airport, and then finally down to Dulles airport. They weren't allowed to land at any of these other airports, because the Port Authority in New York, for example, wouldn't even give them the rights until they had gone through all the tests on the ground. Finally we got around this because the federal government owns Dulles airport and they had to accept that. There were some other things that the New York authority required. I didn't go on that flight, but later I talked to one of the FAA pilots and he told me, "You know, if it had been any country other than the Soviet Union that sent these pilots over on this aircraft, I would have sent them back." But he said, "The pilots who he felt were fairly good pilots came over and the only flight paths they had were penciled lines on an old National Geographic map, over these congested areas. That's all they had with them." The pilots though did accept the idea of getting additional training in the United States before they started flying. They could see how terribly congested it was around the New York area. They had nothing like that. But their bosses didn't want to agree to that. Again, Russian pride coming out. Eventually they did agree to it.

Oh, one of the things the FAA pilot told me about the inside of the plane was that this was one of the early models. It was so badly balanced that the attitude could only be kept on the level through big tanks of water which the pilots with very strong arms could shift the water around, two tons of water, and showed how poor the plane was. They cracked up quite a few of those. I think they had improved models later on. I think they still use it even today, but it was four jets in the rear. So this gave me some additional insights into the weaknesses of the great threat to the United States.

Q: How about Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson who was there at that time? How did he operate?

LINDSTROM: He operated in sort of, to use his own terms, more or less in splendid isolation. He kept contrasting what he did during this tour with what he had been able to do much earlier. I can't remember the exact time frame, way before I was there. He was able to have direct contact with Khrushchev in the earlier Khrushchev period, and just be a one man embassy. So when he came back this time, he said several times, "It doesn't really matter because my boys," referring to the counselors of embassy, "now can have contacts that they couldn't have earlier." This was generally speaking true. But he found it rather frustrating, I think, not to be able to do that. I remember when I first met him when I arrived he said, "Now remember, always distinguish between my telegrams and embassy telegrams, if there's a first person in there I want to see it. It's nothing new but he was very much conscious of that.

Q: What about your contacts? Did you find as Minister-Counselor it was a different world?

LINDSTROM: It improved quite a lot, yes. I was doing more things such as that Aeroflot business. But I also got involved in merchant marine affairs. This was a very useful ministry, and I had quite a few contacts over there. This stemmed from the fact that the Soviet's actually goes back to my first tour, had really decided to import grain from the United States for the first time in history. I had to go down to Odessa to look at the port, and see how we could get that grain in because, Odessa had been created back before communism as a grain exporting port, not an importing port, so everything was sort of wrong. I remember negotiating with the Ministry of the Merchant Marine, and they said, "Of course, you don't have most-favored-nation treatment on the shipping rates. You'll have to pay the higher non-most favored rates." And I reported that back to Washington. I didn't know one way or the other. Washington came back and said, "But we do have most-favored-nation treatment. We signed an agreement with them in 1937, and we are pouching you the book on that, the published volume." So I remember taking that into the Ministry of Merchant Marine, and they were really impressed, reading from this. So they had to acknowledge it and I heard later from somebody else in one of the other ministries (this was the talk of the Soviet bureaucrats at that time), that I had come in with that big book of treaties and found something they weren't really aware of. So they backed off. I found that if you did your guest list properly, you could occasionally have working luncheons with Soviets. Not with other nationalities usually, just Americans and Soviets, including someone who was a KGB type. That relaxed them a little bit. So we did a number of luncheons like that. We all had to speak Russian reasonably well to be assigned to Moscow in the first place, and have the luncheons in Russian.

Q: What was the feeling Leonid Brezhnev within the embassy? He was fairly new on the scene as

a leader. How did you all evaluate him at that point?

LINDSTROM: He was so much less visible than Khrushchev, that he was sort of a puzzle, I think, to evaluate. This was something they worked very hard on in the political section just using standard Kremlinological techniques. They got more and more little insights into what the man was like and what he was doing. But he had a very different style, of course, from that of Khrushchev.

Q: Kremlinology is trying to figure out whose is doing what to whom, and who is ranking where.

LINDSTROM: Oh, all that sort of thing. Reading the press very, very carefully, looking for any little minor thing. It's a technique that did yield some benefits, not an awful lot.

Q: But in the economic field, you didn't have to worry about that too much, did you?

LINDSTROM: Not too much, no, except again we did our kind of detective work looking to see what they were doing with economic reform, and major plans, major industries and that kind of thing. But the real fine analysis had by necessity to be done back here in Washington in INR or CIA. They had the staff to really go through this stuff.

Q: Did you find that there was any economic analysis coming out of the Soviet press? Or was it pretty much just displaying whatever the bureau or the...

LINDSTROM: I wouldn't really call it analysis in our sense of the word very often. Again, you're just looking for reporting of things that are going on in particular industries, and their annual plan reports, and all of that sort of thing. So there was not too much that we could rely on there.

Q: Did you get any insight into economic training at the universities?

LINDSTROM: I tried to, and I did get a card to go to the Lenin Library, actually something of a privilege, which is quite an experience. The lady librarian there said, "You're free to look at anything here. You go from one room to another." She had a key that would lock the door behind me. Also, I used to call, from time to time, at part of the Academy of Science that dealt with economics and these conversations were occasionally worth reporting. They didn't really open up the office safe or anything like that, but they were allowed some academic freedom.

Q: Economics is such an international science. Were they at all plugged into the economic international role? I mean would John Kenneth Galbraith come over and talk or vice versa.

LINDSTROM: Yes, sometimes somebody like that would come over. Galbraith came over, but not to discuss economics. But we did have other luminaries and they would be invited to go out to Moscow State University to give a lecture on some topic. And the approved people, the advanced people in their university could do that. But in terms of setting up anything that was equivalent to the kind of training we have in this country for economics, no. I understand they have great difficulty in even starting that up now. I read something just recently and they were

still using old textbooks from the Soviet era. So there was very little of that going on. Yet there were some high level contacts -- a man who was number two in the powerful State Committee for Science and Technology. He developed and it exists today, a special relationship with the Sloan Institute at MIT. He's a very powerful figure, his name, as you might guess, is a Georgian name. The Georgians would always get along, and he may have been involved in one of these spy scandals earlier, but it didn't hurt him. I always found that the State Committee for Science and Technology was a more useful place to go than the Ministry of Foreign Trade. These were my two prime ministries. But it was very much dominated by the KGB, and the GRU, the top intelligence organizations. But they had very bright people, and they were sufficiently confident so that they could talk to you. They were great door openers. If I wanted to go out to a visit out to the Baltic states, for example, I would see if I couldn't get their help and get me some appointments out there, as well as the Foreign Trade Ministry. But the mission of the State Committee for Science and Technology was, as the name suggests, to acquire foreign technology, by fair means or foul.

Q: Was there much interest in Soviet developments in science from the outside? I mean outside the Soviet Union.

LINDSTROM: Oh, yes, a great deal. In fact while I was there, during my first tour, we sent our first science officer over, Glenn Schweitzer, who has been working the Soviet beat ever since then, not out of the State Department, but out of the Academy of Science, our Academy of Sciences. I saw him just recently. Since then we have always had a science officer there, and they've been able to do some useful reporting. They were a little more independent insofar as security was concerned than other parts of the Soviet regime we dealt with.

RICHARD FUNKHOUSER
Economic Counselor
Moscow (1964-1965)

Ambassador Richard Funkhouser was born and raised in Trenton, New Jersey. He graduated from Princeton University with a Degree in the Liberal Arts. He began working for Standard Oil but eventually moved on to the Foreign Service in 1945. During his active duty he has served in Paris, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Moscow, Gabon, Vietnam, and Scotland. This interview was conducted on February 2, 1988 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well, turning to that, I would like to move to your assignment to Moscow as Economic Counselor in 1961 to 1964.

FUNKHOUSER: I arrived in Moscow September 1, 1961, at four o'clock in the afternoon and departed September 1, 1964 at four PM. Three years to the dot. (Tours of duty at Moscow, a maximum "hardship post," rarely exceeded two years. When asked to serve a third year, I had to promise my wife "not one minute more.")

Q: How did this come about?

FUNKHOUSER: Well, it was sort of a natural progression. I had been in economic and commercial affairs a good part of my career in the Middle East, in Western Europe, in Syria. I also had political experience in Middle Eastern affairs. I had been bombed in Cairo by American Lend-Lease B-17s with American pilots making \$1,000 a flight over Cairo flying for the Zionists. I saw the Palestine situation from the beginning. Fifty years later, it is hard to remember how popular the U.S. was throughout the Middle East. Unlike the colonial powers, Americans had established the only Western-type universities in the region with the result that the ruling classes were predominantly pro-American. This changed overnight in 1948 with the partition of Palestine and American sponsorship of the state of Israel over the vehement objections of Secretary of State General Marshall and all other top officials except Truman's Domestic Affairs Advisor, Clark Clifford. I have often wondered whether Truman's decision pushed his candidacy over Dewey over the top several months later? I had been assigned to Palestine and to a dozen Arab countries. And when I was in Syria during the Suez Crisis it became very clear to me, not so much through cynicism I think, but through realism, if you know the Middle East, you know that the United States is quite unable to take and treat Arabs and Israelis evenhandedly.

I got tired seeing my Arab friends come across a crowded room shaking their finger, "Why do you take these positions," knowing what they were going to say. I was sympathetic to their point of view to an extent, but nevertheless was reluctant to get in the middle of an ancient fight between two "brothers." I learned on the Iraq, Syria and Lebanon Desk that lesson when I invited the top Arab whom I knew in Washington to meet with the Special Advisor to the Secretary, the top representative of the Jewish point of view in Washington. I'll never forget it. I drove up in a little Topolino, which was a cheap Italian car which you could pick up and the sort of convertible that you put the top back with one hand. Up drove Kayali, the military attache from the Syrian embassy...he was very bright and had very good connections...in a big blue, I think it was, big blue convertible Cadillac. He was followed by the representative in the State Department on Jewish affairs in a big white Cadillac convertible. It was hard to tell them apart. They looked very, very similar and swarthy. They both had a certain weight. Both were very, very bright. And we went up to Kayali's apartment. And within five minutes of the conversation, and here I was trying to get the point of view from both sides, it became very evident to me they liked each other, they knew everything about the other's business. They were fun to be around. They enjoyed each other's company. I thought to myself, "Why in heaven's name are you, Dick Funkhouser, and/or the United States, trying to get between these two?" And I resolved that that was an unresolvable question for the United States Government. I guess it was cowardly, but I wanted no further part of Middle Eastern Affairs, because I thought it was and would be a disaster. I later prepared a "Doomsday Scenario" along the lines of Nevil Shute's "On the Beach" in which nuclear disaster starts in the Middle East. I visualized unlimited U.S. political/financial/military/media support for Israel driving the Arabs first to despair, next to terrorism, then to oil blockade, then to war (non-nuclear).

Current Middle East and other press reports asserting that Secretary of State Albright has stacked her Middle East staff with Jewish officers, that she believes power exists to be used, that she plans to extend NATO eastwards to Israel might rekindle this scenario, however off my timetable. Equally off in timing was my last message to the Department January 30, 1976 on

retirement in which my “swan song” depicted the Middle East as the foremost, long-term threat to U.S. security because of our blank-check for Israel under all Congresses and Presidents (except Eisenhower). I concluded irreverently, “Holy Christ...what would He think as a Jew, prophet or Son of God to return home?” I was reminded of how we scoffed at the outlandish statement of our UN Ambassador, Warren Austin, during the UN debates on Palestine in 1948, “Why can’t the Arabs and Jews act like good Christians?!” Fifty years later, this possibility of the Golden Rule replacing “an eye for an eye” (or rather “10 eyes for an eye”) seems even more remote.

And so, I tried to get out. When I got assigned to the National War College, I did my thesis on what I knew, which was the Middle East, and what I hoped to know, which was its border problems with the Soviet Union. I studied Russian in the early morning FSI [Foreign Service Institute] classes and I did my thesis on the historical establishment of the land boundaries between Russia and Turkey, Afghanistan, Persia.

Q: So you saw your career going in one direction, you made a very conscious effort to turn it around.

FUNKHOUSER: I did indeed. To move into an area that I wanted to be in. It’s not unique. Many officers want to leave the Third World, whether Africa or South America or the Middle East, and try to get into countries that really are closer to Western civilization, where most families basically prefer to be.

Q: When you went to Moscow as Economic Counselor, again we’re talking about 1961 to 1964, what were your main tasks? This was the beginning of the Kennedy Administration, obviously a time of testing and strain and all. But as Economic Counselor, what were your jobs?

FUNKHOUSER: Well, the Economic Counselor in Moscow has on his staff various experts: on nuclear energy, on agriculture. One of my major jobs there was to work on budgetary problems, particularly those that might indicate where the Soviets were spending their money, given all of the vast difficulties of figuring out anything significant from what the Soviets published, such as the progress on the Five Year Plan. Certainly nothing was more important to the Embassy or Washington than to try to analyze how the Soviets were doing when they put out their progress report on how they were fulfilling their Five Year Plan. Whether they were putting more money into, as Khrushchev did, into agriculture....he plowed up the virgin lands, for example. We, through our very expert agricultural attaches, would go wherever we were allowed to go, look at the crops and see whether the harvest would be such as to support what the Soviets were claiming.

Q: This was quite a gamble, wasn’t it, on Khrushchev’s part?

FUNKHOUSER: Oh, it was a gamble, and it helped seal his doom. It was a disaster. He plowed up the virgin lands. You know he went to Iowa, saw our corn there and thought that maybe because it was flat, the virgin lands of Kazakhstan might have had the same fertility and the same soil that we do in the West. But it wasn’t that way. The topsoil was far thinner. And the virgin fields blew into the Caspian when he plowed it up, like plowing up the wild grass on a sand

dune. But we followed that closely, and this was important from an economic standpoint to the United States because we like to sell them vast quantities of wheat. And so a very key part of what we did was in that field, and I would say we totally missed drawing the right conclusion.

One of the things I learned as Economic Counselor there was the extent to which the Soviet society and government can surprise the West. Even with satellite pictures you can't tell what amount of grain the Soviets have in their storage bins. We went into a negotiation with the Soviets, and so did the Canadians, on wheat in 1964. (cf. New York Times, front page 3/3/64.) We knew the harvest was bad. That was evident from reading between the lines in Pravda and grain journals, agricultural journals, and from what they would allow us to see.

But we were totally startled to find out when the negotiations started that the Soviets wanted a billion dollars worth of grain. This was the world's largest grain deal ever proposed, and we were totally taken by surprise. Why? Was the Foreign Service not doing its job? No. The problem was that we didn't know that Russia had no reserves. That was obviously a very strategic and military secret, which we did not know. We should have known more back in Washington. If the Agency, if State, or if Commerce had been smarter in those days, they would have noted that the Soviets were chartering up tankers two weeks before the negotiations started. They chartered all of the grain tankers that they could, and this should have been noted and given us a hint. It would have had great importance to figure out how much money the Soviets were going to put on the table. And so this was a very personal lesson in the ability of another society to totally surprise us.

During my tour in Moscow, the Soviet ability to surprise the world was demonstrated three times: 1) this billion-dollar wheat deal, 2) missiles in Cuba and 3) the overnight ouster of Khrushchev, which no diplomat or correspondent there claimed to have expected. In trouble, yes, but to wake up and find him gone peacefully, never. However, perhaps even more surprising in my diplomatic experience was not the acts of secret enemy societies but of our allies, i.e., Suez, where our closest allies, the British, French and Israelis, attacked Egypt without our foreknowledge. I have never understood how our intelligence services could have failed to uncover this plot or, if they did, to inform the President! As is known, he was infuriated, particularly since the Soviets picked the occasion to invade Hungary, and he forced our allies (and Zionists at home and abroad) to backtrack, quite a feat.

Q: Well now, this is speaking within our own society and the bureaucracy, what you were doing, the analyzing of the Five Year Plan is exactly the sort of thing that the CIA is supposed to do, too.

FUNKHOUSER: Oh, yes. We worked very closely together.

Q: Was this a cooperative effort, or were they doing on their side, while you were doing it on yours? Or did you have a feeling of real cooperation there?

FUNKHOUSER: I had great respect their economic cadre, I guess the CIA calls it, and the economic and financial experts in the CIA. I had to be briefed before I went to the Soviet Union. We would get from the Agency a list of non-classified questions which they considered any intelligent American business man or diplomat should try to get answers to. And they're

basically pretty simple. What is the grain harvest? What are the papers saying? What are their reserves? which we never could answer. And I found that they relied heavily on us. We had covert CIA people from their Directorate of Operations in the Embassy, but I had no working relationship with them. I worked very closely with the agents (Directorate of Intelligence) on economic subjects, because none of it basically was covert. It was all open. We were all trying to get to the same point.

The extent of cooperation back in the Department, I think, was cooperative, but bureaucratically jealous.

Q: A certain amount of competitiveness.

FUNKHOUSER: Basically, State had one person in Soviet Affairs that I reported to on economic policy. In fact, he was an older gentleman, not as old as I am now, but he was very relaxed, and he did very, very little. Almost all the economic reporting and the economic intelligence on the Soviet Union in 1961 to 1964 was, I would say, 95% done by the Agency overtly. I guess almost all overtly, because you just can't be very covert in the economic area.

In-house secrecy can, of course, be essential when it comes to covert CIA operations in an Embassy. "Need to know" rules. Two such operations stand out in my personal experience. One, the Penkovsky affair in Moscow (described later) and two, the U.S.-UK plot to overthrow the pro-Soviet President of Syria in 1956. In neither case was I "in the loop" although serving as Counselor of Embassy at the time. The Damascus plot was exposed to me inadvertently by ineptitude of the plotters, e.g., the CIA station chief was stone-deaf and could be heard inside or outside the Embassy without bugging devices. To me, the most bizarre twist in this foiled plot was that the date chosen for our plot was the identical day our allies picked to invade the Suez Canal! I've always wondered if they could have pulled a historic "scam" by diverting us from Suez and implicating us at the same time in their Middle East plot to overthrow Nasser and his allies.

So I was their man in Moscow, I would say, and they were my backers in Washington, because the State Department basically deferred to the Agency on agricultural and economic policy. Not policy so much, but getting the facts. So I'd say we worked extremely closely. That doesn't mean we didn't have knock-down, drag-out fights. In my amateurism, I had chosen to attempt an analysis of the direction of the Soviet military budget and policy by dissecting the speeches, the written word, the top statements made by Khrushchev and others at key occasions, and note when adjectives changed in such statements as "We are giving the `top' priority to development of higher standard of living for Soviet citizens, including more money into consumer goods and into agriculture and food." And then you'd see, "We are giving `high' priority to the development of consumer goods and agricultural reserves."

I can't really repeat the language now, but I did a very provocative report on the military trend, which indicated in 1962 that, judged on an economic basis only, all of the adjectives and all of the nuances which I in the Economic Section could find were tilting towards heavy industry and towards strengthening the military, compared to whatever existed. The nuances were all moving towards the military.

Tommy Thompson, the Ambassador, fully supported my report. But Boris Klosson, Political Counselor, was upset with an Economic Counselor getting into political reporting.

Q: He was the DCM at this time?

FUNKHOUSER: No, he was my opposite number.

Q: Political Counselor.

FUNKHOUSER: He was Political Counselor, I was Economic Counselor, and Jack McSweeney was DCM. And Tommy Thompson, Ambassador Thompson to me then. We did play poker up to his death, together...thought it was an excellent report and decided we would challenge Washington on the diversion. All the evidence we cited, some of it seemingly trivial, showed the Soviets were tilting increasingly towards the military. The CIA ripped me apart, because they were the experts on budget. And they came back with the most microeconomic analysis that no general Foreign Service officer could possibly match, proving I was wrong. Six months later Cuba took place, and I got some credit for being one of the few that at least got on the record a Soviet military buildup six months before the massive military operation that took place in Cuba.

Another of my major responsibilities, not unrelated to a shift of resources to the military, was the "Big Inch Pipeline" crash project designed to tie both East and West Europe into dependency on Soviet oil while earning scarce hard currency. Over strong objections in certain Western circles, notably France, the West German Economic Counselor and I were successful in persuading the necessary authorities to cancel the West German Mannesmann steel plant contract to roll 36 inch pipe for the Soviets. Khrushchev was of course apoplectic; he claimed that the Soviets could roll their own 36 inch pipe, a rarity at the time for steel mills. He had boasted that he was going to "bury" us. In the end, the line was delayed an indeterminate time and completed only to the East German border. What this disruption of the Soviet economy and its long-term plans contributed to the eventual Soviet collapse is for those with access to Soviet archives to determine.

Q: The Cuban missile crisis. That was October of 1962. How did this play for you in the Embassy in Moscow?

FUNKHOUSER: Well, it was, as you know, startling. When the crisis broke one of the things that impressed me, as in the Middle East, mobs formed, so called. Crowds formed. But unlike the Middle East nobody got stoned, as an American would during the Suez crisis.

The so-called mobs and demonstrators in Moscow would stop when the red traffic light came on! They'd stop!

Q: We used to call them "rent-a-mobs" in Yugoslavia.

FUNKHOUSER: Oh, did you? You know exactly what I'm talking about. But to see any demonstration in the Soviet Union was really new to everyone. We were all told not to provoke the crowd. Just board up the windows at the Tchaikovsky Boulevard Embassy. Some of us lived

there. Not to appear in the windows, which would be mob-inciting, as it certainly would in any underdeveloped country. Of course, we peeked out, and I remember, and this is illustrative of the question you asked. Here's this great demonstration. A few ink bottles thrown at the Embassy. The police were down with the demonstrators, but not doing anything. And one of the New York Times correspondents, Ted Shabad, we noted leaving, which we were forbidden to do, but you can't control the press. Leaving the embassy compound, going out into the mob, the demonstrators.

Well, we wondered what would happen. And a circle formed around him, and the police were near him. When he came back, we asked. Nothing apparently happened, except that's what happened. They all wanted to know what the news was. They were scared to death that there might be trouble--really worried. And there's no doubt that the worse the crisis got, the Soviets in every conceivable way, the Soviet people--we had an artistic group there, and they weren't all that good--but they got so many ovations during this period that they had to move the Soviets out of the theater. We took it as an expression of "We don't want any fight, bad relations, particularly a war with the United States." It was quite clear that the people were demonstrating that they didn't want any part of confrontation with the U.S. That must have influenced Khrushchev, as well as the bombers we sent towards Soviet Union.

Q: Did the Russian bureaucracy during this period shut down on you?

FUNKHOUSER: No, no. In no way. No way. I dealt with Gherman Gvishiani, who was the Deputy Minister for Scientific and Technical Research, the organization that basically is charged with stealing our commercial secrets. Oleg Penkovsky, our famous spy who tipped us off on missiles in Cuba, was one of my principal overt contacts in his capacity as Protocol Officer of Gherman Gvishiani's Committee for Scientific and Technical Research. But until shortly before he was caught, tortured and shot, I was kept in the dark about his spy role. I found him rather pompous and gave little deference to him, undoubtedly to his surprise and annoyance. Only when the DCM Jack McSweeney wrote out on a piece of paper (to maintain mandatory audio-security in the Embassy) asking whether I had invited Penkovsky with other Committee officials to my periodic "movie night" in my Embassy apartment did I suspect his vital role. "Need to know" had been successfully followed. I learned later that it was in my bathroom that he was tipped off that the KGB was closing in on him and that he had sent his last fortunately erroneous warning to the USG that the Soviets were to launch their nukes! Ironically, I was the temporarily ranking officer in the Embassy when called to the Foreign Office to receive the official Soviet protest of U.S. spying. (See New York Times 12/26/62 front page.) But he was a very powerful man, son-in-law of Central Committee member Kosygin, and I had no trouble doing my work. It was quite the opposite.

The officials were like the French during times when DeGaulle was being very difficult with the Americans, and I became Political Counselor in Paris. They showed great concern that they might be talking to an American during the critical periods, but never was the door closed to me in Paris or Moscow during those times. It was obvious that they wanted no part of the government policy.

Q: Well, you served under two of our major Russian Sovietologists, Tommy Thompson and Foy

Kohler.

FUNKHOUSER: Three really. Chip Bohlen in Paris.

Q: Bohlen in Paris. I'll come to him later.

FUNKHOUSER: I was lucky...

Q: I wonder, could you compare, contrast their operating styles?

FUNKHOUSER: Well, the three of them were totally different, I would say. Tommy Thompson was very reserved. He wasn't a hail-fellow-well-met, and he was very precise. He was the most, I would say, attentive to details. After all, he negotiated the only withdrawal known at that time, or maybe since, withdrawal of Soviet troops from a foreign country.

Q: Iran?

FUNKHOUSER: No, in Vienna. He did the Vienna negotiation. He had seen it all. He had dealt with the Soviets, and no one of the three, I think, had his experience in negotiating with the Soviet Union, so nothing really interested him more than building up an accurate file on information that could have policy considerations for the United States more than the other two, I would dare say, although I'd hate to have to have Foy Kohler hear me say that. All of them were top flight diplomatists. But you asked about style. Tommy Thompson was 'do the work, forget the fun and games,' although he had two children and was a very fine parent. Sent one of them to a Russian public school together with my son. But a very serious, cold externally, warm at heart, but a man who ran a very precise staff meeting. He would understate what he wanted, and a few people who thought that they had a special relationship with Thompson, such as Boris Klosson, would go see movies in Thompson's flat and really was a favorite of the Ambassador socially, could overestimate the value of friendship over professional performance. I recall one staff meeting where I had heard the Ambassador ask Boris softly, "I would like a report at earliest possible date on this subject." And Boris had either forgotten it or didn't do it, and he'll never forget it, because the Ambassador aimed a reprimand at him which froze the entire staff meeting. I learned a lesson: "If the Ambassador ever asks for anything, and he didn't often, but by God drop everything, get at it and get back to him as fast as you possibly can." That's the way he operated. He only said it once, but you'd better pay attention. Style again.

Foy Kohler, quite the opposite. Delightful, showed up at all the American parties, which Thompson would rarely do. Was an easier man to get along with.

After all, we were under pressure in the Soviet Union; the families, the wives. We all lived together and worked together, as you know from Yugoslavia, only it was much, much worse. We couldn't open our windows in the offices; we couldn't even type on a typewriter; we had to write everything out in longhand. Security was heavy on us. Moscow was a crucible, which was very hard on the wives particularly. Some took to drink. There would be a morning drinking clutch. Martinis at 11 o'clock. Some became alcoholics. Mental distress from living that closely together, Americans don't do it like Russians, and a man like Foy Kohler, who had no children

of his own, nevertheless he and his wife both spent an awful lot of time trying to build a family atmosphere in the Embassy, with great success. He obviously was extremely good at everything he did.

The Soviets, I think, had the greatest respect for Thompson of the three. I didn't know about Chip Bohlen in Moscow. But Bohlen spoke by far best the Russian and could really do business in Russian, which neither Thompson nor Kohler, although they were "three/three" in Russian, could. One revealing difference between Bohlen and Thompson was exposed in poker in which they both reveled. Tommy, the Scot, made far more money by judicious conservatism; Chip handled his chips more freely...always wanted to see the last card, a known fatality in the game. Both played for stakes in which a thousand dollars could be won or lost...I always thought it was a security risk in Moscow to open the game to anyone in the Embassy, including low-paid code clerks!

Q: "Three/three" refers to the speaking/reading level. Five speaking, five reading is the top or bilingual level.

FUNKHOUSER: So they were so-called "fluent." No one in the Moscow Embassy was allowed to go unless he spent one year in a room with a native speaker getting to the three/three level. There are exceptions. For guys who couldn't make it the U.S. government still paid for them to have private tutoring for one year; even a "two/two," which my deputy was, will be sent to Moscow after his year of language training. But Bohlen was by far the best Russian speaker. He started off his career in Russian school in Paris.

MARSHALL BREMENT
Political Officer
Moscow (1964-1966)

Political Counselor
Moscow (1974-1976)

Soviet Desk, National Security Council, White House
Washington, DC (1978-1980)

Ambassador Marshall Brement was born in New York in 1932. He received a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College and a master's degree from the University of Maryland. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1952-1955. Ambassador Brement's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Hong Kong, Moscow, Singapore, Djakarta, and Saigon, and an ambassadorship to Iceland. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on April 11, 1990.

Q: Now because we had this other interview which covers some of the transitional bridges, lets move to a completely different subject and this is going to Moscow, you were there from '64 to '66? What were you doing while you were there?

BREMENT: I was Second Secretary in the Political Section and I had the Far-eastern job. I was covering Soviet relations with all the countries from Australia through India, which at that time was sort of the premier job in the political section because I had Sino-Soviet relations, I had the Vietnam war, a coup in Indonesia, I had the Indo- Pakistan war where Kosygin was the mediator. Soviet-Japanese relations were always interesting. So 60-70% of the cables written in the political section were done by me.

Q: You had this almost unique ability to look, was there a difference between the Soviet hand and the China hand? I'm talking about in the American Foreign Service. Did you see any differences?

BREMENT: Yes, I think so, definitely. The China hand tended to be quite enamored of China and Chinese civilization. He certainly liked the comfort of it, the food. The Chinese are easy to deal with. Chinese servants, if you have good ones, are wonderful. So when you were in the China milieu you were a gentleman and you lived a pretty good life, sort of a happy life anyway, at least in Hong Kong and Taiwan or anywhere in Southeast Asia. And certainly it is true in Peking. I know several people who have served in Peking and Moscow both. And there is no question that they liked Peking better, even though it is quite a dusty place.

You have to differentiate between those people who came to the Soviet Union from a West European background and those who came from other backgrounds. Those who came from a West European background, and their wives, certainly never got over a sort of culture shock -- the grimness, the dour sort of nature of the Russians which is only on the surface, but it is there. If you get into an elevator with a bunch of Russians they will all be stone-faced, whereas we tend to smile at strangers. It is a cultural thing. But the inconveniences of life, the terrible climate, all these things wear on people, and of course the microphones everywhere have a big effect. Somehow they don't seem to have as big an effect in China, I don't know why. Microphones are there too, but in the Soviet Union it really got to a lot of people.

If psychologically you are the kind of person who would find it very difficult having a microphone in your bedroom, then you found life in the Soviet Union very difficult indeed. So when you finally crossed the border into Finland or Poland or wherever you went it was like a great weight coming off your shoulders. I never particularly felt that. I enjoyed Moscow because professionally it was really what it was all about. I was working for the State Department and that was what the State Department was focusing on. I was happy there in that sense and also culturally. Moscow was a world class city if you like music and theater. They had their own style, but when it was good it was certainly as good as anybody. It was a great cosmopolitan center, with a genuine culture which was fascinating. It could be oppressive. I think it was important to get out of Moscow. But I think it is important to get out of anyplace occasionally.

Q: The prime focus of your work was obviously on the Sino-Soviet relationship at that point. How did you see it? You are looking at it from absolutely the other side of the moon. Were the Soviets sort of "lovers rebuffed?" or how were you seeing that they were reacting to this? Did they understand this or were they trying to do anything about it?

BREMENT: The Soviets understood it. I was there for the full show. Kosygin, who was really the number one at that point, did try to repair relations with China. And I think the Soviets would have gone much further if the Chinese had been interested. But the Chinese were really not interested in anything less than a capitulation. And the Soviets, for perfectly good reasons from their point of view, really couldn't capitulate to China without giving up their leadership of the world communist movement, which at that point was inconceivable to them. These were all people who came to the forefront under Stalin and very much felt that one of the reasons that Khrushchev had to go was because he handled things so badly diplomatically in the international sphere and also in the international communist movement. They were just about to have a conference in Bucharest in December '64 where the international communist movement was about to split apart. By removing Khrushchev and postponing that convergence and by taking what they called a "principled" position, which meant support for Vietnam among other things, they reasserted themselves within the communist movement. The communist movement was coming apart. You had the Chinese communists on the left and the Euro-communists on the right, along with the Yugoslavs. The Soviets felt this pressure and felt they had to do something about it and the way to go about it was to adopt a sensible, reasonable, principled policy that would appeal to most communist parties and would move the Chinese way out to the fringe, which they did.

Q: Were the Soviets as you watched in the international sphere sort of dumping on the Chinese?

BREMENT: Yes, they were using every opportunity to dump on the Chinese, and their line essentially was, "look, these guys are talking this revolutionary line but they really aren't acting that way." Here we are really supporting the Vietnamese; we want to send more goods, ship more arms and so on, but they won't even let us send things to Vietnam across China. It is defeating the Vietnamese war effort. We, the Soviets are faithful to our international obligations. The Chinese talk a good game but they really don't do anything." That is essentially what the Soviets were saying, and I think they did turn the situation around. In only three or four years, only the Asian parties were with the Chinese. This was not a question of the rightness or the wrongness of the line they were propounding, it was just a question of politics.

But it was more than that. It was a situation where the Soviets benefited enormously -- and had no reason at all to help us extract ourselves from Vietnam. We were not giving them any reason to change their policy or to try to influence the Vietnamese to change their policy, because we were saying right from the start, "this is not between us, we don't have any quarrel with you," as though the Soviets had nothing to do with it. But of course it was Soviet weaponry that was being used by the Vietnamese to kill Americans. It was Soviet oil that was being used to drive the weapons. And we were just ignoring that minor fact. Indeed, we were offering no pain to the Soviets because of their actions.

Q: Was there any thought of saying, "well if we are going to do this let's blockage the country?"

BREMENT: Indeed, I wrote a letter that Foy Kohler, who was my Ambassador then, saying missions like the Harriman mission don't make any sense, that the Soviets benefit enormously from the Vietnam war and if we want to make them change we have to impose penalties on them for having this war continue. In other words, we have to up the ante. We have to make it

dangerous. We have to give them reasons to want this situation to end. If we don't do that, they will not only not help us out of the situation, but they will do everything they can to keep us in the treacle, in a situation that we can't get out of. Amazingly enough we got a letter from Tommy Thompson saying we can't do that because it might push the Soviets and the Chinese back together again, which I found completely extraordinary at that point. This was '65 or '66 and I was following Sino-Soviet affairs and knew that there was nothing the United States could do that could drive the Soviets and the Chinese back together again.

Q: This was the "wish is father to the thought." I'm not sure if that was the right expression, but we saw things, we were going to be helping Vietnam, and no matter what we do...we were always worried that something else would happen that would deter us.

BREMENT: That's right. It was very difficult for us to see the real chasms because maybe we were too hung up on the ideology. We kept thinking of Communism as a world movement, and it was hard to see that you could have two major communist powers split without them coming back together at some point. That certainly was the perception. And then the perception at home was that you could have guns and butter at the same time. You could fight a war, keep it a moderate war and at the same time have a good society, or "Great Society," I should say, and all that implied. I remember I was at Stanford after I left Moscow. I remember Paul Kreisberg coming through. He was one of the State Department speakers and I heard him saying that. I had grave doubts at that point myself as to whether we could have guns and butter, since I was living through the cultural revolution in California at the time. I think the answer was, that we couldn't. You can't fight a war sort of half-way. If it's a real war, you are paying heavily for that war. If you are fighting against someone who is giving a total effort and you are giving a partial effort, you are not going to prevail.

Q: Moving on to another question, how did you see the reaction of the Soviets to the Indonesian coup in 1965 when Suharto moved Sukarno out, and took care of the Communists? It was a peculiar thing in that it would stick on doing something to Chinese Communists, but here was a really major nation although very often underrated. Were the Soviets sort of chuckling at this? How did they feel about it?

BREMENT: They very much low-keyed the situation. They said, we are out of there and this doesn't have very much to do with us. I think that a certain amount of satisfaction could be gleaned. Of course they had been kicked out by Sukarno, and there was very much of a Chinese involvement in the killing of the Indonesian general, which led to a counter-coup. So I think that quiet satisfaction is how one would characterize Moscow's reaction. But it didn't get much play in the Soviet press.

Q: Speaking about this, how did you deal with the Soviets? Were you able to talk to Soviet officials, or others, or was it pretty much a press operation?

BREMENT: In those days you were very restricted in terms of your dealing with Soviets. Indeed, it was possible to establish friendly relations with Soviets but only with Soviets who had their tickets punched to do that sort of thing. So I did have a couple of friends who were either in the Institutes, or...one was a newspaper man of sorts. He died shortly thereafter. He was quite

frank, or moderately frank, but always within certain limitations. So you mainly got your impressions from the press, from talking to other people in the foreign community. At that point, Moscow was the only place where I had been where the diplomatic community was very useful. In every other place I had been, the American embassy was a useful tool for other people. But really you didn't get too much out of the other diplomats. You had Asian diplomats there to talk with if you were covering Asia. You had the Indians there who were really quite close to the Soviets and very smart diplomats. They were very worthwhile talking to about the whole range of affairs. You had Australians.

When I was there -- before the six day war -- you had Israelis who were excellent, because they were natives to the Soviet Union. They would be like you or me being a diplomat in Washington. You have a certain sense of the country that you can't get otherwise. Of course, a certain amount of information came through normal diplomatic intercourse with the Soviets, but since I was covering third country things, I didn't have that much of it in my first tour. I had some of it when the Ambassador would go in to talk about Vietnam, or he'd talk to some of the other Ambassadors. I would go along with him about Asian matters.

You were spending your full time focusing on it, which was of course a wonderful way to get the mind together. So you were picking up a lot by osmosis. All your antennae were out to try to get it, but it was not so much directly retrieved from the Soviets. The big difference between my first tour in Moscow and my second, separated by eight years, was that in the second tour there were dissidents, so you could actually talk to Soviets who were anti-regime, which you couldn't do at all the first time.

Q: You were there during the fall of the Khrushchev, how did you and the others in the Embassy view the fall of Khrushchev, and Kosygin coming in? Was this a good thing for us or a bad thing? How did we feel about it?

BREMENT: Well, I remember, it was interesting, on October 15th we had a meeting at the Embassy. Mac Toon, who was the Political Counselor, had come in that night and done a preliminary cable saying why Khrushchev fell. And everyone of the people at the meeting who were specializing in anything at the embassy came up with their own reasons for his fall. The Agricultural Attaché probably had it better than anybody else, it was because Khrushchev was trying to split the party into agricultural and industrial branches, which really got at some very deep seated power positions of people. But of course I said it was because the international communist movement was heading for an irrevocable split, with the Chinese becoming more prominent. The economists said things were terrible in the economy. So everybody had his own reasons and they added up to the fact that Khrushchev had alienated all the Soviet power bases.

We did not see it as particularly good or bad for the United States. I think in retrospect, Khrushchev comes out as much more a positive individual and more of a positive force than we felt at the time. Most people thought of him in terms of the Cuban missile crisis, the Berlin crises. We thought of this blusterer who kept making crises and kept bringing us trouble and who indeed talked in a menacing way about Soviet military capabilities...sometimes he talked one way and sometimes the other. But sometimes he talked a very tough line, and would threaten war. So I don't think anybody thought we were losing much when they got rid of Khrushchev.

In retrospect I think we missed a lot. We missed a lot in 1955 I think, we missed opportunities with Khrushchev, and that is too bad, too bad that we missed them. I think we just weren't looking. And we didn't have a strategy or a receptivity to change in the Soviet Union. So much depends on the mental construct that you bring to a situation, even before you get into it. I think we had this idea of a Stalinist country and Khrushchev was the new Stalin in a different way. And although he was doing certain things that were quite revolutionary, we didn't want to take advantage of them because they were at variance with our preconceptions.

Q: I saw pictures of him standing behind Stalin, he was one of the crew. I think this is one of the things, we hope as we go through this oral history, we go back and see how we looked at things at the time.

BREMENT: There's certainly a difference in my own view. I would certainly have subscribed to the view that Khrushchev was a very dangerous man. And therefore when he fell, it was very interesting, it was of course the first coup d'état in communist history, but it was not really seen as being of great benefit and as not much difference for the United States.

Q: No matter what it was it was basically really a monolith which had its own ideology which was hostile to us and that was that.

BREMENT: Yes, exactly. He was the guy who exploded the largest nuclear bomb ever done by man, the one who started the rocket forces, who was going to threaten us with intercontinental ballistic missiles. All that. But I think clearly in retrospect he was also someone with whom we could have come to agreements that would have been beneficial to us and beneficial to the world.

Q: I suppose one of the things I am getting at is as diplomats, sometimes, I think there is a tendency to look for somebody who is trying to be consistent. Even if they're opposed to us at least you know where they stand. Khrushchev seemed to be all over the place and this can sometimes be a bit disturbing to somebody with a diplomatic frame of mind. I think this may have played a role in this.

BREMENT: Yes, I think that is right. He was an innovator and we bureaucrats and diplomats don't much like innovation. We like somebody who is predictable. He was a little too unpredictable. It is not just a bureaucratic prejudice. His style was too unpredictable for us to do business with.

Q: And this was part of the cause of his downfall with his own bureaucracy.

BREMENT: Absolutely, they couldn't get a reading on him and that's why they couldn't function within their own system of central planning. Each member of the Politburo from his own bureaucratic perspective wanted to get rid of Khrushchev. That is why they could come together with only one dissenting vote, and that was Mikoyan, who only had all the force of foreign trade. There was no power there. I think there is something about the Foreign Service perspective that probably makes it not a useful tool for policy.

Q: We are in fast moving events sometimes.

BREMENT: Yes.

Q: On this, you had two Ambassadors who are quite well known. Foy Kohler and Walter Stoessel. Could you characterize how you saw them and how they operated and how you felt their effectiveness was?

BREMENT: Stoessel was of course DCM in Moscow the first time I was there, when Kohler was the Ambassador and he was instrumental in bringing me to Moscow to become Political Counselor, thereby yanking me out of Saigon after only thirteen months there.

Q: Let's talk about Foy Kohler now and we will talk about Stoessel later.

BREMENT: O.K., Kohler was a quiet, effective good Ambassador. He was highly skeptical of the Soviets, as well he should have been at that particular point. My impression (and I have never really talked to him about this) was that he felt that he was there at a period when nothing much could be done to move the relationship forward, and that he was holding the fort, so to speak, and carrying out our policy. But we were dealing with an essentially hostile power at a time when relations were getting worse, because the Soviets saw a need for both internal and external orthodoxy. And there wasn't much that could be done in terms of negotiating anything or coming to any agreements that would improve the relationship.

Q: One final thing here, two things, one that was in your bailiwick was the Japanese- Soviet relationship.

BREMENT: Well, as I saw it at that time and since, it is a real conundrum. The benefits to the Soviets of making a positive gesture to Japan are obvious. Yet they have refused to make one for 40 years. First of all, I would say about Brezhnev that he really was racially prejudiced against the Orientals. That's one thing that came out clearly in summit meetings with him. And this was true against both the Japanese and the Chinese. Indeed, during several summit meetings he went off on the Chinese and just went on and on about their iniquity and about the common threat they pose to both of us. Clearly, it was deeper than just policy differences. The Russians also have a bad feeling about the Japanese, a feeling, by the way, that is returned by the Japanese. And they haven't forgotten the Russo-Japanese War. They see themselves as quite vulnerable in East Asia. They see the Japanese as an ultimate threat. Even in the Gorbachev period, it's hard to understand why they simply don't make some kind of move in terms of the Northern Islands, the so-called "northern territories." It is such an obvious ploy. You say, "Look, we'd give you back the northern territories, but we can't because you've got the Seventh Fleet in Yokosuka and we don't want the waters around those islands to be used as passages for warships and for submarines to go into the Bering Sea and the Sea of Japan. If you demilitarize them and if you will allow us to put observers on them to monitor what ships are going in, you can have those islands back."

It seems like such an obvious solution. It's been obvious for years, but I'll never forget my surprise that Brezhnev in '78 actually fortified those islands and put ten thousand people on them

for no reason at all, except probably his Far East TVD commander thought it was a good idea. But that doesn't mean he has got to do it. So, you really run into a sort of dead-end here, in that there is no expert on the Soviet Union or Japan or on Soviet-Japanese relations who can really come up with a good theory as to why the Soviets haven't done that except that they don't like and don't trust the Japanese. They still remember and, in fact, they are just commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the battle of Khalkin Gol which the Japanese call Nomonhan, which took place in August of 1939 as the Soviets were negotiating the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. At the same time, the same day, a major pitched battle was going on the Mongolian-Manchurian border where the Soviets claimed they killed 60,000 Japanese and only lost 18,000 Soviets and where the Japanese suffered a truly major defeat. This was Marshal Zhukov's first great battle. It was a classic double envelopment of the Japanese, where he simply destroyed the Sixth Japanese Army. And the Soviets remember that. They are publishing all sorts of books about it. And Japan is simply not seen as a potential economic savior which it could be. The Soviets also are very uncomfortable that the Japanese have passed them in gross national product.

Q: One last thing on the Soviet side, right now as we are talking, really in the last year, 1989-90, the Soviet Union really is an empire. We used to say it in the Foreign Service as sort of lip-service, but we used to see it as a really unified whole. How were we seeing that, you were in the Soviet Union, I mean all these disparate nationalities, did you see this thing as having potential weakness or was this just sort of talk?

BREMENT: I think most of us mirrored the actual Soviet view of the problem, and that was that it wasn't much of a problem. And although you can say that we were obviously wrong, because of the latest developments, I am not sure that we were. Because the problem was then under control. It is Gorbachev who has allowed it to get out of control. I mean, there was no question about the unhappiness of some of the nationalities. But the fact was that they were effectively repressed. You didn't have to be a very acute or astute political observer to take a trip to the Baltic Republics and discover an awful lot of anti-Russian feeling. In fact, I remember I arrived in Tallinn at 5:00 a.m. one morning at the train station in January and it was at least 40 below, with the wind blowing hard. I got out on the platform and looked around hopefully for someone to meet me and, of course, there wasn't anyone. And there was a line for cabs across the platform with about 40 or 50 people lined up. So I went up to the train master in a little booth there and I said to him, I want to find a hotel. I had the name of the hotel I was going to and he said, rather he gestured to me, I don't understand you, what are you saying. I was talking Russian, of course. And then I said to him, "I am from the American Embassy and I was hoping there would be a car to meet me. But there isn't and I want to find the hotel.

Then he answered me in perfect Russian, saying the hotel is only fifty yards up the road. You can walk up there. It is very easy." This was in the sixties. Of course there was enormous anti-Russian feeling in the Baltics and much less anywhere else that you went. You found some to a certain extent. But that is only natural in any multi-national, multi-ethnic state. I mean you find some of that kind of animosity in Chicago, or Minneapolis or wherever you go with large ethnic groups or with people of different races living side by side. If you have this kind of situation you are going to find a certain amount of animosity. The question was never whether there was animosity, but whether it was under control. And it was under control. This was not just some outside observer talking; this was the way the Soviets felt. They felt it was under control,

because they had no problems.

Gorbachev's book Perestroika, published in 1987, specifically states that the nationalities problem has been solved. But it obviously wasn't. It was merely concealed under a large KGB rock. The problems really only occur when you lift the rock. Then they are going to occur, sure. But every place outside the Baltics the problems are more inter-ethnic than anti-Russian. Many of those nationalities, like the Armenians, looked on the Russians as essentially their saviors, from the Muslim hordes or the Turks. So it is an Empire and now that the Pandora's box has been opened, it is hard to see how, in fact it will be shut. I think you can say that without question. But were we wrong in our thoughts about it at the time? Was I wrong? I don't think so. At the time I think we were essentially mirroring the view of the people who were there, both the Russians and the nationalities themselves.

Q: And we were reporting as it really was at the time. This is the way it was.

BREMENT: No. It wasn't like the Intifada. Nobody dared to throw a rock or to question authority.

Q: The Intifada being the repression of the Israelis on the Palestinians. Yes, I mean you could have been in Israel and you could have said the Palestinian problem is under control, and not foreseeing the Intifada, because that was the way it was. But it was a little different. The Intifada was going to happen. In the Soviet Union, it didn't have to happen the way it did happen and certainly if you are running a large empire you have to use a certain amount of force, and once you let everybody know you are not going to use force, you are going to have a lot of difficulties.

SAMUEL E. FRY, JR.
Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1964-1966)

Consular Officer
Moscow (1966-1968)

Samuel E. Fry, Jr. was born in New York, New York in 1934. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1956 and then spent a year as a Dartmouth Fellow at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He served in the U.S. Army in Germany in 1958-1959. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Norway, Finland, Romania, and the Soviet Union.. This interview was conducted on January 26, 1993 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: What were you doing in Soviet Affairs? You were there from October of 1963 to June of 1965.

FRY: The principal activity right at the start had to do with Kennedy's decision to sell grain to the Soviet Union. It has become commonplace in recent years for countries to sell to the Soviet Union. It is hard to remember that this was a terribly controversial decision. This was aiding and

abetting the very enemy that you said you were going to fight. It was assisting their economy, which led to "a fat Russian is a happy Russian," "you won't erode communism with people being fed, you will erode communism without any bread," right down to very silly things. The right wing launched a tremendous campaign which had a letter writing element, because of which I spent half my time in responding to Congressional inquiries. One which I remember very clearly: the reason that the Soviet Union is buying the grain is so that it can make alcohol which it can use as primers for a special hand grenade they have invented which will be used against NATO forces. Another: the Soviet Union is taking the grain sacks and putting, instead of USA and the handshake symbol, USSR on them and sending them to other countries. No grain to the Soviet Union was shipped in sacks, it was shipped in things like the sterilized tanker *Manhattan* and other bulk cargo grain ships, it was off loaded with suction pumps in Odessa, and so forth and so on. We had to answer all this stuff because there were people who really believed it. That was one of the first things.

The other thing was that I had to process, this was my specific job, all the visa requests for any "Soviet businessman" who was coming to the United States or was coming to confer with the Amtorg Trading Company, which was a US corporation. This was a holdover from the pre-Second World War and Second World War Russian Purchasing Agency in New York that had American employees as well as Russian employees. It was considered a hotbed of spying and industrial espionage. So every time a Russian wanted to come over here and said he was coming on business, I had to call up the businesses, make sure of the exact time of the appointment, etc. It was very time consuming; I might be working on three or four at one time and have to make thirty or forty calls for each one. Then at the end of each week the FBI liaison with the State Department would come in and I would give him all the information so that they could surveil these people. Then we had to get the visa approved and I had to write the waiver request, and so on. So that was another element of the work. For each Russian businessman--and plenty of them weren't businessmen, they were obviously a certain level of espionage, but not the Abels and the spies of fame; these were the journeymen, plumbers coming in to see what they could see in the factories--it took a lot of time.

Other things included working on the air traffic arrangement; Pan American and Aeroflot were chosen to have reciprocal flights between the countries. You remember that we had no American planes flying into the Soviet Union directly when I first started working on Soviet affairs. To have a military flight go in to supply the Embassy was a very big deal and it took a very long time to arrange each and every flight. The end of all this work--and I worked on this all the time that I was on the desk; I was in the group that was meeting with the Russians because it had the economic slant, of course, on the freight and passenger revenue--was that the first flight came through when I was consul in Moscow in the fall of 1967 or spring of 1968. I was at the airport collecting the passports from the pilots after the first Pan Am flight came in. We had other agreements that we were working on--I wasn't involved directly but I would sit in and take notes when I was called upon to do it--and one was the first consular agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. We had Americans in jail, we had Americans who had been arrested for manslaughter, accidents, and so on, without the benefit of a consular agreement. There was no access to prisoners unless the Soviets allowed it. I later benefited from the consular agreement during my time in Moscow; I processed five arrests of Americans, attended trials, hired lawyers

for them. I was benefiting at that time at least from the first muscle-flexing of the agreement. Later the agreement was far more effective when the bugs were worked out.

Q: Back to your time when you were on the Soviet desk. What was your impression of the Soviet officials that you had to deal with?

FRY: I dealt with very few Soviet officials directly, except for some junior officers in the Soviet Embassy whom I later found out were usually of the intelligence variety. I met them mainly socially through the encouraging of all junior officers of Embassies to join our International Junior Foreign Service Officers Club in the State Department.

Q: This was a period of, what was it called--JFSOC? This was very much a part of the Kennedy mystique--youth is important. The young Foreign Service Officers had a lot of clout at that time.

FRY: We were encouraged to socialize with other Embassies, but of course the Russians were very suspicious of this as were the Eastern Europeans. We also sponsored and raised money for and did all the administrative work for the Junior Foreign Service Officers' Fourth of July reception which was popular for many years before the eighth floor was rebuilt. We had over a thousand people, including Lyndon Johnson's daughters, two years in a row, who would come to see the fireworks from the balcony of the State Department. I met a couple of Russians that way. Then I did meet some Russians because I had to deal on visa matters and I sometimes had to clarify something about the businessmen who were coming. And so in 1964 and 1965, when I was in Russian language training, I was invited to the Embassy on Soviet National Day. I knew enough people there to be invited. There was very little socializing except in a formal setting. Almost none that I know of. I asked a Russian diplomat to come to a friend's house to watch a Muhammad Ali fight in the mid-'60s and he very much wanted to come because there would be a lot of junior diplomats there, but in the end he didn't come.

Q: How did they operate?

FRY: They were very, very professional. I had great admiration for their language training and the background that they had received prior to their assignment to the United States. One of the people we dealt with was Georgi Korniyenko. Korniyenko later became one of the highest ranking officials in the Soviet Foreign Ministry and had a very successful career. After the retirement of Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin he was really their top American specialist for many, many years. The reason I knew him and watched him operate was that I was called up fairly frequently to take notes for memoranda of conversation, as one of the junior officers, for such Deputy Assistant Secretaries as Dick Davis, Richard Davies and for William Tyler, who was then Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. Sometimes there would be just the two of them and myself, and I would have to do the whole memcon. When I first did it I was very nervous and scared; I read up on how to do it and I practiced and got to be pretty good at it. Then they asked for me because I always went right down and wrote it out in longhand--we had no computers in those days--and gave it to a secretary or typed it myself. They always wanted it quickly to do a telegram to Moscow. I also very often was called to escort the long-time Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin from the diplomatic entrance. He was dean of the Diplomatic Corps when he left. That was how long he had been here. He probably ranks in the top five of all

the diplomats that I know anything about, certainly of the ones I have read about. We are talking about a man who was simply superb in his diplomatic role. That is why he was kept in this country for twenty some years, and he had been deputy chief of mission before that.

I got to know Dobrynin well enough so that when I was married in 1965, I was still on the Soviet desk, he heard about it and congratulated me in the elevator. When I was courting my wife, we were walking along the C&O canal up near Great Falls. It turns out that the circle that Russians were allowed to travel in fell just short of Great Falls. I knew it because I had to keep track of my Russian businessmen. Dobrynin was coming up the towpath with his wife beyond the permissible point. He saw us and we stopped and I introduced him to my fiancée and we had a nice chat. I wanted to say, "Mr. Ambassador, you are out of bounds," but I had such deep respect and awe for the man that I couldn't find it in my heart to ever tell anybody about it and I don't think he had a clue. I figured a man the stature of Dobrynin on the tow path was going to be just fine as far as I was concerned.

Q: While you were on the Soviet desk, what were you absorbing from those who were dealing with the Soviet Union as professionals at the time?

FRY: I think that what I was absorbing was that there were two elements you always had to take into account in dealing with the Soviet Union. The first was that you had to follow the shield that the administration wanted to put on its activities. You didn't want to look like you were coddling communists--there was still a lot of that pressure. On the other hand we were involved in the day to day operations of trying to manage a relationship between two increasingly armed superpowers. You simply could not start each day by saying, "What can I do today to weaken communism?" What you started your day with was, "What can I do to solve this problem? How can we get this eighty-year old Jewish woman out of the Soviet Union for medical treatment that her brother is willing to pay for in New York? How can we get the Bolshoi Ballet out this time more simply, for a tour?" In all of those things it was the human problems, it was the day to day mechanics of managing a relationship.

What I learned from people who were later Chiefs of Mission--Foy Kohler, Spike Dubs who was Ambassador to Afghanistan and was subsequently assassinated, and many other senior officials at that time--was that you don't carry any Cold War emotions or any other personal beliefs into the relationship that you are building on a professional diplomatic level with your counterparts. You do your business, you do it professionally, you don't raise your voice. I heard Richard Harding Davis, then a Deputy Assistant Secretary, call in a Soviet diplomat to complain about a border incident or something in Berlin and give him very harsh words in a very dignified, civilized, soft-spoken voice. He realized, and then I learned, that the tone of your voice with your counterpart over the table has nothing to do with how things come out, or how problems are solved or not solved. What it can do is to arouse human antagonisms which may simply cloud the real issues; you don't want that so you don't do it.

I learned that making your point very clearly, so there is absolutely no doubt on the other side as to precisely why you called them in, was the whole point, and shouting did no good. Also, as in all diplomatic relations, there were those on the military or intelligence side who welcomed confrontations with the Soviet Union. They saw it as an opportunity for their work or for

disruption of the system. That was not necessarily compatible with what you were trying to do, not that you would stand in the way of it. So there would be times when reciprocity ruled. If an American's tire was slashed in Moscow, for whatever reason, you can bet that a Soviet tire would be slashed in Arlington, in Bethesda, on 16th Street, or wherever, about a week later. And vice versa. Even if it was a hoodlum with no connection to anybody in America it would wind up with some poor Foreign Service officer having to buy a new Goodyear out in Moscow. So reciprocity was the name of the game and the order of the day. If I allowed a Soviet diplomat a waiver to go to San Francisco to talk with someone there it was only done with the understanding that an American would be allowed to go to a closed area.

The closed areas in the United States and the closed areas in the Soviet Union were monitored very carefully and they were part and parcel of the relationship. It occupied a lot of time. The Soviets actually began their closed areas program, that is areas denied to foreigners for any reason except on a very special waiver, long before we did. We tried to negotiate out of it, but they wouldn't so we just began one. I had a map in my office, and a map at home in case I was called there, and a list of cities that were especially closed--under no circumstances would waivers be granted. I had rings around New York, rings around Washington, where they couldn't go beyond. If a policeman called the State Department and said, "I arrested this guy for speeding in Chappaqua, New York [sixty-five miles from New York City], what do I do with him?" then we had one on them and they would have to let one of our guys off when they caught him outside the ring in Moscow. It is minutiae like that that actually took up a lot of time on the desk.

Q: Then you went to Russian training, is that right?

FRY: I asked to go to Moscow and as part of that there was Russian language training at the Foreign Service Institute. I had started trying to learn some Russian on my own, to get an idea of the language. I was accepted for assignment to Moscow, to go in June or early July of 1966, so in September 1965--I had been married in the summer of 1965--I was released from the desk and began Russian language training for one year.

Q: So you were taking Russian from 1965 to 1966?

FRY: From the late summer of 1965 to the end of June in 1966 and then went to Moscow immediately afterwards.

Q: You served in Moscow from 1966 through 1968. What was the situation there when you arrived?

FRY: In a curious way, we were allowed to do things then that subsequently we were not allowed to do. I will tell you a quick story. When I went to Europe from New York in the summer of 1966, my wife and I took the *United States*, landed in Le Havre and drove-- I had my Ford Fairlane which had been specially built for Russian roads, special springs and so on -- through Scandinavia, stopping in Copenhagen, Stockholm and Helsinki, and on to Leningrad where we stayed for three days over Soviet Naval Day. I had a movie camera -- I had never signed in at the Embassy, I was going strictly on my visa, the Soviets gave me permission to drive in, the Embassy gave me permission to drive in -- and went up along the Neva River and

filmed the whole review of the Soviet fleet and the newest cruiser, the head of the Soviet Navy coming across in his launch; I took pictures of the crowd, people waving at me. Then we went to Novgorod, stayed overnight in a hotel there and did all the tourism there. Finally we drove through Kalinin, which might have been a bit closed because it was industrial, had almost no surveillance that I recall, got to the Embassy in Moscow, parked the car and went in and introduced myself and that was the way I started my work. Several years after that our side would never have allowed you to drive a car in and not check in with the Embassy first as they would have feared a provocation or something like that.

In any case, I began work immediately in the consular section and my wife began work, as a contract employee with USIA, in the downstairs cultural section which adjoined the consular section and used the same waiting room. That was where the library was. Mainly Africans students and foreign students came in to use our materials. Very few Russians were allowed in because the militia wouldn't let them pass the gate.

The embassy situation was very correct but you were very much aware of the heavy hand -- the militia outside the Embassy, the concern that your Russian nationals were working both sides as they probably had to. On the other hand, the professionalism of the consular staff, that is the Russians -- they were all women, there were four and later five when I was there, headed by a woman named Mary Litvenienko, famous to a whole generation of Foreign Service Officers -- was excellent and so cooperative and helpful. We weren't handling anything in the consular section that was particularly sensitive, so the working environment with our Russian colleagues was excellent. I became devoted to them, and showed them movies when the Embassy was closed on Wednesday afternoon. They never came to my house, but when I left they gave me a little chit on a commission store, which is like our second-hand store, and said, "Go there and give this to the woman." That is all they told me. When I went there I was given a beautiful samovar that they had arranged to give me which I still have.

Also, at that time we were experiencing a rather sharp increase in the number of American tourists that were allowed to come in. For the first time Americans were allowed to drive into the Soviet Union from Finland -- which I was allowed to do as a diplomat -- and from Poland through Minsk and down into Moscow, and I think they could drive from the crossing in Czechoslovakia -- later closed after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia -- through Kiev and on to Moscow. So there was an increase in tourism. Eventually the Pan-Am flights started and American tour companies began to sell more and more tours. What this meant was a lot more work for the consular section.

It also meant that the Russians had to begin to realize that you cannot allow tourism and then treat tourists like prisoners. You can herd them around with Intourist but there are people who are going to want to photograph a bridge or a cathedral in the center of town. To have militiamen come up and want to snatch the camera for photographing a bridge that is on a postal card being sold in the Soviet stores is ridiculous. We had to keep reminding them that they were in the big time now and if they wanted tourists they were going to have to be responsible for providing the tourists with the tour they had paid for. We would get all kinds of complaints in the consular section about rooms that didn't look out on the Kremlin and "what are you going to do about it," a lot of aggravations because we had to treat those complaints seriously or tourists would report

us to their Congress person.

But on the serious side we also began to get elderly American citizens who were returning to see relatives in the Soviet Union that they hadn't seen since the '30s or the post-war period, and they died. Or those who were on tour ships, like the Moore-McCormick Line that came into Leningrad and later Odessa, who simply had a heart attack while they were on Soviet soil on tours. That required us to do all of the Foreign Service things regarding death of US citizens abroad, to arrange for shipment of the remains to the family, consular report of death, etc. A lot of things began during my first watch in the Soviet Union that we simply hadn't been doing before.

Another thing was that American tourists, not diplomats, were allowed to fly into the Soviet Union from Afghanistan -- from Kabul to Tashkent in Uzbekistan -- and then continue on a Soviet domestic flight, which was about a tenth the price of a direct international flight to Scandinavia. They were booked from Kabul, say, to Stockholm via a domestic flight. What happened was that a few Americans thought that when they entered the Soviet Union they were just going to transfer to another flight, then they would fly up to Leningrad and transfer to another flight and go out to Helsinki. The first one, in the fall of 1966, brought in hashish taped to his body; I won't say that he was an addict but he later told me that he had made more than fifty LSD trips in college in the mid-'60s and he was pretty messed up. He had also brought in hashish in a suitcase that had a false bottom which we subsequently found out was provided to him by a KGB informer in Kabul. The KGB has primary jurisdiction at ports of entry so it meant that the minute the arrest was made at the airport we were dealing with the KGB. We were not dealing with the KGB part that sent espionage agents abroad, it was the domestic counter-intelligence and border guards. But in any case, you were dealing directly with the KGB. On the first arrest I went down to Tashkent and was able to talk with the gentleman. I went alone, incidentally, and that was the first time in the Embassy's memory, I won't say ever but certainly in a long time, that an officer had gone out alone some 4,000 miles from the Embassy.

Over all the time I was there I had four arrests in Tashkent; I went to Tashkent eight or ten times round trip and I had a lot of surveillance but no harassment. The KGB was very correct; sometimes I had to wait three days for an interview and it made me pretty angry to sit around. But then I walked around the city and got to know it better and began to do some reporting on what I saw, so it turned out to be pretty valuable. I was also buying local newspapers; when you were out of Moscow you bought up all the local newspapers you could and took them with you. Usually the Russians let you do that. One time they stole them from my hotel room because I had been down there more than a week and they finally decided I was getting too much conceptive information rather than one or two papers. They claimed that the cleaning woman took them. I said get them back and they said that it wasn't possible. Then I saw the non-velvet hand of the KGB stepping in to remind me that I was alone down there and had better behave like a good consular officer instead of a showboat getting all the local literature. I did manage to buy some books that we hadn't been able to get and they let me get those. I guess they didn't realize what I was doing. I had to take my notes with me, notes that I took at the trial: since I was writing more than was said at the trial I had to carry those with me. Because it was very hot down there, my wife helped me fabricate a case which was plastic so the papers wouldn't get wet but was cloth on the outside. I would fold that in half and tuck that into my shirt so that I always had that with

me. I don't know if they knew that. So I went to Tashkent for those trials.

The first person was released in November of 1967 on the fiftieth anniversary of the Soviet Union. For two subsequent arrests, both gentlemen in question went to prison. They got three to five years at Potma, which was in the R.S.F.S.R. southwest of Moscow, where foreigners were kept. It was a minimum regime labor camp where you made gloves and chessmen and things like that. One of the guys was actually a deserter from the Vietnam draft from Ford Ord, California. He wanted, for his defense, to throw himself on the mercy of the court because he refused to fight against the Vietnamese. I argued against this and his lawyer also thought this was not a good idea. I had hired a lawyer for him who was a member of the Jewish community in Tashkent and whose family had lived there for hundreds of years -- there is a big Jewish community down there, including a synagogue. Well the guy wanted this defense and did throw himself on the mercy of the court. What he forgot, and what I had warned him of in the few moments when I was alone with him, was that Russians don't like disloyal citizens, draft dodgers, and deserters. He got three to five years at Potma.

I might say, as to the Soviet system of law, that I first saw it as a complete aberration of law and order. But later on, in curious ways, I came to respect the system in this sense: the preliminary investigation conducted by Soviet authorities is extremely thorough. It encompasses the crime and the person's past; recidivism, the recommitting of a crime, is very serious under Soviet law. Soviet law is surprisingly lenient, or was, in many first cases, in particular with young people. The second time you are caught it is very, very hard on you. You almost always get a medium regime, or hard regime, labor camp, or even prison. Labor camps aren't considered prisons. This young man, the deserter, had a very clean record; the Soviets knew that I had documents showing what a fine young man he was and who went astray just this one time. Whether it was true or not, the documents were introduced into court. But he kept playing on the idea that he could have been fighting in Vietnam but instead was for peace. I tried to tell him that this was not necessarily a good defense in the Soviet Union because the Soviet authorities, and in general the Soviet people, do not respect persons who will not do their military obligations. It is a very serious offense in the Soviet Union, a long penal sentence.

I did not see that this defense would play as well as he was expecting it to and indeed it did not. Basically, there is a judge and two lay assessors, who are factory people put into white shirts for the day, but the judge makes the decision. After the American had a chance to testify and his lawyer appealed for him, the prosecutor asked for five years. The judge sentenced him to three to five years. The judge concentrated on the fact that he had entered the Soviet Union with the drugs, that he would have had an opportunity to try and sell them in the Soviet Union, and even if it was not in the Soviet Union he was going to take them to another country where he would condemn people to a life of using drugs. The Russians were very, very strict and very much law and order both on their own people and on foreigners in the matter of drugs. This was long before it was fashionable in the US to be so hard on port of entry drugs; we were strict but not anything like it became later.

The Russians were very hard on these people. He went to prison, and two others that I handled all served their time. One, who was an Hispanic-American, opted hard-line, that is wouldn't cooperate and took a Buddhist stance and refused to help his defense attorney; he went into a

silence strike when he was sentenced to prison. Finally the Russians got tough with him and put him into a medium regime part of the camp where he had to work pretty hard. The end product was that instead of getting out in three years they made him stay four. That proved to me that the best thing you could do once you were in their hands was to cooperate in every way, because you weren't going to make your point in a totalitarian system by pretending that you were tougher than the camp guards. The final case I was working on as my esteemed colleague Robert Barry, who later became Ambassador to Bulgaria, and Indonesia, and many high level stops along the way, came to replace me. The outcome of that trial was Potma, also.

One of the saddest cases I had was a person not in good health; he was a drug user, had been working in Spain, owned a bar there, was married to a British woman, one thing and another. He got all involved in stolen cars, driving them to the Middle East, and had decided finally to make a killing on the hashish. He went to the same store, got a false bottom suitcase -- the same store that supplied the first American with a false bottomed suitcase -- and when he walked into that airport they had dogs, photographs, the works. He also had a vest, which was *de rigueur* for smugglers in those days, lined with flat pressed hashish. Never was a person nabbed and nailed so cleanly. They had a movie of undressing him while he was standing there with a shocked expression, peeling all this stuff back with the dogs going crazy. Anyway he was not in such good health and the upshot of this was that he went into the labor camp -- this was before prisoners were brought up to Moscow where we could see them and offer them medicines in the program that the State Department introduced into the consular system to make sure right at the start that there were no medical problems -- with a vitamin E deficiency. He lost most of his hair, a lot of his teeth, and his skin was bad. When he finally was released, he got three to five years but I think they let him out a little early because the Russians were getting worried, my colleagues saw him at the airport on his exit flight and he looked like an old man and he was only in his early '30s. This was the down side of messing with Soviet authorities. Even if you tried to cooperate you were still in a labor camp far, far away from, in those days, any direct Embassy support or moral support; you just didn't see anybody for a long time that you could talk to. Plus, the camps were very dangerous.

There was the case of Newcomb Mott. As I was preparing for the Soviet Union, a young American illegally but inadvertently used a small border crossing in north Norway that was only for Norwegians. He was tried in Murmansk and was sentenced to the Gulag, I forget for how long, for illegal border illegal crossing, another KGB operation. This was in the spring of 1966. The Soviets said that Newcomb Mott committed suicide. We say that he was murdered, probably by other prisoners who were on the train who were hard core criminals and really tough. They probably killed him for his watch and whatever else he had on him. An autopsy quite a bit later did find what was compatible with a stab wound, among other things; he was beaten and was probably strangled.

This was a very serious game in the Soviet Union with regard to Americans who were arrested and we took it very seriously. I traveled about sixty thousand miles alone in the Soviet Union; to Odessa, Kishinev, Minsk, Kiev, Leningrad where two young Americans were arrested. They had just been released from the Army. This was in the fall of 1966 shortly after I arrived. They did some black marketing and also stole a bronze bear from the *Europa* hotel in Leningrad. They were charged with all kinds of things. What was interesting about their trial was that the

Russians allowed the Intourist guides (women) who had helped them along on their trip, and served as interpreters, to testify at the trial. The prosecutor showed the notes that the women had taken about the behavior of the men before they committed their crime and it was a real eye opener -- why the Soviets did it I didn't understand at the time -- to see the detailed reports that were made on each and every tourist the women were with. How they joked about their own country, whether they appeared loyal to the United States, etc. In other words, they were being set up as possible co-optees if later on they professed a love for the Soviet Union and didn't like the American military. What was bad about these two arrests was that one of the Americans had been a pilot of a prop plane that used to fly along the East German- Czech border on patrols and he kept part of his flight book with him. He had violated US Army regulations, US regulations, everything; plus, it was just dumb.

Even more interesting about this case was that the Soviet Union, for the first time ever, allowed what we would call bail for one of the young men. His father came over and the son was allowed to come down to Moscow on \$10,000 bail. It wasn't a bond. They had to send \$10,000 to Soviet authorities which was put in a dollar account until the disposition of the trial. The other, the military pilot, was not allowed to leave his cell so the consul, Harlan Moen, and I had to go and visit him in his cell a number of times. Both Americans were tried and both of them were found guilty, but both were released with heavy fines. Wouldn't you know that the fine for the one was the \$10,000 that was already on record. The other one I think was \$15,000. I was thinking today that one of the two young men came from Arkansas, and I wonder if he is still down there and voted for Governor Clinton.

We were talking before about businesslike relations as opposed to the Cold War hysteria. My message from those trials was that the Russians were telling us to tell our tourists to be very careful, and to obey Soviet laws whatever they thought of them. That is why they let us see and hear what the Intourist women had recorded. They didn't do this by chance; they wanted us to know that they were following people very carefully. So we put into our brochure, "You don't joke about the Soviet system. You can discuss your country honestly, you can be a normal American. In the Soviet Union you do not take souvenirs from your hotel room, you do not take towels, you do not take bronze bears that turn out to be by a famous sculptor. You toe the mark, however painful it might be. The Soviets do not look on these things as shenanigans; it is hooliganism and its a crime and you may be arrested." You didn't want to scare the bejesus out of people who were coming in to have a nice tour and most of the people were no problem. On the other hand when you started getting younger people coming over on language exchange programs you really had to give them a hard briefing.

Q: It was also a period of student rebellion which in an earlier time -- and maybe even now -- would not have been accepted. In those days young men, up to their early '30s, could get away with a lot more in the States and maybe Western Europe.

FRY: By 1968 the greening of America was well under way. The Tet offensive had passed in Vietnam and things were very difficult on the campuses of the United States. What we had to tell people was that Soviet law applied to them while they were in the Soviet Union, and in the Soviet Union you do not get on a street corner and start preaching about democracy. We used to use the old joke -- to soften the pill about behavior patterns there -- of the Soviet who was

arguing with an American and the American said, "Anytime I want I can get on a street corner and denounce Lyndon Johnson as a fool." The Russian said, "We have the same freedoms here; anytime I want I can get on a street corner and denounce Lyndon Johnson and call him a fool." They got the point very quickly about what that meant. There were Americans who came through Russia who had deserted from I think either the *Wasp* or the *Enterprise* from Sasebo or Yokohama, Japan. There were five sailors -- a famous case -- who deserted and went on Soviet television and were later popping around Sweden and over the years have gone home. We did have a lot of deserters who tried to convince the Soviets that they wanted to live in the Soviet Union and didn't want to serve in the American army. Curiously enough, in many cases, the Soviets just put them across the border into Finland. They didn't want any part of this unless they were going to be really valuable. Although once they put the Americans on television, I don't recall that they ever did that again. These were just young sailors and I have forgotten all the circumstances of why they had gotten in trouble on the ship and finally deserted.

We had an Embassy program where every night one language officer would follow television from when it went on to when it went off. Since there was only one channel it wasn't hard. You monitored everything and had it written up in the morning, dictated it to your secretary, or whatever, and that was on the Ambassador's, DCM's, and others', desks by nine or ten in the morning. We often picked up things on the Soviet news about Americans who had come to the Soviet Union that we didn't know anything about. We would go to the Foreign Ministry and ask to talk to the person to be sure he was there under his own free will.

Sometimes the Americans were willing to meet with us and sometimes they were not. There were a number of cases like that. I don't know what the disposition of the cases were, I can tell you that most Americans who had lived in the Soviet Union for very long, who had gone there with the idea that they would be some kind of hero for denouncing the war in Vietnam, very soon found out what the reality of life was like there. Once the show was over and the television lights were off it wasn't very pleasant. Most of them were not allowed to stay in Moscow, they went off to smaller towns. I think all of them left at some point and the Russians let them go; once their propaganda value was used they were simply a drain on the Soviet economy.

I would like to mention one other incident in Moscow that moved me a great deal. It was the kind of thing that happens that for just a fleeting moment took the hard mask off the Cold War and gave a glimmer of hope that underneath the Soviet tyranny was the Russia that we are perhaps seeing a bit more of today. There was first the Soviet shock after the assassination of Martin Luther King. Since this followed President Kennedy's assassination by a very few years there was the feeling that the United States was in serious trouble. Not just trouble because we were bogged down in Vietnam, but, just as we later saw in the Soviet Union, they began to say that American society was beginning to disintegrate. They were looking at the worst that you could.

I had television duty in Moscow the night after Martin Luther King was assassinated. I will tell you what the Soviets had on their television. They took all the television coverage of the riots in Washington, DC, and they shortened them so what you got was a tape running all the worst case scenes in about a three minute clip. So what I saw when the television came on was, with the announcer saying almost nothing. There was the Memorial Bridge with the cars backed up and a

car burning so that there was smoke there, a machine gun emplacement on the steps of the Capitol with sandbags, tremendous smoke pouring out on H Street, solid smoke and fire, pillaging, National Guard at camps in Stanton Park and Lincoln Park on Capitol Hill, and the Mall with armored cars and men armed with automatic weapons who were marching towards and ringing Union Station. All of this was shown on Russian television. I was stunned. I stopped writing. At that time we did not have a taping facility in our homes -- I don't know whether the surveillance people in our Embassy were taping this. I wrote it all up and we sent in a telegram immediately. I was not only stunned by what was happening in the United States but by the Martin Luther King assassination itself. That was the Martin Luther King assassination. Subsequently Robert Kennedy was assassinated.

Q: This was in June of 1968 wasn't it?

FRY: Yes, near the end of my time. When he was assassinated that was it. John F. Kennedy was, for all kinds of weird, psychological reasons, revered in the Soviet Union for his American University speech in 1962 or 1963. It was the first presidential speech which sought to reverse the tide of Cold War polemics and attempted to stake out new ground.

Q: I think it was early 1963. It was the summer before he was assassinated.

FRY: That's right, it was after the Cuban missile crisis. In any case, there was a sense of good feeling, that things could change. The Bay of Pigs was over with the attempted invasion of Cuba by dissidents. The one gift that Soviets prized more than anything and that I gave, rarely, to Russians who had been helpful on my consular trips, was a Kennedy half dollar. I cannot tell you the effect that this had on people.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia and this was a very important gift there too.

FRY: Yes, it was really a very moving thing to see their response. I gave it once to a doctor who had treated an American in a car accident way out in the Ukraine. It was a closed area and I was allowed to go there. He died and his wife was injured and we brought her back to Moscow. I went there with the Embassy doctor; it was near Poltava. I gave the doctor a Kennedy half dollar and he was really moved; I won't say teary, but he couldn't thank me enough.

When Robert Kennedy was assassinated it was more than anyone could think about. We thought we should do something here, the flag went to half mast, of course. The Ambassador, then Llewellyn Thompson, said it would be appropriate to have a sign-in book, or else we got something from the State Department that said if you wanted to do it it would be appropriate. So we got a big book for people to sign and in the lobby of Spaso House, the Ambassador's Residence, we set up a table and got a black cloth for it. I found in the library a *Look* magazine which had a picture of Bobby on the cover. We cut it out and framed it and put that over the book for it. I think we had some Bach or dirge or quiet-type music, which is very typically Soviet. Whenever a prominent Soviet citizen dies the radios immediately go onto dirges. I was given the first assignment to stand by the book and greet people as they came in. The idea was to put out someone who was on the country team, as I was as a section chief, but not someone really high ranking like the head of the political section. Everybody thought that nobody would

come at the beginning and then the Foreign Ministry would say who was coming over from the Foreign Ministry, if anyone, and then the Ambassador might be there. I think we opened the book somewhere around ten in the morning. We had sent around a diplomatic note the day before saying that the book would be open for signatures.

The doors had not opened before the cars started pulling up. In the first car was an official whose name I do not recall but he would be the equivalent of the Deputy Director of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs in our State Department. That was starting up pretty high; the next one was a Soviet military official, then the Ambassador of Peru, or wherever. Suddenly Ambassadors' cars with the flags flying appeared, another high ranking military officer, and so on. They were coming through and there was no one in the House to speak of except myself and a Chinese servant who had worked there since the forties and was a fixture around Spaso House.

I felt I couldn't leave him there and run to the phone, but then Georgi Korniyenko, the head of American Affairs at the Foreign Ministry came in, and by this time we were already on the third or fourth page of the book. Every visitor was so deeply solemn, so apparently shocked, and with the dirge music, I was close to tears myself. I just had to run to a phone. I told them what was happening and all hell broke loose. The political counselor came right down and I guess I was relieved of command. But the thing that struck me was that with the Russian political hierarchy there was no sense of "you see that your country is falling apart," "you see what happens when you get into Vietnam." Nothing like that, I can only describe it as profound shock. Now they were really getting worried that something was deeply amiss and deeply afoot in the United States that might ultimately affect how the United States was looking at the Cold War. In particular, they held to the conspiracy theory of President Kennedy's death. The assassination of his brother, who was then running for President of the United States, more or less confirmed their view of something of much greater import. In their own country that would be the way it was since there was no way for orderly change to take place. So they just saw this as some massive kind of plot. I think they were so concerned about this that it actually showed and was why they wanted to appear on the scene immediately. It was their message that this had graver implications in their mind than just the death of the man who was running for president.

Q: I think we had reached a modus vivendi and it looked like there were hidden forces. Actually this one was probably an off-shoot of the Palestinian problem, but to somebody outside of the system...Even in the United States it was...

FRY: Certainly, and until very recently we tended to filter many world events through the prism of US-USSR relations. Whether they were appropriately placed or not that was where they got imprisoned.

Q: What was your impression, at this particular period of time, of the morale, the caliber, the outlook of the Embassy staff and the leadership of Llewellyn Thompson?

FRY: I think over all the morale was very high in the officer corps. There were spouses whose morale was low because they had not had an opportunity to really learn Russian, or in some cases even to study Russian. They seldom left the compound, they did not share in the excitement of the work in the same way that someone who was at a desk everyday did, they were

not reading the classified messages to know what was really going on behind the scenes, and they were under surveillance and their homes were being bugged by electronic devices. But over all, I would say, morale was the kind of morale you get among professionals who consider themselves sort of an elite. We were the shock troops on the farthest reaches of the ramparts of the Cold War. You couldn't get any more into the heartland than being in Moscow since at that time there were no other posts open in the Soviet Union. When we walked into the Soviet stores, when we walked down the streets, we were both in a fascinating country with a long history and in the camp of the enemy. And the enemy was never far away. The surveillance was heavy; the electronic surveillance was just assumed, in your automobile if not always in your home, and in restaurants where you went and hotels where you stayed when you were traveling. There was that constant sense of -- we didn't really use the term 'big brother' so much, although the term was used in the public a lot from the Orwell novel -- "big brother is watching you."

I think my own personal morale, and my wife's as well, was very high. For one thing, we took vacations in the Soviet Union. We also spent three days in Odessa touring and meeting the first US passenger ship, and three days in Vladimir simply touring. We went through the Intourist program, though we could do some things on our own. My Russian was getting good at this point on getting around and I felt pretty comfortable talking to people on a one-time conversation basis. I used to pick up some interesting, not earth shaking, information on how life was going there. I think all of us who could travel, as part of our jobs, loved it. That was a real sense of being on the front lines, you might say, and of gleaning whatever information you could.

I remember going into a courtroom in Tashkent about a half-hour earlier than I was supposed to -- by this time they were so used to seeing me that they didn't pay any attention to me anymore -- and I sat in on a trial that was absolutely fascinating and which they probably wouldn't have let me hear if they had thought about it. There was a dentist in Tashkent who was shaving gold that he was supposed to put into fillings. He had stolen gold -- it was some kind of gold scam -- and there were people who had been arrested who had been helping him. One guy who was helping him in this gold scam had already been drafted, his head had been shaved and he was already doing time in the military system. Now he was getting slammed by the civilian court. I wrote all this up. It was the first time I had been to a real criminal trial with real political overtones.

The interesting part was that they were all Russians but they were scamming the Uzbeks, they were shaving the gold out of the Uzbek mouths not the Russian mouths. There was a lot of hard feelings against the Russians that I picked up by talking with the Uzbeks while walking around the street. This was because there was an earthquake in Tashkent a few years previously and the Russians had rebuilt their part of the city but the Uzbek part still looked like hell, and you could see the fault line through the city.

The Uzbeks were very bitter about this. I remember one guy, I was buying papers from him in the underground that went under the main street, and he said to me, "I am really curious about you." Now he is speaking his second or third-hand Russian, he probably had a dialect before Uzbek, and I was speaking my Russian which he could tell was foreign. "I think I finally know who you are." I was absolutely amazed. "I talked about it with my friends," and he looked around at some people there, "you are very tall [because I am over 6'5"] so you can't be one of them [meaning Russians] but you are very dark, so now we know. You are Lithuanian, aren't

you?" I said, and I was always very honest with people because I never knew when I was looking at a setup or a provocation, "No, I am an American, a United States citizen." And I always told people I lived in New York City because that is the one city in America that they know; I told him I was born in New York. I want to tell you, they never stopped talking about that and from then on every time I would come around their shops in the underground they would salute me and say, "American." They would stand up. They thought it was great that an American was down there. I'll never forget that statement, "You're tall and dark so you're not one of them."

Q: What about Llewellyn Thompson and how he ran the Embassy and how he dealt with things from your perspective?

FRY: When I first was on the Soviet desk and studying Russian, Foy Kohler was the Ambassador. Ambassador Thompson had been brought back to the United States in 1962 and was President Kennedy's advisor. He gave him that wonderful advice in the Cuban missile crisis when the President had received two letters from Khrushchev. He said, "What you do is don't pay any attention to the second one. Just pretend like you didn't get it." That seems to have been one of the factors in breaking the problem down to a manageable solution. He was considered a very good advisor and his office was in the State Department. I used to take Memoranda of Conversations for him and had gotten to know him a bit. He knew that I was going to go out there. He was a great gentleman, soft spoken, kind. I was very concerned about his chain smoking. He was one of the few people I have known who simply never had a cigarette out of his mouth or his hand. I mention that because as you know he died of lung and throat cancer.

Q: 1964 was the year when the famous Surgeon General's report came out.

FRY: That's right. The Ambassador then in Moscow was Foy Kohler; he had been there since late 1962. I had also met him in Washington. All those Ambassadors took a great interest in the junior officers coming out because they knew that the junior officers were the real backbone of a lot of the work, particularly in the consular office where we were all basically junior officers, FSO-fives or lower. I was a six by that time and then I was promoted to five while I was there to be consul. They paid attention to what you said and gave you advice. Ambassador Thompson, for example, was interested in the fact -- more than just saying, "Oh," -- that my first post had been Trieste. I said, "Of course, your name is so well known there." I didn't say revered, but the Italians were damn glad that he pulled their chestnuts out of the fire in the Trieste agreement. Thompson was very pleased at that.

When I went to Moscow, Foy Kohler was there. The very first week Foy Kohler and Phyllis Kohler had my wife and me and all the new officers who had just arrived, over to the residence. Now sure, Ambassadors do this all the time. We had a very nice long chat. Then three weeks or so after I had started working in the consular section, I looked out into the waiting room and there was Foy Kohler talking to my wife. She took him into the library and showed him some things they were doing and then he walked across to the consular section. The Russian employees practically fainted; they said, "He rarely comes down here; this is just amazing." He came in and we showed him a few things in the consular section. He joked that the consul's

office was actually bigger in square footage than the cramped Ambassador's office up on the seventh floor where it was all under surveillance with Marine Guards. We didn't have Marines downstairs since we had Russians working with us and a lot of Russians in the waiting room. He did make the effort to come down and see you in your job. It did wonders for your morale, and at staff meetings he always went around and listened equally to each officer and gave you the impression that he was interested. If you wrote a telegram or an airgram that he thought was good he might even mention it. He would see you upstairs and say, "That was a nice piece on the (such and such)," or, "Your trip report on Kishinev to see that dying American was quite nice; that will save the State Department from any questions from the family as to what actually happened."

As it turned out, Foy Kohler went back to be, I believe, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and Llewellyn Thompson came back out as Ambassador. He was there at the time that I left and gave me a signed photograph. We got to know him; my wife was a very lovely and charming person, good natured and a good morale builder, and he appreciated that in the Embassy. So I think in that sense he was a very good morale builder. I also think that some of the senior officers were pretty hard task masters because they didn't want you to start feeling sorry for yourself because you got harassed by somebody in the street or were the subject of a provocation or your wife was unhappy. But at the same time you learned so much about speed drafting and speed reading, particularly the guys in the political section, for example. The pressure was always on, and it was a very high pressure Embassy.

But I learned something then that I found discussed in the management courses that I took later on in my Foreign Service career: there is no such thing as a stressful job. There are only people who are stressed. (This doesn't really help you much if you are stressed.) But what I found was that if you break your job down into what is precisely the most important thing that has to move at that moment -- that was my Foreign Service lesson there -- that is when a lot of the stress goes away. Although you might have to come in on a weekend or a night, the principal fact or information that Washington needed to know had gone, and in a high stress for information flow post that is what you did. It sharpened my priorities which kept me in good stead for the rest of my career because I knew the tendency was to do the easy part first and then ponder how to do the hard part. That was doing it exactly the wrong way when we were on the ramparts out there. Washington wanted it, wanted it fast, and didn't want any excuses when that Assistant Secretary sat down at his desk -- and we had that eight-hour turnaround so sometimes it was a little hard; they were going home to sleep when our day was starting. That is why people stayed after hours and just got those telegrams out. There were superb language officers like William Brown, who was Ambassador to Thailand and Israel, and many other language officers who become Chiefs of Mission; Allen Davis, Bill Price, Norm Anderson, Bill Dyess, Bob Barry, Bill Farrand, Tom Niles. There was a very solid corps of officers; not a turkey among them as we used to say.

FREDERICK Z. BROWN
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1964)

**Assistant Administrative Officer
Moscow (1965-1967)**

Frederick Z. Brown was born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania in 1928. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University and a master's from the University of Colorado. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1950-1956. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in France, Thailand, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Cyprus. Mr. Brown was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 2, 1990.

BROWN: ... My assignment ended early. I left after eighteen months in Thailand. I left in June of 1964 to go to Russian language training. Because in the back of my mind I always had this desire to be a Soviet specialist.

Q: The real stars of the foreign service in the post-war years, even the pre-war years, were the Russian specialists. Was this still the impression you had?

BROWN: Yes, that's where the action was.

Q: Not only the action, but this was the absolute top grade people.

BROWN: Yes, and this is why I went for it. I had been given to believe just exactly what you said. I had come to observe that. The elite were Eastern Europe and Soviet specialists. I wanted to be part of that elite, and I was told that the chances of getting in were relatively small. First of all because I was unmarried. They had this ridiculous notion that single officers should not serve in Moscow because they would be subject to compromise. Well later on I was to find that in Moscow, I was freer to do what I wanted than anybody else. And the people who were compromised to my knowledge were all married officers. I happen to know three married men in Moscow who were caught in flagrant delicto with infrared cameras. And the only reason they could be compromised was because they were married. Whereas I, who had an active social life, the KGB had complete recordings of all the Mozart and Mahler symphonies from my bedroom, which were used as cover music. And I would announce it, with the name of the conductor and orchestra so that the KGB would be able to file their recording in a way that others could enjoy later on. But I was never compromised in Moscow, because what I did was in the realm of normal activity.

But in any event it was considered a bit of a coup for an unmarried officer to go to Moscow. I was one of two people in that category who were sent to Moscow in 1965. But I did look upon Russian language training and Soviet specialty. I made a conscious decision to leave the Far East as it was then called and to go on to Soviet specialization.

In retrospect I see this as rather bizarre. Because I later made the decision to leave Soviet affairs and go to Vietnam to save the world, in 1966. I went into Vietnamese language training in 1967 and I never had much desire to go back to Soviet affairs after that.

Q: You were behind the curve.

BROWN: Either ahead of it or behind it. But there again, I had the opportunity in 1963 to volunteer for Thai language training which would have been over in 1964 and then come back to the embassy. I turned that down and instead entered Russian language training in August of 1964. Spent a year in Washington and then went from there to Moscow for a two year tour.

Q: From 1965 to 1967 you were there. Could you explain what the embassy was like and such?

BROWN: The practice in the foreign service for a relatively junior officer, and at that time, when I went to Moscow, it seems to me, I was an FSO 6 at that time, I had not been promoted to FSO 5. I forget when I was promoted to FSO 5. But I was fairly junior, although not by any means a young man, by current standards of that time, but the practice at that time, for someone who is not absolutely fluent in Russian, and when I left the foreign service all I had was an S 3 R 3, was enough to do business but not much more than that. But unless one were a member of what you might call the in group, in Soviet Affairs, had been to Garmisch for the finishing school there. Those of us who were not in that category, and I certainly was not, were assigned to non-political officer jobs or non-economic officer jobs. My first assignment was as assistant administrative officer, which actually turned out to be one of the most useful assignments in the embassy in terms of using Russian language. I was the personnel officer for a staff of a hundred Soviet employees. I dealt with the UPDK, the organization for the servicing of the diplomatic corps. In that capacity I was down every day to the UPDK complaining about the elevator that wasn't being built, trying to get Ambassador Kohler's shower repaired, and so I had a lot to do with the Soviets. My Russian actually improved quite a bit in Moscow, but you improve only in the area where you work unless you make an effort to go outside your vocabulary opportunity, so to speak.

So my first year was as assistant admin officer, and I worked for a gentleman, the admin counselor, Sanford Menter. I was his deputy, I also did a bit of budget and fiscal work although not a great deal. I supervised the Russian language training for the embassy. But my real job was to relate to UPDK and the housekeeping function of the embassy, including personnel. There was a personnel officer for American personnel. So nominally I was her boss and when Menter would leave the post, I would be acting admin officer. So that was my first year.

Then the second year was sort of graduate school for people like myself. I went out to bargain for positions on the fifth or seventh floor in the embassy, which ever was the political section. I ended up not getting one of those jobs but I went instead to the publications procurement officer, PPO, which was a euphemistic term for collection of intelligence. The PPO, actually there were three Americans assigned to the PPO job. I was the senior officer and I had a deputy and I had a staff officer working for me and he did the accounting basically. The job of the PPO was to buy books, maps, postcards, anything in writing about the Soviet Union, and to send this back to Washington in the diplomatic pouch. It was a full time job for basically three people. Because we went around to every bookstore in Moscow, and scarfed up everything we could. Sometimes in two copies, sometimes in fifty copies, depending upon what the material was. It was quite an art to go into the political bookstore or the economic bookstore, and look at a book and determine how valuable it was to the consumers in Washington. The consumers in Washington were the obvious ones, CIA, Library of Congress, Rand Corporation, and then DIA and a whole galaxy of

lesser agencies who relied on the embassy to collect Russian language materials including maps. So we not only did this all over Moscow, and there were hundreds of bookstores in Moscow to cover, some more valuable than others. A lot of repetition. You see the same material in every store. A very carefully controlled press industry as you can imagine. But we also took trips out into the countryside and in that capacity I traveled all over the Soviet Union. I went to Leningrad several time, Kiev, Riga, Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan, Novosibirsk, I was the first American official to visit there at the Academgorodok, to establish liaison on behalf of the Library of Congress, with the Library of Academgorodok, Alma Ata, Tashkent, Fruensi, Yakutsk, Irkutsk.

So I traveled all over the country, not only bought books and maps, talked to people, but did as much as one could in the way of photography and other informal activity. All of this was written up in airgrams. Heaven knows, no telegrams. That was a waste of time. You did airgrams and it would go back to the consumers in Washington. The PPO was considered to be one of the more important ways of learning what was going on in the Soviet Union.

Q: In terms of the political section, you were going out more.

BROWN: In many respects it was more interesting that the political section. I sometimes traveled with people from the political section. I often traveled, as it turned out, with a very fine gentleman by the name of Christopher Squire, who was the science attaché there. He accompanied me on three or four trips. We accompanied each other. Chris eventually went to Vietnam as a province senior advisor, and then came back and was consul general in Leningrad for several years and then headed up the Soviet service of the Voice of America before he retired. Chris died not a year ago. Did you know Chris?

Q: Yes, I called him to interview him and he said he had to go into the hospital.

BROWN: Yes, he had a brain tumor. Very tragic. Chris and I traveled all over the Soviet Union.

Q: How did the Soviet security apparatus operate?

BROWN: They were all over us. They would frequently close every bookstore in a given town. Of course we had to clear all of our travel and get it approved by the Soviets. The Soviets bought us the tickets. The women that ran what you might call the special services unit of the embassy, bought you tickets to the Bolshoi Ballet or whatever and did all of the travel arrangements for you, internal travel was a lieutenant colonel in the KGB, Elena. Everything was done with the complete knowledge and planning of the KGB. Frequently when we would go to a town, we would find that virtually every store was closed for "sanitary day" (cleaning day). The word would go out that the PPO was coming and close up. Often, it appeared to us, that this was left in many cases to local discretion. In some cases the store would be open and the director of the store would say, "Well, screw Moscow. Come on in and buy. I need to get my quota out." And they let us. Because we would come with several thousand rubles and we would make their week. To go in and buy fifty copies of the Economic Gazette of a local republic. They liked that. And oddly enough, the thing that astounded the Soviets the most, was the technology of our packaging.

In the Soviet Union, a paper bag is a precious thing. At least it was in those days. Usually you had to bring your own. But we would come into a bookstore with collapsed corrugated boxes under our arms and several rolls of that plastic tape in which nylon was imbedded with one of those fancy machines to cut it with. We would come in and buy a thousand rubles worth of stuff, maybe several hundred books and the salesman would say, "Now how are you going to carry these. Take these, we don't have any boxes." We would say, "Well we have boxes." "Nah, you don't have any boxes." So we would get out these boxes and throw them together and with the tape, seal them up. We would collect a crowd of a hundred people as we did this. They couldn't believe it. They said, "That tape won't hold it." So what we would do was take a yard of nylon scotch tape and squeeze it together and make a rope and say well you pull this. We would have six Russians on either side pulling, trying to break this rope. They were astounded. That was really the big attention getter, when we would go in and buy books.

Not surprisingly, in many of the ethnic areas such as Tbilisi, Yerevan or Tashkent, you would find people who were very friendly. Whereas in the Russian areas, or in Moscow, not so much. Leningrad in particular, they were very tough. In the ethnic areas, the areas that are now in such discontent and uproar, you would find a more tolerant attitude. But the KGB was always there, they went with us everywhere. We often had to hire a car, which would be a KGB car basically. So they knew where we went and what we got. I am absolutely certain that the stores that were open the day before had been told to put any book of a sensitive nature and put it under the counter. So our job was to run around and try and find these things. They knew exactly what we wanted because we had two Soviet employees full time working in the embassy, putting the books together. Every week we would send out half a ton of books. So the Soviets knew exactly what we were sending out. It was a quid pro quo. A very ineffectual quid pro quo in my view.

The Soviets had at that time as many as fifty people doing the PPO function in Washington. They still do. They carry it to exotic lengths in terms of subscribing to publications, and scarfing up an immense amount of material on the United States. In order to protect themselves against interference in that activity, by the FBI or whatever, I think the Soviets had come to the conclusion that they had to allow PPO to operate in Moscow. So they let us operate on a short leash, and do that activity.

One of the prize things that you always tried to get was a telephone book. They were hard to get. I remember one of my predecessors had managed to (I won't say steal) to appropriate a telephone book from the office of one of the local officials that he called on in one of the provincial towns. He thought he got away with it and the day that he was about to leave that town, I forget where it was, there was a knock on the door, and the KGB were there and said, very politely, "Mr. So and so, we would appreciate it very much if you would give us back the telephone book."

"Oh, gee, did I have a telephone book? I must have picked that up by mistake." So they kept an eye on things very closely and were very carefully about monitoring the people that we talked to.

Q: Let me ask you a question about Soviet personnel at our embassy. What about Soviet personnel. Is it better to make all the employees American?

BROWN: From my experience I got to close to zero in terms of feedback with the Soviets that

worked at the embassy. The personnel system in the American Embassy in Moscow was a battleground. You looked upon it as a daily engagement. The chauffeurs were all very well turned out. Well groomed. Obviously high-ranking officers in the KGB. There was no doubt about it. They feigned an ignorance of English but we all assumed that they were fluent English speakers. For our purposes, we chose to speak to all the Russian employees in Russian, to improve our language capability. But there was no sense that I ever got from a Russian employee, that I dealt with, that somehow I was picking up local color or helping my understanding of the Soviet Union or life in Russia. None. Zero. Life was very closely controlled then. During my time in Moscow, I was under oppressive KGB surveillance only once. It was towards the end of my tour, and because of a personal situation that I was involved in, I think this KGB sensed that and felt that now was the time to put pressure on me. All of a sudden they slapped 24 hour surveillance, close surveillance on me. That meant a KGB car behind me and my own personal car, which I used a lot. I went out a lot at night. Bumper to bumper tail. Following me into restaurants. Standing beside me at the urinal. Sitting at the same table with me at a restaurant. Really full court press. That was the only time that happened to me.

Q: What were they trying to do?

BROWN: My recollection is that this took place towards the end of my tour and there were things going on. I was involved with some people. Not Soviets, but on a personal basis. I had a fairly steady girl friend, a German girl. I think they felt that there was some gain to be made by making me feel nervous. It only lasted a short time. But I could tell you that other officers in the embassy were under this kind of pressure frequently. But except for that one time, I do not recall feeling the KGB presence oppressive. I must say that I spent, of my two year tour there, I must have spent four or five months living at Spaso House. Particularly at times when Ambassador Kohler was away, they wanted an officer there to sort of keep an eye on the silver. The Soviet staff was not above appropriating some of the furnishings or the food. Particularly the food in Spaso House's freezer. I spent a good bit of time there.

As a general observation, my time in Moscow was a very rewarding tour and I felt very little of the oppressiveness and pressure and boredom that many people felt in Moscow. But those were largely wives, families. Moscow was a terrible place for families at that time. The apartments were very bad, very cramped. There was not much to do for the wives. Most of wives didn't speak very good Russian. A couple of them spoke excellent Russian and used that opportunity to move around and learn about Soviet life and Russian life in a very rich and cultural environment there. But by and large it was tough duty for the wives. I was unattached. I could go out by myself and I didn't have to worry about babysitters and things like that. And there were many companions in the Western, European diplomatic corps. So I had a ball. An absolutely wonderful time. Socially, I went to the Bolshoi as often as I wanted to. I got to be quite a ballet fan, opera, plays. There were constraints on my social life with Soviet citizens. I did not get very far in that. I must say.

The one time I developed a social relationship with a Soviet girl, immediately the KGB did move in on that and began to control her and I immediately broke. You had to report every contact you had of a social nature with a Soviet citizen at that time to the office of the special assistant. But that said, I felt very free. I had a great time.

Q: How did Ambassador Kohler operate? Both in Russia and in the embassy.

BROWN: Thompson replaced Kohler. I was there mainly in the Kohler era. Then there was a gap and then Thompson came in. The DCM at that time, and I saw much more of the DCM than anybody else, was John Guthrie who subsequently went on to be DCM and charge for much of the time, in Stockholm during the heavy Vietnam War era. Then I guess he went down to South Africa.

Kohler, to be honest with you, did not make a very strong impression on me as an ambassador. The relationship with the Soviet Union at that time was not very good. Vietnam of course had heated up by the time I got there. In 1965 the American forces had moved into Vietnam. The Marines landed in Danang several months before I got to Moscow. So the American buildup was going on. The American ground war was in full swing. 1966-67-68-69 was the peak of the American involvement. So it was not a warm relationship.

We were quite compartmentalized, I can tell you that. My job as admin officer, I had no need to know what was going on and as PPO I had no need to know. I guess I had one regret. One should not have regrets, but in retrospect, I did not do as much on the political side as I might have. I am not sure how much there was to do. The people who were too active were immediately PNGed, were compromised, like Don Lesh, like Bill Shinn, two of the great Moscow University graduates came into the foreign service, were fluent speakers, and the Soviets were ruthless with them. They would figure out who the best people were, compromise them and get rid of them.

By contrast the Soviets pop out so many American specialists that you can't PNG them all. I suspect that we still suffer from the same short sighted training of our foreign service officers. I am a good example of it. As a four or six year tour and then you let them go, and go off and do something else. And so the government spent a lot of money on me, and I didn't make good on it. Maybe they got their money back in terms of Vietnamese language but this is a terrible problem in the foreign service and we ought to come back to this later on. Because I got into that angle of it when I got back to personnel later on with regard to East Asia assignments. It comes back to the concept of service, of dedication of one's life in a sustained way to a given area, or given specialization. So much in our culture argues against that kind of dedication.

Q: You left Moscow in 1967.

BROWN: Let me add a note that is not strictly professional, but I think it should be recorded.

The phenomenon, tragic phenomenon, of service in Moscow in that era, was the high incidence of divorce. I must say that among my colleagues and dear friends, of the American Embassy in Moscow, a number of them were subsequently divorced. Either as a result of Moscow, or soon thereafter. I suspect if you did a statistical analysis of Foreign Service families, you would find that the incidence of divorce is higher among those who have served in Moscow. It's just an aside observation. I am not sure why, whether it is the isolation, the difficulty of the wives, the obsessive quality of Soviet affairs. I don't know. I know it to be a fact, thinking back to the people I was close to there, many of them are now divorced or separated. I just put that down as

an item.

DAVID M. SCHOONOVER
Agriculture Analyst
Moscow (1964-1967)

David M. Schoonover was born and raised in Illinois. He received a bachelor's and master's degree in Agriculture Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He joined the Foreign Service in 1984. He served in Beijing, Moscow and Seoul. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: When someone's working in foreign agricultural work, what does this mean?

SCHOONOVER: Well, in the earlier years, I was not in the Foreign Service. A lot of the foreign agricultural work was as an analyst in Washington. I spent a long time in Washington analyzing crops and trade and related information; making estimates of grain crops and what the likely trade implications were going to be; and analyzing agricultural developments in foreign countries. As it happened, I became involved early on in analyzing developments primarily in the Soviet Union, but generally in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China. So most of my analytical work was concentrated on what was going on in the Communist countries at that time.

Q: We're talking about the Cold War, very much so. As you were doing this, were you looking at what aspects of the Soviet Union, looking at its agricultural system as a weakness or a trade opportunity?

SCHOONOVER: In the beginning, most of the analytical work was not so much looking at the trade opportunity, it was more just keeping track of what was going on there. That changed fairly soon, though, because even going back as far as 1963, the Soviet Union suddenly bought some grain from the United States. This stimulated more interest in what was going on in their agriculture, and also in the likely trade and economic implications of their agricultural shortfalls. My first overseas experience was not in the Foreign Service as such. The Foreign Agricultural Service of USDA joined the Foreign Service under the 1980 Foreign Service Act. However, the Foreign Agricultural Service assigned people overseas prior to that as agricultural attaches. Employees sometimes would go on details or temporary assignments, and then back to regular Washington jobs. Some people already in the early days would stay out for years and years, but other people would just be picked up to do an assignment--a tour-- and then back to Washington again. That's what happened to me after the '63 grain purchase that I mentioned. In 1964, I went on a detail with Foreign Agricultural Service to Moscow. So my first overseas tour back in the mid '60's for about three and a half years was in Moscow on detail with the Foreign Agricultural Service.

Q: This was Khrushchev's period, wasn't it?

SCHOONOVER: It is interesting to recall. On the way to the airport, leaving for Moscow, news

came on the car radio that Khrushchev had been kicked out. On arriving in Moscow, they were just taking his pictures down. The very first *Pravda* I read had the pictures of Brezhnev and Kosygin on the front page. So, it was a time of change. It was an interesting time to first experience the situation there.

Q: Prior to going to Moscow, what was your impression of Soviet agriculture that you were getting from reports?

SCHOONOVER: Well, my impression was that the state of collective farm system was a pretty inefficient system that lacked incentives for the farmers. At the same time it seemed to be something that had found a way to provide a low level equilibrium, you might say, for everyone. In other words, it was feeding the people. They had not, in those first couple of years, been buying grain on the world markets. So, it seemed to be managing, but at kind of a low, inefficient level. Then this first grain purchase in '63 started raising questions about what's going on, how do we explain this?

Q: Were you looking at the Soviet Union when Khrushchev came up with his Virgin Lands Program?

SCHOONOVER: He had carried that out before I went to Washington. It was still a topic of interest, yes. That program was carried out in the '50's, and we were still analyzing what was going on. I think somewhere buried in my collection of little pins that I picked up during my first tour in the Soviet Union is one that says I'm one of the helpers of the tenth anniversary harvest in the new lands. I seem to remember making one trip there, right after my assignment to Moscow, and somebody stuck one of those little pins in my lapel. But the beginning of it was 10 years earlier. So, they were just beginning to really analyze what the implications of the new lands were going to be.

Q: When you got there, were you the agricultural attaché?

SCHOONOVER: No, I was an assistant in the office at that time. It wasn't a big office, just my boss and me, and a secretary. The Agricultural Attache, my first overseas boss, was Brice Meeker. Both then and later, I tried to emulate the example he showed me.

Q: You were there from about '60...

SCHOONOVER: I went in the fall of '64 and stayed until the end of '67.

Q: Who was the Ambassador when you got there?

SCHOONOVER: When I arrived the Ambassador was Foy Kohler, and during my assignment there, the Ambassador there became Llewellyn Thompson. From an historic perspective, I personally find it very interesting to have had the opportunity to serve with those two Ambassadors.

Q: They were really top grade authorities on the Soviet Union. How did you find the Embassy

when you got there? First place, were you married at the time?

SCHOONOVER: Yes, I was. And how did I find the Embassy? Well, interestingly, the Embassy that I served in at that time was the same Embassy that I served in again when I went back about twenty-five years later, and I found the building very much the same. It was located on the Sadovoye, or Garden Ring Road. I suppose it was compartmentalized a bit. As a young and inexperienced person at the time and working in the agricultural office, I probably wasn't very aware of what some of the other people were doing at the Embassy at the time. I think we socialized with a lot of the other young people in the Embassy, so we kind of stayed on the grapevine on some things, but in terms of the broader thinking in the Embassy about what was going on, I probably wasn't tuned in that well. I know I didn't read all of the traffic out of the Embassy at that point. The agricultural section and the economic section worked pretty closely together, and we shared information, but that's probably as far as my sharing went. At that time they did not have the residential compound that was built later in Moscow, so we all lived in different diplomatic compounds around the city, which had been assigned by the Soviet authorities. The one where my wife and I lived was on Donskaya Street, and I think it was given up later on. I think six American families or individuals resided in the apartments in our building. It was a diplomatic compound with Soviet militia guards at the gates--or gate, I should say, as only one was open. We had a number of people from Eastern Europe, I recall, in the compound.

Q: Did you study any Russian before going out?

SCHOONOVER: Yes, I think I studied Russian for about a half year, so I had enough to be able to communicate OK. I wouldn't say I was really fluent, but it was certainly enough to be able to carry on a conversation whenever there was an opportunity to speak with a Russian.

Q: How did your wife like living in Moscow?

SCHOONOVER: I think interesting, but a little bit difficult, too. Carolyn was 21 when we went to Moscow. She did not work at the Embassy. At that time, very few jobs were available for women at the Embassy. Anyway, she was shut up in a compound away from the Embassy, with not many Americans or English-speaking people around. One could get together with people who lived in other compounds, but still I think it was probably a difficult experience.

Q: In the Embassy was there an opportunity to work with your colleagues mainly in the economic section or...

SCHOONOVER: Mainly. As far as joint work, yes. We mainly worked with colleagues in the economic section. We would compare notes now and then with some of the other people. We were probably the main travelers in the embassy. We in the agricultural office tried to travel as much we could, particularly during the crop growing seasons. We obtained almost no information about grain and other crop conditions from the Soviet authorities. And those were the days before satellite coverage. There was almost no way to assess agricultural conditions, except to travel and try to make those determinations from first-hand observations. Sometimes, we were able to observe things also of interest to others in the Embassy, so we would give debriefings on our trips. Much of the country was closed to foreign travel, but enough was open

to enable us to learn a lot about the agricultural situation. We traveled by car periodically in the Central Chernozem and North Caucasus regions of Russia, and in Ukraine and Moldavia, now Moldova. Also, we were able to travel by car to several cities closer to Moscow or Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, and in Byelorussia, now Belarus. We flew to Central Asia, and could hire a car for travel in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Occasionally, we traveled eastward from Moscow by train to places on the Volga or in Siberia, but our planned trips to these areas often were denied.

Q: Were you were harassed? Were they just watching you, or were they trying to run you off the road or other things?

SCHOONOVER: Generally, in the agricultural office, we weren't harassed other than just having people following us around all the time. Sometimes two or three cars of security people would follow us on trips. If we stopped to eat lunch along the road, Soviet security people literally would walk up and down the road by us while we ate; once they even climbed trees to observe us. Sometimes, though, we were stopped by the militia and had documents checked, or were re-routed. Generally, it wasn't a severe harassment. I think on one or two occasions we were hauled into the militia office to shake us up a bit. They would try to get us to fill out a report that we had been doing something wrong, and we would always say no, we're not going to fill out the report, and they'd send us on our way, usually. There was just enough of this kind of harassment to keep us on our toes. The other people who traveled from the Embassy were usually out of the defense office, and they often were harassed, and more seriously. The Soviets just wanted us in the agricultural office to know that they were watching us. There were a few incidents, not to me, but to one or two of my successors, when there was perhaps more serious harassment. I'm a little fuzzy on the details now, but they were not only hauled in by the local militia, but also accused of something in the press.

Q: How about where you'd stay overnight. Wouldn't this be a problem?

SCHOONOVER: There were hotels in those days. If your travel was approved, you usually didn't have a problem getting a hotel room. If they didn't want you to go, well, sometimes the hotels were all booked up. They were satisfactory, but Soviet style hotels usually.

Q: Huge hotels and small rooms?

SCHOONOVER: Yes, but sometimes big rooms. In some of the provincial towns where we would stay, for example, Kursk and Oryol, I think these hotels had been built for Soviet officials, and sometimes accommodations were pretty nice by Soviet standards. They didn't look like the kind we tend to stay in nowadays, but they were pretty nice.

Q: Did you find yourselves alone at meals, could you meet other people or were you pretty well isolated?

SCHOONOVER: In general, they would try to have us sit by ourselves, but they generally didn't try to put us in separate rooms. So, typically, we would go into a restaurant, find a table, and sit down. Since the restaurants were very crowded, this often led to our best opportunities to speak

with other people. Often there weren't any free tables, and, in those days, Soviets didn't have private tables. If there was an empty seat at your table, someone joined you. So, people either joined us or we would join them, and that often was our main way of getting to talk with people when we were traveling. I guess more nights than not we would spend an evening chatting with people.

Q: In the first place, what was your impression of the agricultural methods that you were seeing?

SCHOONOVER: We mainly were observing the grain fields, of course, on this travel and not the livestock. We might see some livestock at a distance, but we weren't seeing it up close. I make this distinction because the grain fields often appeared quite good. We did see some problems. Sometimes we'd see where they put fertilizer on and clearly hadn't set the spreader uniformly, so we'd see strips of green and strips of yellow throughout the field. We would see some instances of machinery sitting around not being cared for. We'd see some problems, but in general, the grain was pretty good. I think if one went to their livestock facilities, things looked pretty primitive in general in those days. But just driving through the pretty Ukrainian or North Caucasus countryside looking at grain fields, agriculture looked rather pretty.

Q: They have one of the best soils in the world.

SCHOONOVER: Very rich soil, yes. Both places. The Kuban region in the North Caucasus has just wonderful black soil, rather flat but very suited to agriculture, to grain farming.

Q: I'm told that one of the major problems with Soviet agriculture in that period was its distribution system, that they lost up to a third of the grain because of storage, mice, rottage, that sort of thing. Were we watching this?

SCHOONOVER: I'm sure that's true, that they lost a lot, and not only grain. One would see a lot of almost anything that they were hauling along the roads, scattered along the roadside where it had fallen out of truck beds. That is just one part of the distribution system. I'm sure there was a lot of loss that way. You raised a good point. When one is talking about some of the other types of agriculture, particularly more perishable products, such as fruits and vegetables, there was a tremendous amount of loss. That's one thing that really struck me. The handling of perishable products was atrocious, and we would see people just throwing tomatoes or something soft and perishable. We would also see fruits and vegetables just sitting and rotting. Once they reached the market, they looked terrible in most cases, even when they left the farm in good condition. If one went to the free market and bought from private individuals, one could get good produce, but if one went into any of the state operated stores, it looked terrible. This is a good example of the lack of responsibility and incentives in the collectivized or State-run system, compared with the private system. I think they had some of the same problems with grain. Grain's not as perishable, though, as these sorts of products. I'm sure they had problems with mice and rats in the grain bin, and they had problems with people not paying careful attention and losing it from the trucks while hauling it. Still, I think that grain probably went to use closer to the original amounts and condition than these more perishable products, where the losses must have been—we're not even talking 50%, I think it must have been--more than 50% loss from the time they came from the

fields to when they actually ended up with the consumer.

Q: Back in the Embassy when we were putting this together, by this time we were looking upon the Soviet Union as being a market for our goods. Were you finding that we were just maybe just....

SCHOONOVER: Maybe just in an early stage of trying to assess that. After the grain purchase in '63, they didn't buy any more grain from us for nearly another 10 years. It wasn't until '72 maybe, but anyway in the early '70's that they bought again. So, we were still mainly just trying to keep track of what was going on, and just beginning to wonder are they going to come back into the market again? We weren't really promoting grain sales during that period. We were just monitoring the situation at that point. In terms of agricultural trade promotions, which were a very big part of my Foreign Service career later on, there was very little of that in that early assignment in Moscow. I think we assisted with two or three agricultural exhibitions during the three-plus years that I was there. They were fairly small efforts. I recall taking part in a poultry show in Kiev and an agricultural machinery and inputs show in Moscow. Some agricultural commodity people, just a very few, came to those events, but these were pretty small efforts compared to the sort of agricultural trade promotion that we got involved in later on.

Q: Did you have an opportunity to take a look at the irrigation systems and the environmental effects on the Aral and Caspian Seas? I understand that it was an absolute disaster. Was that something you were looking at?

SCHOONOVER: We were trying to assess what their production and trade was going to be for all of the major traded commodities, so while I put the primary emphasis on grain, it's true we were also looking at cotton, and we were looking at sunflower seeds, and any other commodities that might conceivably enter into trade or might run into a shortage and, therefore, lead to some trade. Yes, we visited Central Asia maybe twice a year to try to learn about what was going on in cotton production. With regard to the major environmental disasters around the Aral Sea, I don't think that we got very deeply into any assessment of that nor did we even get to travel close to the Sea. Even though we often were in the cotton areas, I was never anywhere near the Aral Sea. In fact, I never did see the Aral Sea, even in my later tour. But we did visit the cotton regions trying to make some assessment of what their cotton production was going to be. In contrast to grain, it's a little harder to make such an assessment for cotton or, at least, I didn't have the experience, and I think it's a little harder anyway. I couldn't just drive through cotton fields and come up with a very good forecast of the cotton crop. But we tried, and we also tried to meet with local officials in the cotton regions to patch together some kind of forecast of what was going to happen.

Q: Were you allowed to go and visit Collective Farm Number 382 or something like that?

SCHOONOVER: Yes. We did that. I don't know what is quite the right word to put on that because it could be quite an ordeal sometimes. Those were the days when you were greeted with excessive hospitality and so, a visit to a collective farm usually turned into quite an ordeal. I developed, or tried to develop, an ability to deal with far too many toasts and far too much hospitality.

Q: It is a Slavic tradition, too. It's not just too much liquor and also too much food, too.

SCHOONOVER: Oh, huge table, yes. I can think of some other experiences, if you would let me just jump around.

Q: Yes, sure. Yes, do it.

SCHOONOVER: ...too much food when handling some official delegations later on where they would be entertained at one place for maybe an early lunch and by mid-afternoon stop at another place for another meal, and then by evening at another place for another meal, and so you're right, not only too much drink but too much food to a point where no one wanted to see any more food!

Q: At the same time you were doing this, I was in Yugoslavia, and I can remember being taken with great pride through a slaughterhouse, which I'd never been to before, and I had no desire to go again. At the very end, all the products were laid out there cooked. My appetite was not very strong at that point, but I had to partake.

SCHOONOVER: I've been through quite a few of those slaughterhouse tours, and eating the sausage at the end. You really don't want to watch the sausage being made.

Q: Where Khrushchev had been to the Garth farm and other places during his time, was there any effort during this initial tour when you were in Moscow, the Soviets farmers coming over and taking a look at what we were doing and looking at our methods?

SCHOONOVER: In terms of farmer to farmer, people to people exchanges, there really wasn't much of that going on. I think Khrushchev's visits to Iowa maybe added a thawing effect for a few years, but remember, Khrushchev was kicked out in '64, and relations took a chill again. In terms of overall relationships, that's when we became involved in Vietnam, and the chill grew deeper and deeper. So, during most of the period when I was there, we went from chill to deep chill. However, we managed to carry on a few scientific exchanges in agriculture during that period because, I presume, the Soviets deemed that on the whole it was in their interest at least as much or more than ours. So we managed to keep a few things going. We probably exchanged four or five delegations from each country each year, they sending maybe four or five to the United States, and we having four or five scientists or delegations in the Soviet Union. I'm sure it varied. Some of this is a little fuzzy now in terms of what we had, but I think I can still recall that delegations like plant seed collectors were always deemed to be a fairly valuable undertaking from our perspective, because we were always interested in adding to our plant germ plasm collections, our pool of plant resources. There were some other areas, too, but I recall that one in particular.

Q: While you were there, were you running agricultural fairs at all?

SCHOONOVER: As I mentioned earlier, there were a couple of exhibitions, two or three, that we participated in during my time, but that was it. We participated in at least one in Moscow and

one in Kiev when I was there.

Q: Did you deal with the Ministry of Agriculture, for example?

SCHOONOVER: Let me back up concerning your previous question. I remember there were fairs or exhibitions that were put on in those days by USIS, and there was a major agricultural fair, which I think took place after I left. When I was there it was really a time of chill in our relationship. Now, dealing with the Ministry of Agriculture. We were very restricted in those days. We were definitely assigned the Foreign Affairs unit in the Ministry of Agriculture, and we knew three or four people in that unit, and the head of the unit, his deputy and one or two other people. If we really had an urgent issue of some type or, I guess, on occasion just as matter of trying to stay in touch with them, we would pay a call at the Ministry of Agriculture, but they never brought in any of the other departments as I recall during my three plus years there. I don't think I ever had the opportunity to meet with any of the other departments in the Ministry of Agriculture. I was present at meetings with the Minister of Agriculture on a couple of occasions. Perhaps the most memorable was when Ambassador Averell Harriman visited Moscow, and I was assigned to be the note taker at his meeting with the Minister. Those were still heady experiences when I was a young officer at the Embassy.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the people you were meeting in the Ministry of Agriculture there were apparatchik as opposed to farmers who'd come up with specific knowledge?

SCHOONOVER: Oh, very much so. These were bureaucrats of the highest order.

Q: Probably had never gotten their hands dirty. At our embassy, on the academic side, did you have any contact with our station there, the CIA? Somebody there must have been looking at crops, too, or not. Did you get any feel for this?

SCHOONOVER: I think that actually we were the primary unit that was doing that and serving all parties. I'm not sure that in my early days there I had even identified very well who was who. Maybe on a few occasions, yes, but I think we were the main office, and we were serving all parties. We would debrief, if anybody wanted to know about our crop travels and estimates. Sometimes I would travel with people from other sections, from the political section and perhaps sometimes I was traveling with someone from the Agency. I won't speculate about any other methods they may have used to obtain information about the agricultural situation.

Q: I'm just thinking that the agricultural... When you're looking at the Soviet Union, probably almost next to the production of tanks and missiles, in other words military stuff, the other really big item was agriculture. Could the Soviets feed themselves? Could they use grain as an export item far more than automobiles? Consumer items really were pretty far down the line, so it was at least my impression that heavy equipment for turning out things, but military equipment and agriculture were really a major, major elements of interest to our side. Did you find that this was something that the Russian Embassy took very seriously about what you were finding out and looking at?

SCHOONOVER: Yes, I'd say so. I'd say people were quite interested in what we were finding

out, and I think we would generally do a debriefing with some people in the Embassy and share our reports with other sections in the Embassy. I know that at least Ambassador Thompson read our reports because I remember when I was working there alone one day he sent one back and said you've got a typo on page two if you want to correct that before you send it out. So, I know he was reading our reports. I should add that we also did regular surveys of the food stores and farm markets, and I know that these reports were used by other agencies to gauge inflationary tendencies in the economy.

Q: During this period of time '64 to '67, what about demonstrations against the Embassy? You must have been doing something that got them mad or something like that.

SCHOONOVER: Yes. As I recall, in '67 those were the principal demonstrations. That was a period of Arab-Israeli conflict.

Q: Yes, in June, the June war.

SCHOONOVER: I'm trying to recall. I think we had two demonstrations. I can't recall the number for sure. I do remember there would be some of the Arab students. Usually they would mobilize students at Patrice Lumumba University or at one of the universities, but I think that one in particular had a lot of foreign students in it. Who else was in the demonstrations I don't know, but reportedly they were student demonstration, and they would march on the Embassy. There may have been two or three that year. I don't remember demonstrations in any of the other years, but definitely in '67. At least one of them got rather violent. Some cars in front of the embassy were burned, and there were some rocks thrown at the embassy. I think there were one or two of the Soviet police who were injured in the demonstrations.

Q: What did you all do, just sort of stay inside?

SCHOONOVER: If it took place during working hours yes, we just hunkered down and stayed away from the windows, the standard guidance, then went about our business. I think I probably was busy writing my next report while the demonstration went on outside. Probably, not concentrating on it very well!

Q: How did you find the Soviet press as far as information? Was it only Pravda and Izvestia, and the farmers' journal of the Ukraine. I don't know what they had, but did you find that this was a significant source of information or not?

SCHOONOVER: It was. I don't think it was intended to be, but it was. You had to piece it together. One very seldom found nice overviews or analytical reports, so basically we set up a system to sort of sieve and gather little tidbits of information out of it, see which ones had more significance, and put them all in a system somehow. It wasn't computerized in those days, but we had filing systems and we tried to pull it all together. If you read that oblast X had met its grain procurement plan, then it went into your system. That would be a fairly significant bit of information. Often the information was even less significant than that, but we tried to keep it all together, and for a series of years, and examined how many oblasts had recorded meeting their plan this year, compared with other years.

Q: The Oblast was the equivalent of...

SCHOONOVER: A province. Yes. So, there were what—I've forgotten the number now—but there were something like 70 oblasts or similar units in the Russian republic, so that would give you some idea. There might have been around 25 or so in Ukraine in those days. So, to give a rough idea, we were keeping track of maybe a hundred little reporting units as well as the minor republics. Most of the minor republics did not contribute a great deal to the grain crop. It was mostly Russia and Ukraine—and also Kazakhstan. So, with a system we compared one year to the next, which ones were meeting their targets or which ones were X percent toward meeting their target by such and such a date, and we could begin to get some kind of a picture of what was happening that year. It provided some confirmation of the field observations that we had made earlier on. It was all part of the picture.

Q: How many other embassies? I think Canadian, Australian, Argentinean, other ones. Did your colleagues have the same interests or not?

SCHOONOVER: We did. We consulted with colleagues to a certain extent. Some were more interested than others. The Canadians, I think, for obvious reasons were much more interested in what was going on than most of the others because they had also sold some grain and, in fact, they made a grain sale or two after the one we had done in '63. So, they were still quite interested in what was going on. Some of the others were interested, but probably not as directly as the Canadians. I'm sure we consulted with our colleagues from the British embassy, and the German embassy, and the Japanese embassy and several others.

Q: Were we working the other way? Did you get any feel, did the Soviets ever consult you about what was happened with American agriculture, or was that not of interest?

SCHOONOVER: It was of some interest. There were a couple of people in their system, whose assignment it was to keep track of American agriculture. Maybe there were more than that with this assignment, but there were a couple who publicly were assigned to keep track of American agriculture and would generally be working on a book or monograph about American agriculture and who would call on us some of the time. Generally, they were in a couple of institutes affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture. The number may have expanded later on, but that was it in terms of who would call on us, and even they wouldn't call on us very much. They would try to participate in one of the exchanges each year, so they would have one of their American experts coming to the United States and I think they had subscriptions to many of our publications. They didn't consult a lot in those days. I think there was danger to them of being seen as hobnobbing too much with Americans even though they were assigned to keep track of America. It was so great that most good bureaucrats in those days didn't want to take the risk of somehow inviting suspicion about what they were doing.

Q: I take it that during that time there were more contacts in the ballet, music, painting and all that.

SCHOONOVER: I think that's right. There were a lot of cultural exchanges going on at that

time. We had limited scientific exchanges in agriculture as I mentioned, but I seem to remember there were quite a few activities going on in cultural exchanges.

Q: Did you get any feel for agricultural schools, training in the Soviet Union

SCHOONOVER: What kind of feel might I have had? It tended to be geared toward applied technical training. The quality I don't know. At a very technical level some of it was good. If it involved getting beyond that, sometimes they were still locked into some ideological positions that didn't allow them to really expand their research. They were supposed to believe such and such was so, and one didn't really want to push the envelope or discover that that wasn't really the way things worked. I suspect there were scientists, involved with more of the premier institutions, who were attempting to do some good research, but probably had to keep a low profile, went about their business, and really didn't bring it much to light.

Q: It reminds me that I think it was during the Stalin period particularly back in the '30's when you had Lysenko, I think, who was basically was a biologist or agronomist or something that was saying you could train anybody to be anything, environment was everything. Did that Lysenkoism come into your orbit at all?

SCHOONOVER: Our impression, yes, was that the political or ideological influence of Lysenko was still having an effect in the mid-'60's when we were there, and it was still stifling a lot of genuine creative research.

Q: It was supposedly, as I recall, a scientific thing, but it was very political. It meant that you could change just about anything if you had the right teaching and the right environment.

SCHOONOVER: Yes. I'm beginning to forget the details of this, but I do recall that some of their beliefs about change had more to do with environmental influences, as opposed to genes and the transmission of characteristics through genetic heritage.

Q: That raises holy hell with real research. If you only think right, the genes will change into a proper socialized form.

SCHOONOVER: I think the genuine scientists really had to keep a low profile, and probably a lot of research simply wasn't done that might have been done otherwise during that period. From our little spot in the agricultural office in the Embassy, other than reading things in the newspapers, we weren't able to monitor that very well. We'd do our courtesy call on Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, but we'd get a real programmed visit, and one isn't going to learn much of anything.

Q: What was happening in the field of American agriculture, because today we're modifying everything, but I think of Henry Wallace and his families. There was a lot of work on hybrid corn and developing strains of grain that were resistant or good for this or good for that. This was a well-developed industry in the United States at this point, wasn't it?

SCHOONOVER: Yes. Hybrid corn had come in quite a few years earlier in the United States.

Good crop breeding work was going on in the United States. I think there was some crop breeding work going on in the Soviet Union, too. Sometimes you'd find a way of doing something and you figure out how you're going to package it so that it meets all of the ideological requirements. Some crop breeding work was pretty good.

Q: Were you at all concerned, in your perspective, about picking up modified hybrid corn from the United States, sort of taking our research and putting it into the Soviet stock or not?

SCHOONOVER: That was a concern particularly, I know, of the American equipment manufacturers, and concerning their participation in trade shows and exhibitions. They were quite concerned about exhibiting their equipment. Generally what happened is that the equipment remained behind, or at least one sample, until it was copied while it was there. Next thing you knew, the Soviets were trying to manufacture something that was almost identical, but they never did any business with the American firm. In terms of crops, I suppose there was a bit of concern, but I don't think at that time it was considered such a major issue. I think simply their ability to take these breeding materials and copy them successfully and make them work in their environment, and generate additional production through their system was not great. I think the feeling was that the odds that the Soviets could pull it off were so slim that it wasn't a major worry.

Q: Did you get any feel for some of the political strains that were going on there, particularly the various ethnic groups in that culture? Were these apparent, the differences between the Great Russians, and the Ukrainians, and the Turkic 'stans, and the Azerbaijanis?

SCHOONOVER: Back in the mid-'60's it wasn't really apparent to me. It was such a police state, with such suppression, such controls. One wasn't going to observe the tensions, even though they may have existed, but people weren't going to show it because if they stood out, their head was lopped off. It wasn't going to happen. So, I don't think we were so aware at the time. The Soviet Union was portrayed as one big happy family, and we might not have believed it, but we couldn't see many of the indications to the contrary.

Q: How about cultural life? Were you able to get out and do things in Moscow?

SCHOONOVER: Yes. It was a good experience that way. In those days you could get tickets to the Bolshoi Ballet and the theater and various other events. So yes, we tried to take advantage of those and go to the ballet and to the theater. The theater was more of a challenge if your Russian wasn't really top notch. The problem is, everyone else laughs, and you wonder what it is they're laughing at! Maybe after going enough, I managed pretty well to get the gist of things. I tried to go to quite a few cultural events, and that was really nice.

Q: How did you find the core, sort of the FSO group there because at that time in the midst of the Cold War, and Moscow was kind of the Mecca of up and coming bright, young Foreign Service Officers. Did you find this?

SCHOONOVER: I don't know what yardstick I had at the time. I think there were some bright, young Foreign Service Officers at that point, but I've met a lot of bright, young people ever

since. In fact, I see no end to meeting bright, young people, so yes. In general I was impressed with the quality of people with whom I was working. I don't recall forming really negative opinions about anyone. Some probably were brighter than others, but I'd say in general I was impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the people with whom I was working.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. I'll pick this up next time. In '67 where did you go?

SCHOONOVER: In 1967 at the end of the year, I came back to the United States and went into the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and spent the next 10 years or more working there in the United States.

Q: OK, we'll pick it up then and we'll talk about '67 to about '77, and we'll talk about what you were doing in economic research.

SCHOONOVER: From Moscow, I returned to work in the Economic Research Service of USDA. I worked in the one of the foreign divisions, again analyzing agricultural developments in foreign countries. My particular area again was the Soviet Union and East European region. I worked first as an analyst on Eastern Europe, and had an opportunity in the fall of 1968 to travel for nearly a month in Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria to make contacts and become more familiar with their situation. I also had planned a trip to Czechoslovakia, but on the day in August when I booked my tickets for travel, the Prague airport was closed, except to Soviet military aircraft. Bad timing—I never did make it to Prague. Eventually, I moved into a job in charge of the research for those areas, and also added China and other Communist countries at some point along the way, so we were covering all the communist or centrally planned countries.

Q: What were your interests? From your work perspective, what were your interests?

SCHOONOVER: I think probably the biggest interest was what was going to happen with grain imports to that part of the world. I remember analyzing developments that suggested potential grain imports, but if you think back to that period, there was still surprise at the Soviet grain purchases from the U.S. in '72. It happened to take place the year that I was away in full time training at school, so I missed out on that event. But anyway, their purchases rocked the boat in our grain markets, and together with other developments, there resulted a period of shortage in some of our agricultural commodities in the early '70's. Consequently, there was rather a keen interest in what the Soviet Union was going to do with regard to future grain imports from the United States. They had not been importing from us, generally speaking, up to that point. There were some grain purchases back in the '60's, but it was essentially a one-time thing. There was this long 10-year period where there hadn't been any grain imports, and then all of a sudden they came back into the U.S. market, and we had some shortages, prices went up, and a lot of people were in an uproar. Some people called the sales to the Soviet Union "The Great Grain Robbery". I think it was simply because of the surprise and the apparent effects that occurred in the U.S. economy. After that, there was keen interest in what was going to happen the next year—and in the future. And so, my first project after coming back from school was to try to do some projections of Soviet grain imports in the years ahead.

Q: Where were you going to school, by the way? What were you doing?

SCHOONOVER: I had a year off. It was one of those nice things that sometimes occur in the course of a long career. I attended Michigan State, doing a PhD program in effect, one that I really never finished up. In that one year, however, I managed successfully to get through the course work and prelims. I was working on agricultural policy, international agricultural development and trade, and international trade policy. I should note also that during the years in Washington with USDA, and particularly with the Economic Research Service, I had the opportunity to contribute a number of articles on Soviet agriculture and trade for books and Congressional reports. I was especially pleased with an article on Soviet agricultural policies that was published in a Joint Economic Committee report in the late '70's, and I believe the article still provides one of the best concise accounts of those policies.

Q: When you started in '67, where were you getting your information on their agriculture? How good were the sources?

SCHOONOVER: At that point most of the countries we were researching, both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, had been publishing statistical books for a few years. So we did have statistics in terms of basic data for some previous years. It was more a matter of interpreting what they were publishing. Now, with regard to current developments we generally didn't have statistics. We had to work with whatever sources were available. We had agricultural attaches in Moscow still and in some parts of Eastern Europe. We were getting some reports from them. We actually were reading newspapers from most of the countries. We received the papers in our office in Washington. We also had press translations from the Foreign Broadcast Information Service. All in all, we worked with a variety of sources. With the weather information that was collected and made available to us so we could analyze weather effects on the crops. Sometimes we would try to do travel into the region ourselves, in addition to having the attache reports. This helped our attaches cover their territory, and it was good for Washington researchers to get into the region and get a little on the ground feel for what was going on.

Q: I can't remember if we discussed it last time, but during the '60's when Khrushchev was going at his great virgin lands opening which, I guess, turned out to be a real fiasco, but how did Russia look by '67, were you seeing there were signs that they might have been having problems?

SCHOONOVER: OK, back to '67. The signs about what came along later before the collapse of the USSR were not so clear. The main thing that you would have observed then was simply the inefficiencies of their system, but on a gross level they were taking care of themselves back in '67. It wasn't until in the '70's that they seemed to be unable to provide enough grain for themselves, and went into the world grain market to supplement their supplies. Their standard of living back in the '60's was low. They did not have a plentiful variety of food commodities. They did have people lining up whenever there was a supply of something that wasn't usually available. They were getting by, though, at a certain accustomed level in the '60's. In the '70's they couldn't sustain the kind of growth and consumption that they were having, and they had to turn elsewhere to supplement that. Later, of course, the strains on their system became even

greater.

I want to comment about the virgin lands. Were they a failure? Were they not a failure? It will probably be debated a long time. It all depends on how you look at it, I guess. I think they did a lot of damage there in terms of erosion and ecological effects, but they did produce a lot of grain there, and with the right practices, a lot of the area probably could be sustainable. Some of it probably isn't, but with the right moisture conservation practices, much of it is. Actually they are still producing grain there today. I think it's like a lot of things they did at that period, they rushed into it with no concern about the environmental consequences, and it really wasn't the right way to go about it, and yet there is continued production out in the region.

Q: Were you seeing any improvement or response on the part of the Soviets particularly getting the grain to the market? I've heard figures up to a third of the grain just didn't get there because of poor storage, poor transport, whatever.

SCHOONOVER: Their system was notorious for losses. Some things were much worse than grain. There were problems with grain too, but if you looked at fresh fruits and vegetables, you'd be absolutely appalled. You'd see the way they handled things. They would just pick up something perishable and fragile and throw it or stack it somewhere and pay no attention to it and things would be crushed or would rot. I can easily think of 50% losses of a product that was good when it was harvested on the farm, and by the time it got to consumers it would be rotten. Tomatoes or something that was really perishable, just wouldn't survive the handling. Grain was something else. There were losses in grain, I'm sure, in storage and transport, and there was probably some grain diverted off, you might say. They may not have been genuine losses. It's just that it may not have been used on the State's account. The product probably ended up slipping through the system. But that isn't a genuine loss. That helped them survive.

Q: It gets to the consumer one way or the other way.

SCHOONOVER: We spent a long time trying to sort out their grain statistics. For many years, the U.S. Government, generally carried a separate set of grain statistics from the official one published by the Soviets simply because they didn't believe the Soviet statistics and knew there were problems accounting for what happened to all that grain in the official statistics. Part of the research that I was doing back in the early to mid '70's was sorting out the grain statistics. We came up with a series where we could start from the Soviet statistics and work backwards through a grain balance to determine how much they actually used. We figured that there was a little above average genuine loss, but the bulk of the difference was in the way they measured grain. They used a so-called bunker weight of grain, which did not really consider grain dried to a uniform standard before they measured it, so this led to a considerable overstatement of production. How much, we'll probably never know exactly. I'm sure every place had its own style of doing this somehow, so that no one will ever know precisely a true standardized measure of Soviet grain production. But we tried to figure out production by doing grain balances and then compared production and use every year and the typical difference. Then we would take weather conditions in individual years through the regions and try to estimate how much moisture there likely would be in that grain so that we could make an adjustment between the Soviet statistic and what our statistics were. In the end we came up with a set of statistics that

was based on the official Soviet statistics, not just a subjective estimate. In the early years in the U.S. Government, there were some totally independent estimates. Such independent estimates made me a little nervous, because they can be subjective and get totally out of line after a while. Too many things get factored into the process. But we went back and we worked from the official Soviet data, and we had something like a 10 to 15% difference, on the average, between their production data and ours because of weather conditions plus we allowed for some additional substantial losses between harvest and usage. I can't remember the precise percentages now, but anyway, the difference was quite substantial.

Q: Up to '72 approximately, all of a sudden they came on the market. Our interest was really on Soviet strength and as a potential enemy. It was not a force within the world market or anything else.

SCHOONOVER: We had been following changes in Soviet grain production primarily to determine just the effect on the Soviet economy and internal developments. Then all of a sudden when they came into the grain market, and it had an effect on the American economy, it became important to try to follow what was happening and project what was going to happen to see how we were going to relate to each other in the grain trade business and what kind of effects there were going to be.

Q: We had Australia, Argentina and Canada who were the other big producers. Were you working on them, too?

SCHOONOVER: There were people in the research area who were working on those countries, so we had a pretty good fix on what the prospects of production were going to be in those countries. Statistics were much better, much more available on those countries generally than they were on the Soviet Union.

Q: What about Eastern Europe per se, not the Soviet Union, but the rest of Europe. Was there much grain production in those areas?

SCHOONOVER: We had the same sort of interest in what was going on in Eastern Europe at that time. Both the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe in the '70's were developing their livestock economies. So we had research projects going on the grain-livestock economy or the feed-livestock economy for several of the countries in Eastern Europe as well as on the Soviet Union. Eastern European countries also expanded their imports of grain at that time. The size and the variability of imports were not as great as for the Soviet Union, but developments in Eastern Europe were of interest. Certainly our greatest interest was the Soviet Union, which had such great variability and uncertainty. There was growth and some variability in Eastern European countries, too, so we were looking at them, also.

Q: Was anybody up to the time when the Soviets entered into the market, was anyone that you were dealing with saying hey, you know these guys may run out of...not run out of...grain but might have a real shortfall. This could really have an impact. Was there anybody seeing that, or was this kind of disguised.

SCHOONOVER: Like a lot of things, you can see something coming down the road, but you don't know when it's going to happen. It's like the collapse of the Soviet Union, jumping ahead, you don't know when it will happen. I think one's kidding oneself if you say we knew precisely when these things were going to happen. We had launched some studies to project what was going to happen in the grain trade, because we understood the potential of significant developments. I mentioned I took off for one year in the early '70's, and the Soviet imports happened the year I was away. I don't think I could have known it would happen that year.

Q: Not on your watch!

SCHOONOVER: That's right! One of those fortuitous things depending on how you want to look at it. Anyway, it had happened. When I got back to work there had been the purchase, but we generally still didn't know what was going to happen after that. The Soviets came in and they made a purchase. It had an effect. So everyone's sitting there the next year saying what is going to happen in the future? Are they going to come back in again? Is it going to be big? Is it going to be minor? So that's when we really got serious. I think the research project of my own that I'm the most proud of is the one that I did then on the Soviet feed-livestock economy. It projected large and growing grain imports by the Soviet Union over the years ahead, and that's certainly what happened. That was the project where we worked-out the way to measure their grain starting from Soviet statistics and coming up with an adjusted statistic for our use. Previous efforts like ours had been hampered by the sentiment that we really don't know their actual production, so how can we do a serious research study? We overcame this situation with our work on the grain estimates and tried to put it all together in grain balances. We came up with estimates of how much grain they were using and how much was going into livestock feed, and how the projections of consumption in their plans was going to effect their grain import needs. We looked at what they were going to need and what they were likely to produce themselves and what it meant in terms of grain imports. One couldn't predict an individual year in advance because of the weather factor, which caused their grain production to go up and down, but one could predict generally this growing gap that they were going to have in grain supplies and the implications for trade.

Q: You must have found, having served in the Soviet Union, and seen the beast up close coming back, this must have been very helpful for you to work on this thing because if you economists who...it's all academic. They haven't been there, and there's a tendency to get overly academic and not understand the problems of an economy such as the Soviets and how it operates.

SCHOONOVER: I certainly think so. It might be hard for me to put into precise words how that affected my analysis, but living in a country and seeing how it really works, especially an economy so different from our own, can make a big difference in one's analysis. It helped to better understand how they were trying to operate and to have an understanding of the inefficiencies in their system, and also to understand a bit about the thinking that went into their plans and what these plans meant in terms of how they likely would act. I think it all played an important part in my analysis and certainly stimulated my interest as well in the project that I was doing. It was something I could relate to. Yes, it made a big difference. That early tour in the Soviet Union made a big difference in the work that I did during the later research part of my career.

Q: What was the relation of your research economic unit and the CIA. The CIA has always been the big analyzer of the Soviet Union. How much were they into the agricultural field?

SCHOONOVER: After the Soviet Union went into the grain import world, and after we had done what I thought was a pretty good assessment of the Soviet situation and pretty good projections about the future, we did work together quite a bit. We kept up good conversations. Sometimes we differed. We got into arguments sometimes about who was right over the analysis and projections, but we had a dialogue, a regular conversation about what was going on there and I think it helped produce better results in both offices. I would say that in earlier years there wasn't such a close relationship, but when the Soviet Union went into the grain market, and after we did our studies and our projections, we had a pretty good dialogue.

Q: Was there a unit to your knowledge within the CIA looking at Soviet agriculture?

SCHOONOVER: Certainly. It had to be part of their overall analysis of the Soviet economy, and certainly agriculture was one important element.

Q: Prior to their entering the market, there wasn't much exchange between...there were two people doing essentially the same thing but not much communication?

SCHOONOVER: I don't know now whether I would have said it that way or not. I just think that when not much exciting is going on, there's not much to talk about, so one doesn't really spend a lot of time communicating. All of a sudden there's an issue that's in the public's eye, and really becomes important, and the policy makers' focus is on it, and all of a sudden you spend a lot more time communicating with each other.

Q: In '72 until you left, from your perspective, the potential Soviet demand for grain became a particularly hot item, didn't it?

SCHOONOVER: Right. It turned out just the way that we were projecting it. Their imports increased and there was uncertainty every year about what their crop was going to be and just how much the grain imports were going to be, so we spent quite a lot of time on that. At that point I was managing research on all of the communist countries, but personally I was still spending quite a bit of time on just the Soviet grain production and trade forecast.

Q: If I recall, weren't the Soviets trying to play this thing as any good merchant would, as close to the chest as they could so they could get the best price before announcing how much they wanted, in other words pretending they probably wouldn't need as much so they wouldn't have to pay as much, and they weren't as hungry for the stuff or not?

SCHOONOVER: Any grain trader, I guess, doesn't want to play his hand till after he's done his activity in the market, so we had to work out a compromise on some of that. The department had...I should say the U.S. government had...concluded a grain agreement with the Soviet Union, and we had an understanding on consultations on grain and certain specified levels that they could take up to certain amounts and if was going to be more than that, we needed to

consult. So, basically we had consultations on a regular basis on how much their needs were likely to be and how much our supplies were likely to be, and if we got outside of those parameters, why we needed to consult again. It gave them a certain amount of freedom in terms of individual purchases in the market, but it also put certain parameters on the amounts, and we made the amounts public. If it were going to be different from that, then we needed to consult again. I think that was a good arrangement.

Actually, quite a few things happened during that period in the Department to make more information available. The U.S. concluded an Agricultural Cooperation Agreement with the Soviet Union, really an expansion of our earlier program of agricultural scientific exchanges, which included provisions for an exchange of statistical and economic information. This agreement never really gave us Soviet grain forecasts, but it provided a lot of data on a more-timely basis than was available before, which helped us in our forecasts. About this time, certain units in the government also began to develop the use of remote sensing to help monitor crop conditions, which was particularly helpful when travel opportunities were denied to our staff. Also, the Department of Agriculture set up public reporting on grain trade and if there were any purchases bigger than certain specified amounts, press releases went out. Now this is for the whole world, not only the Soviet Union, but obviously, it was designed to catch the big uncertain buyers like the Soviet Union. There were weekly reports summarizing everything as well. That was one thing that worked. Regular reporting about grain trade simply hadn't been there before. There were statistics before, but they were well after the fact, and one didn't have nearly as much detail coming out promptly on the grain trade. Then we had the grain understanding with the Soviet Union and, I might add, one came along with China, too. We had a grain understanding there, too. A lot of things happened to try to get information out so that all the players in the market and all the policy makers and all the people in the economy would know what was going on with grain trade, and there wouldn't be a big surprise.

NAOMI F. COLLINS
Student
Moscow (1965-1966)

Mrs. Collins was born and raised in New York City and educated at Queen College, City University of New York; Indiana University; Harvard University; and Moscow State University. Married to American Foreign Service Officer, James Collins, she accompanied him on a number of his assignments in the United States and abroad, including Izmir and Moscow, where her husband served as United States Ambassador from 1997 to 2001. Throughout this time Mrs. Collins continued her separate career, primarily in the fields of International Education, Humanities, and Political Development, notably Russian, authoring numerous publications on these and other subjects. She is currently an Independent Education Consultant in Bethesda, Maryland. Mrs. Collins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012

Q: When were you in Moscow?

COLLINS: The year before we were in England. We were in Moscow the academic year of 1965-1966 and in London, 1966 – 1967.

Q: What were you doing in Russia?

COLLINS: Following Jim. Accompanying him as his wife.

Q: Jim was not in the Foreign Service then, was he?

COLLINS: No, this was a graduate student exchange program that still exists today. Today it is run by IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board), but in those days it was run by the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants, supported by the State Department and Ford Foundation, and run out of Indiana University, by chance. While we were living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Jim had fulfilled the paperwork requirements, but interviews were still required. On a blizzard day, two professors interviewed each of us in succession in their hotel rooms in Cambridge. They declared we passed the first test just by showing up. We had to do it on foot, with knee high boots. I still picture the unhinged galoshes on one of them, which probably means I was looking down too much.

Q: What was their concern?

COLLINS: Well, psychologically it was a very trying, vexing environment to live in during the Cold War, in the dormitories. I think they were assessing our stability, our ability to survive the tedium and pressures of a year at Moscow State University (M.G.U. in Russian.). They already had experienced graduate students and/or spouses who didn't make it through.

To describe the spooky but tedious environment there would take a long time. To try to capture it, I wrote a book on what it felt like to live in Russia as a foreigner through four decades. In it, I tried to recreate the environment of the 1960s in Russia. The book, which came out in 2008 is called *Through Dark Days and White Nights: Four Decades Observing A Changing Russia*. I've given about 40 book talks since, and have made it available now in all electronic formats: Kindle, iPad, Nook, and such, as well as in "hard copy" via Amazon.

Of course I was ready for winter, coming from New York and Bloomington, Indiana, and had the right gear, although I learned that 40 degrees BELOW zero, where Fahrenheit and Centigrade meet, made other "cold" feel just "cool." I should have been alerted when they commented during the interview, "Hopefully you have some sort of hobby or something that will keep you busy like Arthur's knots where you can master all the knots in the book over the year..." because, as it turned out, one of the biggest problems there was plain old boredom. People could hardly survive the monotony of the place, without color or life. I asked whether I could use the libraries there, and they said I could.

So in August of 1965 we took a small student ship, the "Aurelia," out of New York's west side docks, and a train for three days across Europe into Moscow. My grandparents, who had come with my parents to bid us goodbye at the dock, were in tears. They pictured Cossacks, poverty,

ignorance, cold, and hunger. They could not imagine why we would choose to live in the place from which they worked so hard to escape.

We actually had luxury living for Moscow then: our own small suite with a bathroom. There's much more about how we lived and what we did in the book: I had taken notes at the time as well as written letters to our parents. I should add that I was sick a lot: caught lots of bugs. Suffered months of strep throat, for example. Not to mention intestinal parasites.

Q: Had you picked up Russian?

COLLINS: That was required. When Jim was accepted for the program, along with about 15 others, everyone had to study Russian at their own level. Jim's, advanced; mine, beginner. A very intense summer it was, from about 6:00 AM to bedtime, daily. We were housed in a Russian-language-only dormitory. No English was to be spoken. Of the graduate students going then, two were women, the other 14 or so, men. The best known today among them is Bill Taubman who wrote the award-winning biography of Khrushchev.

Q: Did you see yourself as the wife of a diplomat?

COLLINS: No, I had no idea. I still thought I was a graduate student. We might be graduate students forever the rate we were going. I was picturing an academic future. Turns out that the seven years it took to complete my degree is and was less than average. But the Foreign Service life had not even entered my mind.

Q: Were you picking up any feel for the Soviet System, the Russians and the Soviets?

COLLINS: Not while we were in Bloomington that summer doing intensive Russian. Between talking with tape recorders and teachers and one another, it was all we could do to get through each long, hot day. The teachers were primarily White Russians who escaped the Russian Revolution, or their parents had. They were very old, or seemed so to us at the time. In retrospect, I'd guess they were in their 70s. This gave us no inkling about the KGB, security, and being foreign.

Q: When you got to Moscow what were your impressions?

COLLINS: My first impression was that I had entered a time warp. I was back in the Brooklyn of my early childhood—or actually, of my parents' youth. I pictured the 1930s. The graphics of the city were so retro; the buildings so shoddy, worse than those in Brooklyn. Luxury housing for their top party officials was more like Brooklyn apartments. It was far poorer and more backward than what I could have imagined. We all had this built-up image of Russia, how strong and powerful our enemy was. And there it was, all chipped and broken and cracked and malfunctioning, dreary, gray, and monotonous, lacking spirit or hope. While they were technically proficient in the arts, with beautiful renditions of "Swan Lake," let's say, they lacked the freshness, creativity, and originality of inspiring arts. No new writing of interest then, no visual arts. Stagnant. Television news and movies were stylized, predictable: men with tractors, fields of grain. Aspirational. "Boring" understates it.

Q: Sometimes you could see them building a dam, too.

COLLINS: Sometimes there was a dam. They did love WWII also as the subject of film. And this lasted right through from the 1960s (and before) at least until the end of the Soviet Union.

Q: How about the students there?

COLLINS: The students were bright and interesting. The ones we lived with were in graduate philology. Languages. I realized before too long – and wrote about it at that time – how little interest they had in ideology, theory, Marxism and communist theory.

They found these tedious and boring requirements. They were already quite cynical then, even in the 1960s. At the time we thought that the regime could not last forever with this lack of interest; that at some point, it would crumble. There was also a lack of interest in the parades and forced holiday hoopla, not to mention TV and radio. What we did not realize then was how quickly, suddenly, unexpectedly, and soon the Soviet regime would collapse. We did not then guess that it would be in our lifetimes.

Q: I have talked to people who have served in Warsaw in the 60's and 70's. One thing they were convinced was that there were only about five really convinced Marxists.

COLLINS: That's right. In Moscow at that time, the only convinced Marxists we met were those who were hired by the KGB to work with us, follow us, travel with us, keep an eye on us. They were allegedly with the foreign student office.

Q: How did you know who the KGB types were?

COLLINS: Oh, it was easy. As soon as we arrived, they greeted us at the station. All smiles and good cheer and positive thinking. I was suspicious. One good thing about coming from New York, I was cynical enough not to trust these professionally cheery people.

When we first met our “keepers,” we had been on the train for three days after a ten-day boat trip on a small ship. I was a bit spaced. A young man and young woman greeted us all chipper and bright – and spoke perfect English. I thought, well this is convenient, anyway. They had some sort of vehicle into which they piled our footlockers and us to drive us to the dorm. By then we had met up on the train with many of the other American graduate students who had somehow been assigned to the same train and same cars. These two young Russians wanted to be our friends – in a big way. They wanted us to come to tea. They wanted to come to our rooms for tea. They showed great interest in our lives. So I saw as little of them as I could manage to do.

The people who were actually interesting to talk to were not those two, but the people in the dorm around us. The dorm was totally mixed. Foreign students were right next to the Russian students in a way that seems surprising in retrospect. One would have guessed they'd have isolated them from us, but they didn't. Although foreign students were scattered throughout the huge dormitory, the Americans, British, and Canadian students were assigned the same rooms

year after year. On our floor there was one other American and three British students. The other foreign students and Russians we spoke with, we met in the hallways and kitchen, a shared, common kitchen. And sometimes we sat in their rooms drinking tea and having cookies and jams; or invited them to our room for those. The Russian students were careful but incredibly curious. They asked questions constantly.

They would look at America magazine, the glossy publication of USIA (the U.S. Information Agency). These were hot items, this U.S. propaganda. We could also acquire books by American authors and share them with Russian friends. I remember, as they were reading, wide-eyed, a piece about Harlem. A friend asked, “These pictures of Harlem, are they real? Are those houses the ones they really live in?” I looked at the brownstones and said, “Yes.” I told them that many people shared these: they were not for one family alone. But then they looked at the streets parked up with cars and asked, “But they have those cars?” I said that some of them do. They so distrusted their own government to tell the truth, that they assumed any government publication was all lies.

While that magazine tended to look on the bright side, it was broadly speaking accurate. Then they wanted to know whether an entire family lived in one room. And whether they had coats and hats, because they had read that Negroes in America were very poor. Did they really have a TV set? And for washers and dryers, I said they likely shared them. But they couldn’t believe that these “poor people” treated so badly as “Negroes” could have had access to a automatic washers and driers. (I described Laundromats.) “So it is not so bad they are living, no?” And I wanted to say they are living far better than most people across Russia, as possessors of indoor plumbing, hot water, cars, and Laundromats. (This doesn’t get into rural black poverty of course.)

But the point I’m making – if longer than it should be – is that they were trying very hard to check the verisimilitude, the authenticity, of these random bits and pieces of information that came their way. Could they trust these sources? It wasn’t long before they came to trust and believe what we said, because we were always candid and did not sugarcoat America.

I should add that we also got trips into the countryside; to historic towns like Suzdal, Vladimir, and what are now tourist sights but were not yet developed at that time. Old monasteries. Of course our assigned “friends” always accompanied us.

Q: Were you taking courses?

COLLINS: No, I had finished my Ph.D. coursework and exams in my fields. I had decided to read while there. Since I didn’t have original sources or manuscripts in Moscow, I read secondary sources, which they had in the Lenin Library [now called Russian State Library]. I also read a lot of American literature from the Embassy library.

It was also hard to believe how much energy and time were expended in the efforts of daily living: procuring food, taking crowded transport, lugging gear, walking a mile in the cold to get to the Metro train. Exhaustion stalked me--and Russians. So did illnesses.

Q: I was going to ask where you got your food...

COLLINS: It took forever. You'd go into a store and stand in one line, for cheese, let's say. Then you'd order your half-kilo of so-called "Dutch" cheese. Then into another line for rice to be measured out or set aside in a bag. Then to the cashier to pay for and get chits for each item at each station, and return to pick up items you had ordered at each. We had no refrigerator, of course. Very few people did. So we had to do much of this almost daily. We left things on the windowsill to keep them cool. But in the winter they'd actually freeze on the inside sill. And the products you bought had not been refrigerated, so one wanted to be careful, especially about eggs, milk, or poultry. But by Russian standards we were well off. Our stipend provided a significant number of rubles per month [200 @ \$1.20 each equivalency]. So we got our yoghurt, cheese, bread. And the meat they sold called "Bifstek," I'd cook it up on an electric frying pan we had brought with us. Sauté a few onions, add some potatoes, and we had a little stew. Our staple. The British students dubbed it "Beef Magoo" for beef M.G. U. (*Em Ge Oooh*)

Q: Did you pay on the bus?

COLLINS: Yes we did. It wasn't very much. It was an honor system, but we certainly didn't want to appear dishonorable for what were a few pennies.

Q: I was in Bishkek sometime later, and found the bus was so crowded you couldn't really pay. It didn't cost much and I wanted to pay but I couldn't figure out how.

COLLINS: Yes, they had a complicated system. I would get on and I couldn't get anywhere near the cash box, so I'd pass my money along through others. There was a specific expression you would use that meant something like, please pass this along. And I would give, let's say, five kopeks to the next person to pass along. But – along the way – other people, who needed change and didn't have five, would take the five and add their ten kopeks to the bucket brigade. This could get more and more complex, and sometimes led to arguments if the math didn't seem to be coming out right. There could be multiple steps of making change, returning change to people, and such. And people would scream at those who had only larger coins, say 20 kopeks, because you can imagine the number of people then involved in getting and making change. And eventually some coins would make it into the box. Of course you would never know, never able to see the box, but would end up getting your ticket. All this negotiation required a set terminology and specific phrases. Fortunately, we were taught this stylized language.

Q: I can remember getting on a bus in Bishkek and discovering all of a sudden something licking my hand. I thought what the heck is that? I turned around and looked and there was a big St. Bernard on this crowded bus. They had the biggest damn dogs.

COLLINS: Yes, and to add to that – in the countryside – on buses and trains, some pigs, goats, chickens, roosters, hens. Real animals. Not a petting zoo. That was culture shock (even though we didn't call it that then). As we awaited a train once, watching these animals in the station ready to board with us, I commented to Jim, "What are *they* doing here?" To which Jim calmly replied, "But how else can they get there?" Almost no cars or trucks at that time. So weird to experience Russia then, so strangely static and so strangely old fashioned.

Q: I heard of a Soviet specialist, who ended up in a little village, and he had the radio on, and they were talking about a space flight and here was a woman in the middle of the square pumping water into buckets to hang on the yoke on her shoulder. Draw a contrast from that.

COLLINS: Exactly. I wrote a poem on that theme a few years later. I was struck by the contrast between Soviet rockets and satellites heading for the moon with young girls in Moscow walking home from school in their heavy khaki cotton stockings and stiff white organdy hair bows, the way my mother looked in pictures when she was a child in the 1920's or so. It was so anachronistic. And those village pumps.

The disconnect between rocket science and shared village pumps for water, outhouses instead of indoor plumbing, was so stark. In those villages – beginning just outside the windows of our high-rise building -- the roads were unpaved, impassible mud in spring when the snows melted. The gaps were so enormous, with the 18th and 20th centuries coexisting in one place. There were also the stories of highly trained brain surgeons performing surgery in hospitals without hot running water. And the drugs they lacked would fill a book: aspirin, penicillin, as well as birth control devices and condoms. For so many years, the only way to limit family size was through abortions. Estimates suggest some five to eight per woman, which is a lot. Especially when anesthesia was not available. I try not to imagine how that would feel.

Q: This is your first time there. What did you think when you left? How did you feel about going back?

COLLINS: I returned from our student year there thinking that it was a long way from home, and that its economy and basic life were so primitive compared to ours that they had an incredibly long way to go. Such a conspicuous absence of consumer goods, of detergent, plastics, implements, and of course large goods, washers, driers, refrigerators, and cars. And I was thinking, “My God, if this is our superpower enemy, and they are so fragile at home, and so far from being “advanced”-- well that was unexpected and a shock. The second thing I thought was that I didn't want to go back there again. It was really good to be home. It was not just about the material side which was not so important to me, but about the psychological side both for the Russians and for us. The surveillance. The worry about being framed for something, particularly when we were students. And we were, it seems—or perhaps it was by chance. How Russians had to live daily with fear and intimidation: there's no good way to think about this.

People lived with a lot of bad options: were you going to be true to yourself or were you going to do what was expected of you and be rewarded for it, get better housing and special coupons to buy nice winter boots and nice toys for your children and maybe a washing machine or a refrigerator. We all have that to some extent, knowing our “price,” but not with such dramatic consequences. And those were the lucky people. Many had fewer choices because they had been blackmailed into making a deal between living a life as a coal miner in a remote part of Siberia or going to the top university and spying on other students. They wouldn't otherwise get to the university because their father or mother or both had somehow crossed the regime and found themselves in a Gulag. The “sins of the father” could be used against the sons and daughters, limiting their options. If they were lucky. Some of them actually told their American, Canadian

or British “friend” this story. We had already suspected some of this, especially from the more reluctant, less gung-ho, “friends” assigned to other American, British, and Canadian students.

Maybe this is a good place to retell how our student year ended. Sometime during the winter or spring, a stranger knocked on our door. He said he was a student and wanted to talk to Jim. He suggested taking a walk because he knew our room was bugged. We all knew this. So Jim went off with this young man, then returned, then went off for another walk with me to explain what happened. (I don’t have to tell you how cold it was outdoors.) Jim told me that the young man told him that he planned to defect from Russia. This put us in a difficult position, of course. Jim discouraged him. But some months later we got a call from the cultural officer at the Embassy who was in charge of students. He (I think his name was Christiansen) told Jim to come down to the Embassy right at that moment. And Jim did. The officer told Jim that they have to get Jim and me out of the country very quickly because a young Russian man had jumped ship in the Philippines and claimed to be a friend of Jim’s. Jim and I spent our final night there totally awake, for fear the KGB might get to us before we got out in the morning. We had our door wedged with a chair under the doorknob.

We weren’t being paranoid. This was a realistic possibility. We knew that an American Professor, Frederick Barghoorn, had in fact been arrested and jailed on trumped up charges just a year or two before. The image of being in a Russian jail was not something I could sleep with. We never knew and never learned what the truth was: whether the man had simply defected and wanted a cover story, or whether he was a plant who made up the whole story to frame Jim. But we did know that we were going to leave immediately. The officer had told us that he and a car would be waiting for us outside the gates of the Embassy at 8:00 A.M. (I believe it was). And we were to leave as if it were just a normal day for us, going to the bus or Metro to go downtown. That is, we were not to carry anything with us. Take your passport and we’ll put you on an early Air France flight out of Russia, he had said. We did as he said. We left everything in our room. (They found another American student later to pack up our things for shipment to London.)

ALLEN C. DAVIS
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1965-1966)

Political Officer
Moscow (1966-1968)

Ambassador Allen C. Davis was born in Tennessee in 1927. He served in the US Navy from 1945-1953 before receiving his BSFS from Georgetown University in 1956. His career has included positions in Monrovia, Moscow, Algiers, Ouagadougou, Dakar, Kinshasa, and ambassadorships in Guinea and Uganda. Ambassador Davis was interviewed by Peter Moffat on June 26, 1998.

DAVIS: I asked if I might be able to study Russian and go to Moscow and do the so-called Africa job in the political section. When that was approved, I studied Russian for ten months at

the Foreign Service Institute and went in the early fall of 1966 to Moscow.

Q: As one who studied Russian for 11 months, I'd be interested in your reaction whether this is a sufficient amount of language training to enable you to operate effectively in Russia.

DAVIS: This kind of thing is quite imperative. In other words, it's relative. There were five of us in the class. There were some very gifted people. I was more in the middle or lower range of the group of five in that I don't have a particular gift for studying languages. Bill Brown did and Bill Diaz, who is a fairly accomplished language student. I'm trying to remember who else was studying with us, but...after the ten months, I was acutely aware that I would not be able to read rapidly and with full comprehension in Russian, and that turned out to be the case. I was at a disadvantage in that not only was I weaker in the language, but virtually all other people assigned to Moscow having anything to do with political or economic work were Sovietologists. They had studied for years in university and done graduate work and who knows what, so that they really knew the Soviet Union and its culture and its language extremely well. So it was a little bit of a complex thing. Having said that, with really hard work and a lot of anguish and struggle, I made it through the two years. In practical terms, how did I function with the language? I functioned reasonably well when I was away from Moscow. During a two year assignment - this is almost unbelievable - I think there are 15 republics and I went to 14 of them. The only one I didn't visit was what we then called Turkmani.

Q: Afghanistan?

DAVIS: And I even scheduled a visit to go there. So during that kind of traveling, I could function reasonably well. Really, sometimes perfectly okay. In hotels, in restaurants, in casual conversations with people I'd meet in the airports and train stations and elsewhere, but reading - I was always at a disadvantage. Consequently, I had to rely rather largely on English-language translations of the materials dealing with Soviet-African affairs.

Q: But were you essentially dealing with the large African student population or were you following the Soviet policy vis-a-vis Africa. What exactly were you up to?

DAVIS: There wasn't enough dealing with the student population to take up a majority of the time. I lived in a neighborhood not far from the university and I did see a lot of students. But the students had more contact with the cultural division than they did with me. And if they turned out to have some kind of commentary or point of view or conflict or what have you that got into the political area, yes, they came by to see me. And I saw a lot of them. But by no means the number that came in and did research in the cultural and public affairs section. I traveled a lot with the people who did the publications procurement and that's how I got to go to so many of the capitals and out into the provinces. I never got to see that part of the Russian Republic that forms the part from Moscow Eastward. So I never got out into Siberia or that region, but otherwise I got a pretty good feel for the whole country. We had a very enlightened political counselor who thought people like myself - not Sovietologists - really would profit a lot from going out and accompanying the publications procurement officer. A lot of my time there was spent working to get better acquainted with what was happening with the arts. A lot of this was personal. It had nothing to do with assignments from the office, from the political section of the

embassy, but it was very useful to those people who were working on theater, visual arts, on the Samistat, the publications, to have a window through other people. So consequently I spent a lot of evenings and weekends and holidays - my family with families of artists. We went to art exhibits, we went to homes to look at the work they were doing, we heard their comments on the kinds of pressures being applied to them by the Soviet authorities. These for the most part were non-members of the Academy of Artists, so they were outlaw or people on the fringes. Intimidated and harassed by the KGB and the authorities.

Q: So this was a two-year tour?

DAVIS: From '66 through '68. A two year tour. 24 months.

ROBERT L. BARRY
EUR, Soviet Union Affairs
Washington, DC (1965-1967)

Consular/Political Officer
Moscow (1968-1971)

Consular Officer
Leningrad (1971-1973)

USIA, Voice of America, USSR Division
Washington, DC (1973-1974)

Deputy Director, EUR, Soviet Affairs
Washington, DC (1974-1977)

Deputy Assistant Secretary for USSR and Europe
Washington, DC (1979-1981)

Ambassador Barry was born and raised in Pennsylvania. He attended Dartmouth College, Oxford University, St. Anthony's College, and Columbia. He served in the US Navy and entered the Foreign Service in 1962. He served in Yugoslavia, the USSR, Sweden, and Indonesia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: You're going to leave Croatia and whither?

BARRY: To the office of Soviet Union Affairs in the State Department in 1965.

Q: Today is the 23rd of December 1996. Bob, okay, we're off to 1965 is it?

BARRY: '65 and in those days getting into the cadre of Soviet specialists was kind of difficult

and I guess the reason that I ended up there was because our consul general, our second consul general in Zagreb was Karl Sommerlatte. Carl had been in Moscow and guess he and Mac Toon had served together at one time or another. As I was beginning to think about my next assignment, Karl wrote to Mac, who was Director of EUR/SOV, on my behalf. In fact I guess the same thing happened to Tom Niles who was in Belgrade because we were both junior officers in the same class and we both got sent back to work in Soviet affairs. I worked in the bilateral section and Tom worked in the economic section.

Q: You were there from '65 to when?

BARRY: '67.

Q: '67 okay.

BARRY: The key there was to grab the brass ring that would have provided you with the softest and nicest assignment in the Foreign Service which was to go on from Soviet affairs to take advanced language training at the U.S. Army Field Detachment R in Garmisch, Germany. When we both arrived there we both asked well, how do we get on this particular bus? The answer was well you take early morning lessons every in season for two years and get your Russian up to a three and you can go do Garmisch. We religiously did that in addition to working on the desk. We went off every morning and did our early morning Russian across the river in the old Foreign Service Institute.

Q: So, you were doing bilateral affairs?

BARRY: I was the junior person on the bilateral section. The office director was Mac Toon and I started out sort of doing pick up, answering congressional letters. The person I worked most closely with was Virginia James who was a tradition in the Foreign Service herself. I think she had joined the State Department in about 1924. She'd come to Washington and had worked in the government during the First World War and then she was one of the early people, I guess she was originally a secretary, but she developed a strong interest in the Soviet Union and this was the old office of East European Affairs before it was divided up into East Europe and the Soviet Union and of course, before we had relations with the USSR. She had kept a long record of dealings on behalf of political prisoners, dissidents, American citizens who had gotten in trouble one way or another in the Soviet Union and had no relations. She had been present in 1934 when the relationship was finally opened as the result of the Roosevelt-Litvinov agreements. In fact I think she had something to do with having typed up one of the agreements or something like that, but she had been involved with in particular religious dissidents. People like Alexander Dolgun who was an American Jesuit who had been in prison for many years and she had carried all his correspondence forward. She drafted all the notes and so that was my sort of initial job, working with her on trying to get people out of the USSR.

Q: Could you just explain to somebody who is not maybe familiar the language? When you say bilateral relations? What is that as compared to what is not bilateral?

BARRY: The Office of Soviet Affairs was divided in that time to four different sections. There

was one office director. Then there were bilateral relations which had to do essentially with the strictly relationships between the U.S. and the USSR. It dealt with consular matters; it dealt with things like property. It dealt with things like bilateral negotiations on a consular convention which is one of the things that I worked on later on. In essence, anything that only had two parties involved, the U.S. and the USSR. There was a multilateral section, which dealt with things like arms control and the international conferences which the USSR, and the U.S. were concerned. The multilateral section worked on UN issues, so that section was actually involved in the broad range of political issues. There was an economic section which dealt with trade and trade relationships and the various kinds of restrictions on U.S. trade with the USSR and there was a cultural affairs or exchanges section which was what handled the things like people to people exchanges, the international research exchanges for Fulbrights and helped to regulate the two way flow of scientific and technical change and all that.

Q: How would you describe during this '65 to '67 period our relations with the Soviet Union?

BARRY: They were, I would say, not at rock bottom, but they were far from prospering. There were a lot of espionage cases at that time on both sides. That was something that our section handled. The relationship was getting ready to expand in the sense that we had an interest in reopening the consulate, which we used to have in Leningrad or St. Petersburg. The Russians were interested in opening a consulate in San Francisco. That was an issue on which I worked. We were negotiating a U.S./USSR consular convention which provided for rules for dealing with American citizens or Soviet citizens for that matter who were in one another's country provided rights of access to arrested citizens and the rights of consular officers in each other's country to certain kinds of immunities and so forth. That was quite controversial because there were many in the congress who felt that opening a new consulate would simply be a new outlet for Soviet espionage in the U.S. We argued that we needed a new window on the USSR more than the Russians needed a new window since they already had the large relationship in New York. This was something in which Mac Toon was very interested because he felt that it was important to get more posts in the USSR. We were dealing with property issues also. This was the time when we began to negotiate for new embassy sites in both countries. This was a very long lasting negotiation I guess still continues to this day in terms of the new facilities that we had built or are still building in Moscow. This was something that I was responsible for later on in my time on the desk. This was where I got introduced to the fact that the compartmentalization of our security business is sometimes self-defeating. I did not have the kinds of clearances that would have been required in order to be fully apprized of what some of the concerns on the parts of the other agencies may have been. For example, one of the things that we agreed to and I was responsible for agreeing to was allowing the Russians to take a lease on a summer place that was around Berryville, Virginia. I had checked this out with the FBI and others at the time and it came back okay, so we told the Russians to go ahead. Only after that did I find that this particular site was located on top of a sensitive relocation site for the U.S. government which none of the people I was dealing with in the U.S. government knew about. But it turned out that the Russians were moving there for their summer holidays. It came out in all the press that here is this thing that is built over one of the air exhausts or near one of the air exhausts to one of these big old government relocation sites. We went through a long discussion with people about the location of what is the current Russian embassy in Mt. Alto. It wasn't the first place we ended up. We looked around at several places including some of the old estates in and around

downtown D.C. All of which were objected to for some reason or other by local neighborhood groups. We couldn't get the zoning change to do this. We ended up for a while there it was going to be at the old National Bureau of Standards where so many embassies are now located. That turned out not to be feasible because of the fact that they wanted to divide it into smaller plots to provide more sites for other embassies. Mt. Alto was a government property and again we went through the process of checking it out with people. I think all of us who were dealing with this weren't fully clued in as to what the problems may have been. I think in fact this was not finally concluded during the time I was there, but some time afterwards. That whole issue and the conditions of construction and who would do what in terms of embassy construction on both sides is an issue that was important and frustrating because every time you thought that a solution was in your grasp it sort of disappeared again which it still does to this day I guess.

Q: I might point out for the record the problem with the Mt. Alto site became very clear from the papers and all was that it dominates the skyline of Washington where with line of sight one can eavesdrop on the Pentagon and everybody else. That wouldn't be the type of knowledge or abilities that would get to a desk officer. It was the sort of thing that would be kept from you. Only our people and the KGB knew what they could do I guess.

BARRY: Well, there was an interagency committee on internal security which was one of the committees left over from the Eisenhower period and that contained representatives of all the different intelligence agencies and these decisions, in fact, were cleared with this committee, but evidently the people who were looking at it were not the people who were defending against electronic intelligence, but the people who just wanted to keep an eye on the Russians themselves and this was a pretty good site to do it from. There was specialization even in the internal security agency about who does what to whom.

Q: What did you find dealing with say prisoners and consular cases of people and all during this '65 to '67 period? What was the Soviet attitude? Were you able to say come on why don't we settle these things and just get these people out of your hair or was it difficult?

BARRY: Of course this had been going on for years ever since 1934 when the relations were first established and some of the things in the Roosevelt-Litvinov agreement provided for various kinds of things like freedom of religion for people living in each other's country and things like that. The Soviets were never very well disposed to all of this, but they were quite accustomed to getting notes from us especially on the occasion of any kind of high level meeting where our officials would normally have sort of tucked away in their pocket a list of people that the Congress was concerned with or a list of diplomatic notes that had been sent in the past. We made quite a regular practice of sending notes to the Soviet foreign ministry on behalf of prisoners of one kind or another or American citizens or people who we claimed were American citizens and they claimed were not dual citizens and questions of access to arrested Americans and things like that. We dealt essentially with the consular division of the Soviet embassy here on occasion it came to the attention of Ambassador Dobrynin when he would be called in by somebody or the DCM who was at that time Yuli Vorontsov, who is now their ambassador to the UN.

You know, every once in a while you would get satisfaction on a case or two, but it was not what

you would call a wholesale kind of operation, it was a retail operation. Some cases and they took a very strict view of what was espionage and what was subversion and things like that and could not easily be talked out of some of that. Of course, there were a lot of people who were dual citizens. A lot of people who had gone back to Russia during the 1930s, who had come here in the '20s and '30s and then had gone back during the Depression and were legitimately dual citizens. The purges had then picked up and they had been sent off to one camp or another. A lot of them were in Mordovia, which is where a big chain of camps were where foreigners were dealt with. There were some very interesting books written during that period. For example, I mentioned Alexander Dolgun, who finally got out, who was a Jesuit priest and a book was written about him which had a lot to say about life in the camps in the '30s and '40s. Virginia James, as I say, had an absolutely remarkable memory and had a file cabinet full of all these cases going back to the beginning of time. She was the one I think who told me about the time that they moved from the Old Executive Office Building to the then new State Department, that is the old section of the State Department was our new home after that. I guess it was Walter Stoessel who had been the desk officer or the office director as it was and in the middle of the afternoon there was a truck that pulled up and they took all the safes and got them into the back of the truck. They issued Walter a shotgun and rode over to the new State Department and unloaded everything there. So, she had an absolutely wonderful memory of all these things. She died rather recently about four or five years ago at the age of 95 or 98 or something like that. She was living out in Fredericksburg, Virginia. In fact I wrote something about her in the Foreign Service Journal in the '80s, something about her activities and her wonderful concern for all these people.

Q: Did you find that there was always a quid pro quo with the Soviets. I mean if they let somebody go they always had something or not?

BARRY: Well, if you're talking about espionage, yes. If you're talking about things where there were direct concerns of the KGB and we had one of their people or any time we arrested one of their people you could pretty well expect them to find somebody on our side to arrest. Frederick Barghorn is an ideal example of this perfectly innocent example. Barghorn was a Yale professor and I guess this was in the early part of the Kennedy administration. It was before I got into this. He was there on one of the early academic exchanges and we had picked up a real honest to God Soviet spy, somebody then came up to Barghorn on the street with a rolled up newspaper and handed it to him. He was pounced on by the KGB. The rolled up newspaper contained military secrets and so Barghorn was put in jail. Kennedy raised a hell of a squawk about it because this was clearly a case of purely doing this for purposes of developing an exchange. In the event they backed down and let Barghorn go. I forget the exact outcome as far as the Russians. It may be that the Russian was not prosecuted because the U.S. Attorney didn't feel there was enough evidence, but it was not, we were told at the time, a deal. Usually when it came down to espionage cases there was some kind of an exchange. Then later on when it got to dissidents there such as Sakharhov and others.

Q: Was this during the time, the '65 to '67 time?

BARRY: No, later.

Q: Why don't we pick it up?

BARRY: Well, in the future it came to the point where they were asking for exchanges in order to release dissidents. A different story.

Q: Were there any particular sticking points in the time you were dealing with the consular treaty?

BARRY: Oh, yes, it was a very sticky issue altogether. In fact, I think it was ratified during my time on the desk. The sticking points had to do with rights of access and notification. We insisted on a time certain, three to five days, for notification.

Q: We're talking about arrest cases?

BARRY: We're talking about American citizens. What we wanted to be sure of is that we had the right to go into a jail and see the person and talk to them. In the Barghorn case for example, which was the immediate precedent to that which caused some of the concern led to the consular treaty Barghorn was held for weeks without any American having access to him. That was the case under Soviet law in general. You could be held without access to a lawyer, relatives, or anything like that as long as the case was still in the hands of the procurator general, that is, the person doing the investigation. It was only when the decision was made about whether to bring the person to trial or not that he was allowed access to a lawyer. So, we were very anxious to have this pinned down in terms of I think it was one to three days for notification and three to five days for access. The Russians wanted a much more flexible kind of terminology like within a reasonable period of time and the shortest possible time. We negotiated about that for a very long time. The Russians wanted to have in the convention provisos for opening posts and we did not want that because we realized that it would make it difficult to get through the congress. We wanted to have it strictly on the basis that this is something that enhances our ability to protect American citizens in the USSR and represents a real step forward in terms of how the Russians can treat our people. I guess it was Bill Shinn, who was then head of the consular section in Moscow. He was then engaged with a case of another American, Newcomb Mott, who was kind of an innocent abroad who had gone up to Kirkenes in the very northern part of where Norway and the USSR meet in the Arctic and for some strange reason and crossed the border. Well, I guess it reminds me of this young American who just swam naked across the Yalu River from China into North Korea and had to be released and then committed suicide later. Actually the cases are rather parallel. This young man simply walked across the border up around Kirkenes and ended up in a border town which at that time Soviets had opened to Norwegians to come in and go shopping at certain fixed times. They bought them in in busses and things like that. This kid just wandered into the town and he was picked up and charged with espionage. We were not allowed access to him. They tried to trade him for a Soviet spy - I think, a UN person we had picked up. We wouldn't have anything to do with it. He was being transported from, I guess Murmansk, to Moscow where he was going to be interrogated further and tried, and he died under somewhat mysterious conditions on the train. I think it's pretty clear what had happened was he had cut his own wrists and committed suicide, but there were also claims at the time that he was murdered by the Soviets, but we had not access to him and that was another issue that was very prominent then. I remember Bill Shinn at that time made several trips to Murmansk,

which is where he was being held and had a lot to do with the case. A book was written about that, too, charging as usual that the embassy and the State Department didn't do enough for this young man and claiming that he was murdered. That was another reason that caused us to want to have specific guarantees about what we needed to do in terms of U.S. citizens. The FBI didn't like the consular convention because they didn't want Soviet consulates here in this country. I can't remember what position the CIA took. I think they were probably in favor of it because it allows them to have more posts in the USSR. But, it was fought hard over in the congress and it did win the necessary two-thirds majority and I think was ratified in '67, '66.

Q: Was there any property say confiscated during the Czar at the Revolution or something that we're still trying to get out?

BARRY: Actually that's sort of another story because I ended up being the first person who was opening up the first consulate in the USSR. One of the first places we looked at was our old embassy in St. Petersburg, which is now a marriage palace. It's probably a brothel by now or something that makes money. As it turns out, it was too small for us and it was in a poor location in terms of our desire to have a free standing building. It's still there. It's quite elegant. Angus Ward, who was in Moscow in '34, went up to reopen the building and found all the old files still there and transferred them back to Washington. Of course, at one time we had a whole bunch of consulates. We had consulates in Vladivostok and along the Trans-Siberian Railway and things like that all to which came to an end after the Revolution or some of them were reopened during World War II for Lend-Lease and then closed down again. But we were eager in particular to get into Leningrad.

Q: Well, while you were on the desk, obviously you were sort of the new boy on the block with your ears wide open and listening, what was your impression of the Soviet hands at that time? This was sort of the elite.

BARRY: Mac Toon was the dean of the Soviet hands at that time and he later went on to be ambassador in Moscow. He had a long experience and I would say a justifiably low opinion of Soviet politics. He was very I would say rough edged in his feelings with the Soviets and he'd made no secret of it to them. When he finally was nominated as ambassador the Soviets took an awfully long time giving him agreement, but they finally did after they were told that this was whom they better take. There were a lot of other people on the desk some of whom like Vlad Toumanoff had come from Russian background, others like Paul Cook having been an academic expert and worked on this for a long time. The deputy director was Jim Pratt, who later went on to be political counselor in Moscow at the time that I was there. I guess the multilateral section had many of the stars of the then Soviet field. Kempton Jenkins and Bill Luers were there. Generally there what they had was people who were experts in some other part of the world and the Soviet Union at the same time so they had China hands and Middle East people and things like that who were also doing an apprenticeship in Soviet affairs. Always a good group of people, actually not so many of them continued on the Soviet business for one reason or another. Carroll Woods was the head of the bilateral section. I don't think he ever went back to Moscow. The exchanges section had been before a part of the bureau of cultural affairs and then the bureau of cultural affairs had split up and it was divided up into an office of East European exchanges which dealt with Eastern Europe. The Soviet part of it got attached to the political

desk.

Q: What was the impression when you were on the desk of the Khrushchev leadership and I think probably while you were there he was deposed, wasn't he? How did that sort of hit what people were talking about?

BARRY: I'm trying to remember. If such a major event happened it's strange that I wouldn't have been involved in it somehow at the time or made a bigger impression on me.

Q: Somehow I have the feeling that it happened... I was in Belgrade and left there in June of '67. I'm quite sure I remember Khrushchev being on the outs. Did you get any feel for Khrushchev?

BARRY: This was the time when this was the post missile crisis detente period when there were a lot of things going on in terms of new directions in arms control beginnings and things like that. I'm going to have to refresh my memory about all this because it doesn't I guess my nose was too close to the grindstone to have.

Q: So, this would have been '67 and '68 you were at Garmisch? Then where did you go in '68?

BARRY: I went to Moscow. Everybody went to Moscow, that is Tom and I and George Humphrey who was the third person of our class all went to Moscow together. I was lucky or perhaps it was before I had worked on the consular convention for Toon in Washington. I became head of the consular section when I arrived there. Usually the routine was that you would spend the first year as a junior officer in the consular section or in the administrative section or someplace else and then go on to a second year in which you'd do something else. I got the head of the consular section job. In fact I relieved classmate of mine at Dartmouth who had introduced me to my wife, Sam Fry, who had been in Trieste when we were in Zagreb. So, I had an interesting year in the consular section. This was not a time when the consular section was terribly busy. We did have a few arrested Americans as a result of the closing of the borders in Iran. Anyhow it had diverted the drug smuggling trade which normally went through Kabul to Europe from Afghanistan without ever going through the USSR. But, when that got shut off because of Iran, these people started to fly from Kabul to Tashkent to Moscow and then out to the West. The chief of police in Kabul ran the drug sales business and what he would do was he would sell a consignment of drugs to somebody who was going through Tashkent and would tell the people in Tashkent that these people were coming and they were arrested. The drugs would come back and get recycled. So, there were a lot of hapless people who were caught up in this and who were in jail variously in Tashkent and then in Moscow. I went to their trials in Tashkent, which led me to spend at least five or six different trips down to, Tashkent using the new consular convention I got to have access to them in the prisons.

I got to visit the Butyr'skiya prison in Moscow. These were prisons that were left over from the time of Catherine the Great and had been very little improved since and they're described in all of the various literature by people like Solzhenitsyn, but it was fascinating to be able to go into these places and meet the Americans and to sit through these trials. By that time I had sort of

developed an interest in Soviet law because that was part of what we were doing with the consular convention and so forth. We had a lawyer that we picked up in Tashkent who represented all these Americans going to the trials. He was Jewish and got a chance to see some of the tension that existed in Central Asia between the Russians and the Uzbeks or the Kazakhs or whatever of course they told you it didn't exist, but of course you get down there and talk to people and they would. One Uzbek told me that his son was chasing a Russian who had stolen his bicycle and chased him into a Russian apartment building where he was stoned to death in the courtyard of the apartment building. They never could get any of the local people to develop an interest in taking this to court or anything like that. We learned about how to make a sensational appeal and got all the relatives and so forth to write character witnesses. Eventually I think most of these people got released before their terms were out. There were some efforts to trade them for espionage, people in the U.S., but of course, we weren't at all interested in doing that.

Q: Who were these Americans?

BARRY: These were people who were in the early days of sort of wandering around the world. Usually they were coming back from the Far East. They'd been in Thailand or some place like that. They were not professional couriers, they were just young people in their twenties who had gotten into the drug culture and were told that this was an easy way to make enough money to keep yourself traveling around the world and just to carry this stuff along.

Q: How did they exist in the prison systems?

BARRY: Well, I'm sure it wasn't easy. They were allowed to receive packages from outside. They, I don't think any of them were physically seriously mistreated. These were people, who were used to sort of living on the thin edge anyhow. They were glad to get out.

Q: It sounds sort of like the way it was in Greece. I was there '70 to '74 and we had a lot of them and they were put in a Greek jail, it wasn't great, but they really didn't have to do anything, they just sat in the jail and contemplated their naval until eventually they were let out.

BARRY: No, these guys had to work. I think they were first imprisoned and tried in Tashkent, then they were brought to Moscow and then they were transferred to camps in Mordovia again where they did things like making brooms and things like that. They complained that the quota was set too high. They could never get enough to earn any money and that kind of thing.

Q: How about life in, you were in Moscow from when to when now?

BARRY: Well, I was there from '68 to '70. Then we were supposed to go and open the consulate in Leningrad, but that was delayed for a year so I came back and went back in '71 and I was there from '71 to '73, but this time in Leningrad.

Q: Speaking about the Moscow time, how was life there then?

BARRY: It was very insular because there was a lot of fear of fraternization and restrictions on

fraternization on both sides. Of course the Russians were not very easy to get to know either. The diplomatic community did a lot of entertaining of each other. Insofar as one got to know Russians, these were the dissidents; these were the artists mostly. This was where many people who were there at that time still have paintings by Kropovniksky or Kukhin or people like that because these were the only Russians you really could meet on a regular basis. You could in fact deal with some of the correspondent. Later on the second year there when I was dealing with substantive things I was talking to people like Evgeny Primakov, now the foreign minister, and people like that and you had more to do with the foreign ministry. In that first year there were lots of wonderful cultural things to do. The Taganka Theater was in its heyday and we used to catch as much of the theater as we could because this was where if you were watching a play about 17th century France, you were sure it was really about the current Soviet Union and things like Bulgakov and Master and Margarita and things like that. We could travel of course with the restriction that you had to let people know in advance where you were going and they sometimes would not let you go or tell you at the last minute that the place was closed. The embassy had an active travel program and so we went out in addition to these consular visits and got around a fair amount. Of course, there was the theater and opera and music which was all very good. The apartment living was not bad I would say. There were various apartments scattered around town most of which we still have today. Superior I would say to the compound style of living that existed in Belgrade and later to our regret we put into effect in the new building that we have in Moscow.

There was there of course, a good deal of obvious harassment. I think it was my first year there that there was a Pravda correspondent in New York who'd had his car stolen by a genuine auto thief. The car was found several days later in a junkyard or some place with all of the seats taken out and the battery and everything like that. I was going to an art exhibit in the Menage, which is right in front of the National Hotel right across from the Kremlin, and I took my big ugly Ford station wagon. At that time we were only allowed to have American cars and so I had this station wagon which I absolutely hated. It was sort of a bilious green and it was full of stuff from the commissary. I got out of my car and a militiaman was standing right there. I went into the Menage, saw the exhibit, came back and the car was gone. I said to the militiaman, "Where's my car?" He says, "What car?" So, I figured out that this was no doubt retaliation and indeed it was so precise retaliation that in the same number of days after they, the police called the embassy and said, "We found your car unfortunately it doesn't have any tires, it doesn't have any engine, it doesn't have any of this stuff, but please send the embassy tow truck down to pick it up." I said, "Well, I don't really think I'll do that. I fortunately have my car insured by the Soviet government insurance agency. Ingostrakh. You tell me the car is a total wreck, I'll have the insurance company come and take a look at it." That infuriated them of course because the last thing that the KGB expected to do was to have the Soviet insurance company pay me for the car. Apparently some of this fury was picked up later in terms of what we heard from the telephone conversations that were going on at the time. But the insurance company paid, I took the money, I went to Finland and I got myself a new Volvo station wagon for the same amount of money. Jake Beam, who was then the ambassador, managed to assign me to go up to be present at the beginning of the SALT Talks in Helsinki as a means of being able to let Peggy and me go up to pick up the car. So, that turned out all right.

Q: Were there any problems during this first time you were there in '68 to '70 as far as

provocations for you or your family or anything like that?

BARRY: I mean there were the kinds of things where we would say we were going out and we would forget something and come back to the apartment and find that the wires were all hanging out of the walls because they had started to improve the listening devices and that kind of thing. Actually one of the, I guess we took a nanny with us who was not a very bright woman, but she fell in with a Russian who lived somewhere in that same complex and it turned out the Russian's uncle was one of the people that monitored our tapes and she got taken into the room or found the room where they had all these tapes running, but provocations in the sense of the kind of thing one usually thinks of, entrapment, no. But it happened to other people and we were actually probably excessively warned to keep our heads down. We arrived there on the day before the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. All social contacts were forbidden, deep freeze in relations so that first year was conditioned very much by all that. Yes, I remember one of the first things I don't know how we fell into this group, but there was a group of Russians who were clearly very much disenchanted by all this. We were doing something with them, which involved watching the hockey game between Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union in which the Czechs unexpectedly beat the pants off the Russians. This was a case of great celebration by the Russians who were there who were feeling pretty bad about what had happened.

Q: Obviously you were focused on consular affairs. This was early Brezhnev, wasn't it?

BARRY: Early Brezhnev.

Q: What were you getting sort of from your colleagues who were dealing more with the government than?

BARRY: Because of the Czech thing we had not very much to do with the government at that time. This was the time when we had hoped, when Johnson had hoped to have the beginning of the SALT negotiations at the end of his term. This was the time when Vietnam was escalating and there was lots of propaganda about Vietnam. Actually we in the consular section were not all that busy and so we did have time and inclination to do a fair amount of reporting as well. I took my particular specialty, Soviet law, especially Soviet criminal law, and followed a lot of the cultural things going on. I think George Humphrey did some of the same things. We were both scheduled to go on to the political section for our second year there. I remember that I sent a memo to Coby Swank, the DCM at that time, a copy of which I still have someplace saying, here we are sitting down here with not enough to do for three of us in the consular section. We'd really like to supplement what the embassy is doing and other things and so please give us assignments and things to do. I think really during that period we spent as much time doing reporting as we did doing consular work.

The consular cases, well there were some interesting protection cases. I remember one automobile accident out and around Smolensk where Americans had been in a crash. It was still possible to drive your car although it was kind of hard to do in those days. So, we went out to visit these people who were in a regular old hospital in the back woods. The regular old hospitals in Moscow weren't so hot, but out there in the countryside they had nothing. They were sort of in these gurneys along the wall of the corridor of the hospital. Because they had been so smashed

up in their faces the treatment that they had used to reduce the suffusion of blood was leeches. The daughter was a registered nurse and was initially kind of horrified by it, but as she saw how this all worked, she thought well this isn't such a bad idea after all.

Q: What was your impression of Soviet law? Did you get a feel for it beyond what happened with Americans, which would be almost atypical? With others I mean was it a solid working system did you feel?

BARRY: Well, it was very much slanted in favor of the State. By the time a case had proceeded through a preliminary investigation a decision had been made as to whether the person was guilty or not. The only question was what the degree of severity of the sentence should be. In a way this is true of any Napoleonic code country because the procurator or the investigator has the task of both prosecution and defense as it were. We did go to a fair number of trials, just to Russian trials where you can walk into courtrooms and sit down just to be able to observe the nature of the proceedings. They had a judge and they had two so-called peoples' assessors who were sort of the functional equivalent of a jury-people who were not trained in the law, but sat in with the judge to help make up their minds on things like this. The legal community was very much under the gun under the communist party and we were in a case for example of some of the people who we got to know because they were defending Americans were occasionally people who were before people who had defended dissidents. They were certainly not good for your legal practice to do that kind of thing and you could get yourself removed from the Lawyers Collegium, which was the group of lawyers who dealt with these thing, if you were too assiduous of your defense of somebody.

The other thing we did a lot of in those days was to go to lectures, the so-called knowledge society ran lectures on international affairs, on domestic affairs and people who held the title of lecturers of the communist party would go around and appear in so-called red corners of the housing units and in other public venues to sort of give people the low down of what was going on in the world or at home. Then the various deputies at election time would go out and lecture and sort of present themselves to their constituents as then would-be representative in the parliament. These were generally much more revealing than the newspapers, they weren't supposed to be for foreigners. If they knew you were a foreigner they wouldn't let you in, but we would sort of dress up looking our most Russian and we would buy subscriptions to the lectures and we'd go to the door and pay our two rubles and walk in and sit down. I think in many ways that was the most productive reporting we had on domestic political issues and some foreign policy issues. I mean I recall going to these appearances of deputies and being convinced at the very depth of cynicism about the political system because the people in general were complaining and dismissing whatever promises they heard. I mean, there was this one woman who stood up in one of these lectures and said that, "I've been coming to these lectures for 20 years ever since the end of the war. You're the fifth deputy that's come up here. Every time one of you comes I say in 1944 an artillery shell came through the wall of my apartment and the next day somebody put up some boards to keep the cold out, but nobody has ever come to repair it since." She said, "I'll bet you will say that you will see to it that somebody comes and repairs my apartment, but I'll bet you that ten years from now that wall will still be unrepaired." Indeed, when I was back in Moscow a few weeks ago as an election observer I ran into the same kind of complaints by people about their elected representatives. People would ask questions about

Vietnam and doesn't the war in Vietnam mean that there's no way in which we and the Americans would get along. The lecturers would essentially say, "No, no, I mean the Vietnamese have got their own problems. It's very important for us to get along with the Americans" and that kind of thing. At the same time you'd hear some of the most scandalous stories about the kinds of subversion that the American Embassy was up to and things like that, but these lectures were I think a very valuable insight into the society.

Q: You were in the political section from what?

BARRY: This was '69 to '70 and to my surprise I was double hatted. The person who had been the Middle East person, was Norman Anderson, was somebody who genuinely knew something about the Middle East, but for some reason or other they were short on people that year, maybe somebody had been expelled, but I was partly the multilateral section and partly the internal section. The multilateral portfolio I had was the Middle East which was interesting because that was the time in which we were carrying out first quadripartite and then bilateral negotiations with the Soviets about the Middle East in the wake of the '67 war. The idea was to develop a framework for peace talks and of course the Soviets wanted to be co-chairman and wanted to establish their own droit de regard over events in the Middle East. We were eager to keep them out, but on the other hand, their relationships with the Egyptians and the Syrians and such was such that we couldn't entirely exclude them. This was the time that Joe Sisco was assistant secretary. Roy Atherton was the office director in charge of the bilateral negotiations so they were coming back and forth and Joe and Roy would come and we would have discussions with the Soviets in hopes of developing this bilateral track into something that would allow more progress to take place in the four power forum which is what we preferred, but which the Soviets didn't really want to play ball and they didn't want to emphasize the bilateral part of it. So, it was there that I got to know Primakov who was the Middle East correspondent of Izvestiya who is now the foreign minister and a lot of people in the foreign ministry in the Middle East division and in the Americas division. While on the internal side I followed things like some of the dissident trials and I guess developments in, the Sinyausky-Daniel case and all that kind of thing. That was a quite interesting combination of things to do.

Q: Our ambassador was Malcolm Toon the whole time you were there?

BARRY: No. Toon was office director in Washington and later deputy assistant secretary. He didn't come to Moscow until the '80s. My first ambassador was Tommy Thompson and the second year it was Jake Beam.

Q: Could you tell a little about how first Thompson and then Beam ran, I mean your impression of how they both ran the embassy and how they, what you were getting from them about?

BARRY: Well, Thompson was very distant. It was his second time there. He'd had a marvelous first tour during the Khrushchev period where things were quite open and he was able to go to receptions and talk to Khrushchev and talk to all the key people. The second time the relationship was not doing well to say the least. This was in the early Brezhnev years and so it didn't have the sort of spontaneity it had before. I think he was not in the best of health at that time and I think he really didn't feel he needed an embassy. He was the person who knew

everything there was to know about the place and so he was a rather distant figure I say after being there for a year and then going to his staff meetings every week. I know he didn't know who I was.

Q: I had the same feeling in Belgrade with George Kennan. He would go around and say, "What do we hear from the political section, Alex? and from the consular section?" You know, I mean and all this I realized he never really focused on who I was. Let me, wait a second, this just went off.

BARRY: Jack Beam was a different sort of a person and his wife Peggy was a very engaging person who wanted to involve everybody, very warm. I guess Beam was in Prague at the time of the invasion, so had been there before of course but it had been right after the war. He didn't have the long background in Soviet affairs that Thompson did so he was sort of feeling his way and of course he's a very laconic sort of personality, but somebody who was always interested in what people had to say. So, I think he and the embassy felt more engaged than before. The two DCMs who were there were first Coby Swank and then Boris Klosson. They were both very good. Basically it was a very good embassy both of those years. Stape Roy was there in the multilateral section with me at the time and Tom Niles and many others who'd gone on to very distinguished careers.

Q: Did you notice any difference (I mean obviously you were not at the level where you would feel it unless it came sort of ajar,) but the arrival of the Nixon administration in '69 on relations with the Soviet Union and Henry Kissinger was the national security advisor?

BARRY: Well, I had a lot to do with that later on, but I think the first awareness that I had of it was a trip by Kissinger to Moscow which they had not advised me that he was coming. I guess the only way that Jake found out about it was when the foreign ministry called him and invited him to go say goodbye to Henry as he left which I can say was not taken very well, not only by the ambassador, but by the other officers. I think in that period these Middle East negotiations were going on in the Nixon administration. There was the bilateral thing that Joe Sisco was doing, so in that sense, in some ways things had thawed out since the invasion of Czechoslovakia. At that stage the Russians all assumed that Nixon was going to be a extreme anti-communist and were the propaganda was very anti-Nixon and there were not great expectations.

Q: Then you went to Leningrad. What was the background of opening up Leningrad?

BARRY: We had had consulates in the USSR before the war. We had a consulate in Leningrad, which had been in the location of our previous embassy in St. Petersburg. We had, during the war, a consulate in Vladivostok. These were shut down after the war and during the period of concern about internal security and the McCarthy period and so forth. The USSR kept travel restrictions on Americans in the Soviet Union and we had reciprocated by putting restrictions on their travel in the U.S. Mac Toon in particular, who was the director of Soviet affairs in the late '60s, believed that it was important for us to open more windows on the USSR because he felt

that we were more restricted in the information that we could gather than they were in what they could get through open sources in the U.S. He worked on the issue of a consular convention with the USSR which could give us greater rights in terms of access to arrested citizens and regulate citizenship cases and things like that. This had slow going in the congress because they were very suspicious of anything like that. They thought that it was going to lead to the opening of many Soviet consulates in the U.S., which the FBI was against. We made the argument that the two things were divisible, that we could have a consular convention without having consulates. Then the consular convention did go through the congress. It was ratified. We then used it to good effect in being able to insist upon access to arrested Americans in three to five days and all those regulations that went along with it. Then the discussion began of reciprocal consulates in San Francisco and in Leningrad. By 1970 that had been agreed in principle, but of course the great problem was premises. They didn't want to give us anything that would be either too centrally located or would enable us to carry out intelligence operations that they didn't want us to do and of course our people had the same problem in San Francisco. They got themselves a quite desirable space in a high location in San Francisco and they offered us quite unsatisfactory office premises that had common walls with a building on both sides, which was bad from a security point of view.

The consul general at the time, Culver Gleysteen, was quite happy with the consul general's residence, which was a small palace, which had been occupied at one point by one of the Czar's mistresses. He was in favor of moving in, but the question of office space had not been satisfactorily resolved. So when I went there in the summer of '71, our office and our living space was in the Hotel Astoria. It was at least a step up from where they wanted to put us, which was the Hotel Baltiskaya, fit only for spies and dogs. We worked out of a suite in the Astoria and lived there with our three children, dog, and a teacher we had to bring along for our children. There were at that point two other families there, and the consul general and his wife. That circumstance, well it was quite interesting.

Q: You were there from 1971?

BARRY: Until '73. Because this was a place where there had been no NATO diplomats before, the local KGB had not yet quite caught up with the surveillance issue. So, in that sense it was more open than Moscow, although at times I think that I was used as the training vehicle for the KGB because I would always have three or four cars following me at the same time.

There were lots of things that went on there that you could gain access to you which you wouldn't have had access to in Moscow. Public lectures or quasi-public lectures or closed party meetings were some of the more interesting events. By sort of looking as much like a grungy Russian as possible you could walk into these meetings because they often put posters on the wall advertising that there was going to be a discussion by a party instructor at a closed meeting. You could go in there and listen to all this stuff and later report on it. Of course we didn't have any classified communications facilities so the way we'd do that is we would write it out in longhand, take it down to the train from Helsinki to Moscow because there would be an American on that train as a courier. You'd run down to the train station about midnight and stick your envelope through the window to the courier who would carry it down to the embassy.

We sometimes got very interesting information that ended up on the president's desk. One of them this was at the time that I think Kosygin was in Vietnam we were bombing Haiphong. We did this when Kosygin was there, and we did not know if this meant that the Nixon summit would be called off. I was in this closed party meeting at the time when somebody raised this question and the answer from the party instructor was, "No, we discussed that in the party and we have decided that this meeting must go ahead, that it is possible to have reductions of tensions despite U.S. actions in Vietnam." That was the first time we'd heard anything about that through all of our various sophisticated intelligence gathering. That bit of information sort of floated to the top. In Moscow I would run around from one of these things to another and listening to what they said about both economic and political issues and international relations in general and in Leningrad I did the same.

Q: Well, I've heard from others, too, saying that during these discussions, the public would come in and ask quite frank questions and they'd get quite frank answers, completely different from the gobbledygook that came out of Pravda or something like that?

BARRY: Exactly. That was I think probably our most valuable political reporting source.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Soviets?

BARRY: Much more than we did in Moscow. Eventually I think after about six months of living in the Hotel Astoria we got into our apartment. We got a quite nice apartment. It actually was a six-room apartment that had seven families in it before we moved in. It had been built of course as a one family apartment and then we went through it once and a local diplomatic service corps was showing us this possibility. In each of the six rooms there were families, and one room was divided in half, so there were two families in there. The people who lived there were not unhappy to be moved out because it meant that they went back to the top of the list for a separate apartment as opposed to a communal apartment. So, we moved in there and we were the only foreign family in the building. In Moscow of course we lived in a completely segregated facility with guards outside who kept the Russians out. We had some fairly substantial personal contacts with the neighbors in the building including a navy lieutenant commander who invited us to dinner at his house. The people upstairs from us were I think there because of the listening devices that were directed at us, but their kids came and played with ours. So, we had Soviet children in the apartment playing and our children went out and played hockey with them. We knew the sort of dissident crowd; artists and one person that we knew quite well. He used to come by; he began to ask us about Nixon's plans for when he came to Leningrad. I could tell this wasn't a smart thing to talk about in front of the microphones. He didn't reappear in our lives again until three or four years later when he turned up on our doorstep in Washington. What had happened to him was that he had been arrested and taken to an insane asylum and had been committed. His mother was a doctor of some kind, so she got him out, but only to get an exit visa and he was required to go immediately to Israel. He didn't like Israel much either so he got out of there. I think he ended up at the Thunderbird School of Business in Arizona. Then he came back to Washington. Anyhow, that was the kind of experience that we also knew quite well. We knew the painter Rukhin and his family, he eventually died in a fire in his studio, which some people accused the KGB of setting.

Well, we spent a lot of time preparing for the Nixon summit because one of the features of that was a side trip to Leningrad where there was a very detailed program of things for him to do. Our job was to ensure that the palace at Pavlovsk, which was one of the gems of the Czarist era, was properly prepared for the Nixon visit. That included replacing the Turkish bomb sights with real toilets in case the president or his wife needed to use them. Everything went smoothly, but within six hours after the Nixons left the toilets were removed again and reassembled at some party chieftain's place. The head of the local party organization at that time was Romanov as in the Czars and one of his notable adventures was that when his daughter got married he got all of the Romanov porcelain table settings out of the Hermitage and set the table for the wedding. I remember things were broken presumably as a result of throwing them around during the party. But Romanov was quite a hardliner and he was a full member of the politburo at that time.

Q: He was considered one of the heirs presumptive, too, wasn't he?

BARRY: For a while.

Q: For a while.

BARRY: There was a longstanding rivalry between Leningrad and Moscow and the other thing that Romanov got himself into was the support for the idea of making Leningrad the capital of the Russian Federation. They would keep Moscow as the capital of the USSR, but all of this, I mean that was how Kirov got himself in trouble back in 1934. So, I think Romanov overstepped himself. There was a lot of sentiment for Leningrad as being a more European city.

Q: Did you notice a difference between the thrust of what you call political and cultural life between Leningrad and Moscow?

BARRY: Well, certainly the theater in Leningrad was very active. As today there are dozens of beautiful theaters. The Kirov Ballet and the opera was eclipsed by the Bolshoi, but of course it had a proud tradition of its own. All the people of Leningrad thought they were more cultured than the people were in Moscow.

Q: Unlike those "nekultarni" in Moscow?

BARRY: Right. We did run into a lot of the former aristocracy one way or the other, walking the dog. Peggy ran into an elderly woman who was left over from the old days and still had the part of her old apartment, but then people were, once you announced who you were and why you were there, then obviously they knew that you were a dangerous person to be around. We had a dacha on the Baltic Sea north of Leningrad which was a very nice place to spend weekends and go skiing on the ice in the Baltic and drive to Finland and so forth. The diplomatic community was much smaller than in Moscow. Our closest friends were the Finns. Of course, their main task aside from maintaining friendly relationships with the bear at their doorstep, was to pick up the odd Finn who had forgotten to get back on the boat after coming over on the weekend to get cheap Vodka. The Finns knew the country quite well. We were standing on the review stand for the parade for the great October socialist revolution and a Cuban colleague gave us all Cuban cigars and our Finnish colleague gave us all Finnish Vodka to keep us warm. There were no

other NATO countries that were represented at the time.

Q: How about American tourism or West European tourism, I mean, the great cultural center. Was there much going on?

BARRY: There wasn't very much going on then. I mean we had occasional American cultural groups coming through, but it was I think still pretty much off the beaten track.

Q: How about the Nixon visit, how did that go?

BARRY: It went smoothly, but there were certainly some rough parts leading up to it. I remember Peggy Beam being absolutely enraged by this marine major who was part of the advance. He was running around the house checking it over for the Nixons and Mrs. Beam was talking about how we were going to do the dinner here and his response to her was lady get out of here. We're doing this and we don't want you to be hanging over our shoulder all the time. So, I don't think from that point of view it went well. All advance parties can be very difficult to deal with. This was probably the most difficult one I can remember.

Q: Did you have much contact with the embassy I mean were there courier trips back and forth?

BARRY: Yes, we went down once a week or every couple of weeks. People from the embassy came up to visit us, particularly the attaches.

Q: Was there a feeling that having Leningrad, I mean you were there obviously in the early days, was it a good thing, was everybody pretty pleased?

BARRY: There was certainly no feeling that what we were reporting was in any sense undermining the embassy reporting or anything of that sort.

Q: What about the Baltic States? Could you talk about the special treatment relationship we had with them and your role in that?

BARRY: That was part of our consular district. While the ambassador and senior people in the embassy were not allowed to be in the Baltic States because of our non-recognition policy, because we had the consular mandate could and did travel extensively in Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. It did give us an insight into the depth of feeling there about Russian domination, the depth of the feelings against the Russians. Also, of course it was on a much higher economic level than most of provincial Russia. So, going to Tallinn, for example was a treat in more ways than one. They of course, did have a lot of contact across the Finnish gulf, across the Baltic Sea with Finns, Scandinavians. The KGB was pretty active there, they looked for any signs of nationalism getting out of control.

Q: Did you when you were looking at Leningrad at sort of the closer you get to the West, the more things sort of seem to be a little closer to less more barbaric or civilized, it's long term, but did you get a feel for sort of how the Russian economy and the Russian, I mean the Soviet system was working there that was any different than what was seen in the Moscow optic?

BARRY: They did have a lot of heavy industry in Leningrad. I guess I would say that it was probably some of the best heavy industry they had. Defense industry and as we later found out when we entered some of these factories that had been off limits before, they were really state of the art. They tried to explain why they were so far advanced in one segment of the economy and so backward in others. The kinds of metal presses they had to use for example to make containment vessels for nuclear submarines were fantastic things. Later when I went to visit one of these factories after 1991 they had turned it into a consumer goods production claiming they were making beer-brewing machines using the same presses. I don't think it was ever economical. Also, by the way when we were there one of our interests was Murmansk, which was so important during World War II. A couple of times we went up to visit there because many of those people who died in World War II convoys are still buried in the graveyards of Murmansk; these were monuments to the sacrifices made by the Americans to keep Russia in the war something that was not a very popular theme at that time. Some of the more crude anti-American propaganda again goes back to the '60s was the story of the Colorado Beetle. I don't know if you remember that story, but the American potato beetle began to move across Europe in the 1930s. It got to Czechoslovakia about 1948 or '49 and moved from there across gradually to infest larger and larger areas of the Warsaw Pact. There was a famous poster that was up all over the place that showed millions of these little beetles with CIA written on their sides being dropped out of airplanes by parachutes. The story was that this was an effort to sabotage the economy of the former Soviet Union or of the Warsaw Pact. There's a famous incident that Ellis Briggs talks about in his book, Farewell to Foggy Bottom. Anyhow Ellis Briggs talks about receiving a diplomatic note from the foreign ministry talking about the depredations of the potato beetle and citing its Latin name and insisting that the U.S. stop this aggression against the Czech people. He wrote a marvelous note in response. The conclusion was that the potato beetle and he gave its Latin name should never be able to gnaw away at the ties of friendship that join the Czech and American peoples.

Q: What about, were you having any problems with people seeking asylum, that sort of thing?

BARRY: Well, from time to time we would get feelers from some people who either wanted to be recruited or who wanted to entrap us into a recruitment situation and you never could be sure how to respond to those things. I turned them over to the person on the staff who was responsible for that kind of thing. One day on a park bench I sat down next to an old man who really looked as if he had lived through hell. He said that he had been in the Polish army in 1939 and after the collapse of Poland he had been taken with many others to labor camps in the USSR and in this case he had been in a uranium mine in Central Asia. Of course the conditions there were appalling. He said that at one point after Stalin died, he was still restricted to living in that area although the labor camp was closed down. But he had managed to conceal himself on the roof of a freight train that made its way across the steppes and had ended up in Belorussia and had sought out Polish consul and the Polish consul had said, "Oh, yes we'll be glad to help you, but you just have to go across the street here to get your papers regularized." Of course, across the street was the KGB and they immediately sent him back to Central Asia. I guess he had suffered terribly from this train ride because he'd frozen large parts of his body. He went back to the camp and by this time it was 1973 and he had been allowed to leave the area and come back to Leningrad or Moscow, but not ever back to Poland. That was the kind of tale you'd heard from

people in those days.

Q: Was there any problem with harassment or enticement or that sort of thing?

BARRY: I was certainly regarded as and publicly identified as being with the CIA, so yes, close surveillance, but I didn't suffer any active harassment, nor did my family. I think as long as you didn't try to trick these people by trying to get out from under the surveillance it would be okay. Now there one of my colleagues did suffer some active harassment and dangerous situations including some kind of confrontation on a bridge.

Q: The initial staff of our consulate general, how many Americans were there?

BARRY: Four.

Q: The consul general was.

BARRY: Culver Gleysteen.

Q: He's part of the three brothers, Dirk and Bill. Bill Gleysteen was my ambassador in Korea at one point, but the three brothers sort of went separate ways in the Foreign Service. How did he operate?

BARRY: He and I did not get along particularly well. His wife, Flicka, was an extremely difficult person I would say. He was very interested in the care and maintenance of his palace. He was not much into the reporting side of things and I think while I was stirring up the pot by doing all this stuff he wrote me an efficiency report which downgraded my reporting while at the same time the DCM put me in for the reporting award. So, it was kind of an uncomfortable relationship. He was I would say the least successful of the Gleysteen brothers. I think it bothered him. He was the son of missionaries in China and he used to talk about the hardships of his life in Beijing.

Q: What was again I mean, you know, we keep looking at the Soviet Union and the whole Soviet economy was to collapse in less than 20 years from the time you were there. I mean both the political and the economic system really went down. Was that at all, from your observation or others, was this at all a thought in our minds that this is a limited system or how did we feel? I'm trying to capture the time.

BARRY: I don't think any of us thought that, least of all Dick Nixon. It's interesting what Putin said in his speech to the Bundestag the other day, that we listened a lot more to the Soviet Union when they were adversaries than we do today to Russia when it wants to be a partner. We were still living under the impression that Khrushchev tried to create with Sputnik and we were going to be overtaken by Russia. Zbig Brzezinski perpetuated the idea of the arc of crisis, an aggressive growing system that presents a threat to us that will only become more serious over the years. Of course that was also fostered by those intelligence analysts who thought that there was an advantage in making the adversaries seem more capable than it really was because it would be helpful in terms of getting more money for our own.

Q: There is sort of a thesis that Kissinger and his twin almost, Richard Nixon, felt that the Soviet system... We were playing almost a defensive game at that time that the Soviet system looked so powerful it was hard for democracies to stand up to them?

BARRY: Well, certainly if you, found Dobrynin's memoirs particularly interesting in that regard because I think Dobrynin recognized more of the weaknesses of his own system than Kissinger did and of course this whole idea of carrying this all out in great secrecy made it even more difficult to manage.

Q: When the news of the Kissinger secret visits and all, did this permeate sort of a real unhappiness or dislike or something of Kissinger that would sort of permeate our American diplomat group?

BARRY: Oh, sure. Of course, Dobrynin had full access to Kissinger and the discussion that went on between them were not made available either to the embassy in Moscow or to the Secretary of State or anything of that kind. Ambassador Beam wanted to establish equal access himself in which he was not particularly successful and of course Gromyko much preferred to have this handled in Washington because Dobrynin was able to free wheel in ways that Gromyko himself was not. The system in Moscow was very rigid and in every discussion about the Americans and American policy had to be approved by the Politburo. But Dobrynin was free to talk on a what if basis, so I think during that period there were one or two discussions between Beam and Gromyko, but because Beam was not aware of any of the things that were discussed in the Dobrynin channel it didn't work very well.

Q: How about the Vietnam War? We were beginning to disengage, but how did that play in Leningrad?

BARRY: There was a rather vociferous propaganda about the incursion into Cambodia, the bombings of Hanoi and Haiphong and all that. It certainly didn't lead to any personal hostility. I do remember when Jane Fonda ended up in Moscow and came down to demonstrate against American policy in front of the American embassy and was whisked away by the KGB because this had not been a planned demonstration. She was heard to exclaim when she was bundled into the car, "Heavy man, heavy."

Q: Oh, lord. Then in '73 wither?

BARRY: Back to Washington. I looked around for something to do to remain involved in Soviet affairs, but there wasn't anything open at the moment. My old friend and colleague Kempton Jenkins got in touch with me and said how would I like to run the USSR division of the Voice of America. It sounded interesting to me because instead of getting to manage one-third of a secretary, there were 140 people there, and three or four divisions. The Russia division, Ukrainian, Uzbek, a couple of others, Georgian, Azeri. So, I took that and came back and found it quite interesting. It was at the time of the beginning of the unraveling of detente. It was the time

of the growth of dissent and the impact of Sakharhov, Solzhenitsyn and all that. The people working there, most of them of course were emigrants. Different waves of immigrants, some were from before the war, some of them were, one of the leading people there was a Chechan who had been a member of the institute of red professors and he had defected and I guess probably made his way to VOA. Anyhow, there were some who were Jewish and there were some that were anti-Semitic and they spent a lot of time fighting with each other. The Ukrainians would fight with the Russians and all that sort of thing so it required a firm hand often. Also there was the usual stress and strain of the State Department telling us what to report, what not to report. We've seen it again recently about reporting the comments of Osama Bin Laden and of course the idea of many of the people there is that we are journalists just like any other and we report all the news whenever we see it. Kissinger was particularly upset about the amount of attention paid to Solzhenitsyn and Sakharhov and we would regularly hear from our colleagues at the State Department or from the USIA regional office that we had to tone this down. At some point I did because it was getting to the point where every other sentence was about this and nothing else was being reported. Then of course the people who I told not to do it so often went to the press and complained there. But it was an interesting experience. There were some wonderful young people there who had learned Russian as exhibit guides. Jill Dougherty from CNN was one of them and she was able to broadcast in fluent Russian and on the air all the time.

Q: But, you were there from '73 until?

BARRY: Until mid-'74 I guess. In mid-'74 the job of deputy director at EUR/SOV came up much to my surprise because I was then a fairly junior FSO-3. I was asked to take this job. There were three, four deputies I guess, but this was the senior deputy and so the other people were senior to me. I guess I took it over from Stape Roy who went on to the China desk. I moved over then and shortened my tour with VOA.

Q: With the VOA at that time when you would get complaints from the State Department or elsewhere, you know, that you're overdoing this, let's not exacerbate our relations too much. How were these treated?

BARRY: I basically used my own judgment. I mean, I realized that we had to report all these things with credibility. I did also realize that there was a point beyond which we were doing what Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe were supposed to do.

The other thing that was going on at that time was Watergate. I heard lots of complaints including from the Russians about why you're reporting all this stuff about Watergate. As Dobrynin's memoirs indicate the Russians never could believe that somebody as skillful as Nixon would have gotten himself into this kind of situation and that it couldn't be fixed overnight. A lot of our people in the staff didn't like reporting this stuff either, they thought it was not in our national interest to be airing our dirty linen, but that had to be reported for credibility. There were two lines of news reporting, one was the English reporting which was translated into Russian and carried and that I didn't have anything to do with because it was just a matter of automatically translating it. But then there was an awful lot of stuff that was original, it was either features or filler or news items from within the USSR that would be of particular interest. At one point I was warned about what we were saying in Uzbek. Now nobody in the

management staff spoke any Uzbek. The guy who was the head of the Uzbek service was probably somebody who had been involved in the para military actions against the Soviet Union during or after the war. I did finally hire somebody who did know Uzbek an academic from the outside who could come and tell me what was going on and it turned out that what was going on was pan-turanian propaganda. We had to get rid of him.

Q: Where were you getting your material?

BARRY: We had correspondents in the USSR. We had stringers. We had both English speaking correspondents and Russian speaking correspondents. A lot of people in the periphery who would pick things up that were in the Russian language journals.

Q: Were you considered, or were you looking over your shoulder at the BBC Russian service?

BARRY: Oh, yes. Well, we were complementary in many ways. We exchanged visits, the head of the division in the BBC and I listened to them to see if they had things we didn't and so forth. It was difficult to adjust to because when you went to work you stayed until everybody has gone home. Of course, VOA was on 18 hours a day so I had to get used to the idea that you don't stay in the office all the time you're on the air. This led to a more relaxed existence than might have otherwise been the case.

Q: Were you getting much feedback from the Soviet Union on what you were doing?

BARRY: You'd get regular complaints from the Soviet press about what was going on. One of the big issues was did we read some dissident documents. RFE and RL did that. I drew the line at reading large, long texts out loud on the air and wanted them simply to make excerpts. We'd certainly hear from groups in this country when they didn't like something that was going on. Usually, because some of the individuals within the Service would go and complain to them.

Q: You must have been carrying on a sort of a little war with all these various groups all of whom who had probably fought each other or something at one time or another?

BARRY: Yes, but I mean in general I would say that a lot of them, most of them were people who were generally interested in even handed journalism. They realized that this was lacking there and we should not imitate them, so I had particular respect for the person who was the head of the Russian service Victor Frantsuzov who was a very respected person within among the listeners. He was a sort of Walter Cronkite of the Russian service.

Q: In '74 you went to back to SOV and you were there until when?

BARRY: I'm trying to remember, let's see, when did Carter come in?

Q: Carter came in in '77, January of '77.

BARRY: Okay, when Carter came in I went over from SOV to be the director of UN political affairs. I was in EUR/SOV from '74 to '77.

Q: What was sort of the structure of SOV and where did you fit in?

BARRY: The director was Mark Garrison, deputy director was me. There was a director of bilateral affairs or the head of the office of bilateral affairs I think was Jack Scanlan. There was the director of the multilateral affairs office who I think was Sherrod McCall. There was the director of economic affairs. There was a director of exchanges. That was Sol Polanski, so there were four heads of offices.

Q: It must have been difficult because this was again during the Kissinger era, I mean he was very much.

BARRY: The era was extremely frustrating.

Q: Because the things that you knew nothing about was stirring around all the time, weren't they?

BARRY: And yet we were being asked to write papers for senior people to go do things and we knew that for everyone of these things there were two briefing books. There was a real briefing book that had been put together by people who were in the know and there was the briefing book that we struggled to put together and had to sort of guess at what was going on.

Q: Was there any effort made to say, "Come on fellows let's straighten this out?"

BARRY: This was a job that had to be done above our pay grade. This was Bill Rogers' problem and Art Hartman was Assistant Secretary. They left some things to us, bilateral issues, and we tried to get involved in the arms control business and we wrote papers on that, but I doubt that any of them had much resonance. Hal Sonnenfeldt when Kissinger came over to be Secretary of State, Sonnenfeldt and his crowd sort of ran Soviet affairs directorate of their own.

Q: He was counselor of the department?

BARRY: Let's see, he was at INR at first. Then I guess he went over to be a staff member at Kissinger's NSC and then he came back as counselor and he had a bunch of aides working for him.

Q: Should I mention that? I'm just coming to that part. I'm interviewing Hal now and I'll be doing it next week or something. I mean was it a heavy-handed operation?

BARRY: Oh, yes. Of the one bridge between us all I guess Bill Suhinn had been in SOV I guess and then he went over to work on Hal's staff. He was somebody who would share things with us. The rest of them would not. I think if Sonnenfeldt or Kissinger ever found out that he was sharing anything with us it would have been too bad for them.

Q: During '74 to '76 how did you see, you say detente was becoming falling apart?

BARRY: It was falling apart in part because of Soviet activities in the third world and I guess this was the time of Angola and of Cuba getting involved. It was falling apart because of domestic criticism of and it was falling apart in part because Brezhnev himself was in decline and was unable to delink the solution of the SALT agreement with another summit. They had summits in '72, '73 and I guess '74 was the last summit and by that time U.S. critics were already accusing Nixon of using the Soviet card to hold onto power. They had a number of agreements on the prevention of nuclear war and all this stuff, which were under attack by the right wing, including right wing democrats. This was the period of Jackson-Vanik and the insistence on agreement to a quota of immigration before SALT I could be ratified.

Q: Were we seeing Brezhnev as somebody whose sort of hold on power was getting weaker maybe because of age?

BARRY: No, I don't think we did at all. In fact it was at that point that we saw Nixon's hold on power reducing. I think we underestimated the degree to which Brezhnev's hardening of the arteries had affected him. Of course if you read Dobrynin he never had much of a free hand in many of these things because of the need for consensus among the Politburo, on all the various initiatives that would be taken. The area where Brezhnev was most confident because of his position before of being in charge of the military industrial complex was essentially SALT, but he had opposition from both Grechko and Ustinov about a lot of these issues. Marshall Grechko, the Defense Minister, and Ustinov, the member of the Politburo responsible for military production.

Q: Were you seeing any affects with the so-called China cards at that time?

BARRY: This was the time of the Usuri River clashes between Russian and Chinese troops. There was widespread rumor at the time that Brezhnev had sought U.S. acquiescence in a Soviet nuclear attack on China, something I don't think was ever put that boldly but I suspect there were fairly strong hints of it. Of course, Kissinger definitely had a strategy in mind of linkage. China played a large part in this linkage. There was more stress and strain about the third world I think about Cuban activity, it got worse as the situation deteriorated until finally in 1979 with Afghanistan that it went all away. It was a steadily building cycle of things.

Q: Were we looking at, you know the Soviets were making a significant investment in Africa, were you sort of talking to our people in the African bureau and trying to figure out what the hell, what does this really mean, or was it just in general, I mean, they're spreading their influence and this is a bad thing?

BARRY: Well, I think what we figured it meant was that they had an ideological commitment to this and they believed in that part of the idea of peaceful coexistence which sort of amounts to what's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable. In Dobrynin's explanation of it, the issues having to do with the third world were not in the hands of the foreign ministry at all, they were in the hands of the international department of the CPSU headed by Boris Ponomarev who really believed in the ideological commitment. Dobrynin wonders out loud, what kind of a dog did we

have in this fight? Why were we interested in it? He says, look at the situation now, did we make any lasting gains in the area? Of course, then there was the whole Egypt-Israel issue, the six day war, the resupply, Soviet resupply of the Egyptian armed forces in was it '72?

Q: '67 was it '67? Then there was the October war, which I think was '72.

BARRY: That's right. Well, that put a major strain on the whole relationship, too because at that point they had alerted some paratroop units and they began to resupply things. We both did in fact at the time.

Q: Did you have a feeling, you know I sometimes try to get the attitude, that Kissinger because of his great diplomatic triumph if you want to call it that was the opening to China, was a little too much on the Chinese side than on the Soviet side or not?

BARRY: I thought so at the time and I still do. Although he was frequently denying that he was doing any of this because of a desire to get at the Soviets I concluded that was very much what he was doing. He made little effort to disguise it.

Q: So, then you moved over to the Soviet desk? So, your job was?

BARRY: Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Q: And you did this from early '79?

BARRY: To '81.

Q: What was the state of relations in '79 to '81, well the first things really went through a change, but when you arrived there in '79, the Carter administration had put a lot of emphasis on trying to change things around.

BARRY: Well, of course, the previous period had been the decline and fall of detente. The Carter administration came in with a high emphasis on human rights and they desired to make a change in the way, which we carried out our strategic arms program so that we could get things through the congress. So, this was a period of considerable distrust on the part of the Soviet leadership. Brezhnev was still alive, but he was weakened at that point. He had had a number of small strokes and was certainly not able to think on his feet. The period started out with insistence on the immigration issue, Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn and so forth. I think one of the early steps was Carter's letter to Sakharov, which caused a great stir in the Soviet Union. Now, Marshall Shulman was then the Special Advisor to the Secretary for Soviet Affairs. As it turned out, I learned later why he wanted me in this job. Because I had at some point when I was in the office of Soviet affairs filled in for Hal Sonnenfeldt at the UN association which was about to take a trip to Moscow. Cy Vance was on that delegation and Marshall Shulman was putting it together. Apparently the briefing I gave was something that had favorably impressed Marshall and so that's why I got this job. I was closely involved with Marshall and of course he was close

to Vance. But Brzezinski and the people at NSC took a different line. So, that was a constant struggle throughout that period having to deal with that. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was in 1979, and preparations for martial law were underway in Poland. So, it was a period of considerable turmoil. In arms control we sought deep cuts in land based nuclear missiles going beyond those that had been agreed in SALT. It was clear to me, and I think to Marshall, that it was never going to happen, it was too radical a departure. You couldn't pass over ratification of SALT to revise the agreement before it was ratified was definitely not going to work. Although I don't think people either didn't care or didn't realize it. It was ominous that we were going to do this. We went to Moscow as part of the delegation led by Vance and Harold Brown to present this to the Soviet leadership and I recall telling his people at that point, Les Gelb in particular that I could predict with considerable certainty that they were just going to reject this out of hand which they did. There was considerable disappointment and bitterness at the delegation that there had been so little progress.

Q: This was the Vance trip where he went to there and was shot down?

BARRY: Yes, in a press conference before we even got out of town, by Gromyko.

Q: Were people still moaning over why the Soviets didn't play along or something. I mean to have a new administration, a new Secretary of State that rebuffed sort of publicly right at the beginning, a damn fool way to start off an administration in terms of sort of a certain amount of good will?

BARRY: This was a year into the administration and the initial steps had not been very promising. The Soviets have always been more comfortable with republicans than with democrats. The emphasis during the campaign and the emphasis during the early days of the administration and the persona of Brzezinski I don't think promised very much to the Soviets. It's also clear from reading Dobrynin's memoirs that at that stage in particular the machinery of the Soviet Union was pretty much on automatic pilot. Nothing happened without the politburo endorsing it whereas Brezhnev was in a state of physical decline, the people who had a lot to say were people like Gromyko and Ustinov and they were not very they were disappointed in the failure of detente as they saw it and the state of the U.S. Soviet relations had been going down in the Nixon period. The Soviets still did think that Watergate was basically the accomplishment of the enemies of detente and they couldn't understand how a thing as trivial could have caused the downfall of the Nixon presidency.

Q: It wasn't on your watch, but obviously you were sitting there I mean meeting with them. What was the feeling in '79 when you came in, why did the promising period of detente under Kissinger and all had fallen this way?

BARRY: I think first and foremost the two sides have different expectations from the idea of detente. The Soviets felt that this was a commitment to geopolitical parity, that the Russians would be full partners. The two superpowers in the world, that there was a commitment to the whole arms control area to parity in all kinds of weapons, the Russians and their development of weapons systems and the deployment of the SS-20 missiles in Europe we saw as decoupling, as decoupling the U.S. from Europe. It was this whole thing combined with in '79 in Afghanistan,

which was very much seen by Brzezinski as the crisis of the drive of the Soviet Union toward the Persian Gulf towards Pakistan in the south. We had at that point considerable debate about what to do about the invasion of Afghanistan. I remember one of the rather heated discussions on arming the mujahedeen and the release of Stinger missiles and the idea that once you have let these things out of the box you'd never get them back in again. Of course, I was just reading a commentary by Brzezinski again who was asked about the wisdom of this in light of such events and he still says that the result of the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan was actually the dissolution of the Soviet Union. From our point of view, we saw many people on our side saw the issue of peaceful coexistence as a method by which what's mine is mine and what's yours can be negotiated. So, that whole concept I think had been signed up by Kissinger on this agreement for the prevention of war was very much under attack by people who felt that signing up to this declaration was an unwise decision at best.

Q: When you got there in '79 was there a feeling we were going to try to repair relations or I mean on the State Department's side where the Brzezinski and the National Security Council the Brzezinski group was almost moving in a different direction?

BARRY: I don't think it was that stark. I think that on individual issues, particularly arms control issues because to a large degree the compass of the U.S. Soviet relations had increasingly been linked to the strategic arms limitations talks. I think our goal was to try to get the strategic arms agreement behind us, ratified, and then to move on in this and other arms control areas. I think that we realized the depth of irritation of the Soviet leadership didn't want public engagement of the president in some of these human rights issues. But, it wasn't that they wanted to destroy U.S. Soviet relations and we wanted to build them up. I think we placed more value on keeping a steady course in the relations and trying to proceed based upon what had been accomplished before. Of course a substantial amount of my time was spent on Eastern Europe. That was a little different in the sense that this was not Marshal Shulman's area. There was a lot going on around Eastern Europe at that time and I made a couple of trips out there. Yugoslavia was important post at that time. Larry Eagleburger was the ambassador. There were a number of bilateral issues. This was a time when the relationship with Czechoslovakia was very bad because they were still under the post Prague spring period. I'd say I spent half of my time on Eastern Europe things.

Q: Who were on the Soviet side of things how we and we obviously went to December of '79, but Marshal Shulmann what was his role and what was his background?

BARRY: He was a long time Soviet expert. He had been in the government back in the Truman administration. He was at Columbia. He was head of the Russian studies program at Columbia. He was a close friend of Cy Vance's and somebody who had a very good understanding of the Soviet Union. He was also a wonderful person. I was very close to him personally. He was not terribly well-equipped for the bureaucratic sword fights that go on in Washington. He was too nice a person. There were certainly lots of occasions in which Brzezinski took out after him publicly.

Q: You know, sometimes when you put two people from the same academic institution together I mean they spent all of their lives fighting each other at least I mean that's what academics do kind of.

BARRY: Well, I don't think Marshal was much of a bureaucrat. Brzezinski, actually I knew Brzezinski, I went to Columbia back after leaving the navy, Brzezinski had just come down from Harvard and I took a course from him. I don't think I took a course from Marshal. Brzezinski, I think, reflected the heritage of his Polish ancestors about Russia.

Q: How did you all evaluate the decision making process of the Kremlin? This was prior to the invasion of Afghanistan.

BARRY: It was pretty clear from Dobrynin's memoirs what it was like at that time. That is, although Brezhnev was a dynamic and innovative personality in the early stages of his career, by that time he was not at all. Everything passed through the Politburo and the conservatives on the Politburo had the upper hand. The people who had put a lot at stake for the improvement of the relations with the U.S. and the development of detente were by that time pretty well discredited because of the failure of the policy from the point of view of the Soviet Union. People like Ustinov, who was the head of the military industrial complex, people like the defense minister, Grechko, certainly had a much stronger position. The attitude was, we're going to hold to our course because this was something that we'd decided upon and it's right and we're not going to adjust.

Q: What was the role of Gromyko at that time?

BARRY: Well, he was a candidate member of the politburo. He was not an equal voice with the full members and he had always been a conservative in the sense of somebody who was inflexible particularly at that stage of the game when he realized that where the Politburo was going. He personally found Carter and Brzezinski irritating.

Q: With the Soviet Union we've come up to the events of a larger part of '79 when all hell broke loose and Iran and Pakistan. In the first place, did the takeover of our embassy in Iran have much of an effect on what we were doing?

BARRY: The U.S. government can at best deal with three crises at a time or two crises at a time and the whole Iran thing preoccupied the government throughout that period near the end of the Carter administration. Then of course as far as this arc of crisis here is concerned in the sort of idea the this was a dangerous aggressive move by the Soviet Union that certainly was the mood that Brzezinski set at the time.

Q: Had we been following Afghanistan and its relations with the Soviet Union very high in our lookout list?

BARRY: It depends on what time you're talking about. I think in the early '70s it was not, but towards the end of '79 certainly their activities in Afghanistan and the increasing involvement of the Soviet Union were in our favor, were periodically warning them don't do this, don't do that, especially in late '79 of course it didn't have much of an effect. If you look at it now from the point of view of the Soviets, they looked at it as a defensive move because they saw that the so-called progressive forces in Afghanistan were losing out. Dobrynin's memoirs say that after the

decision was made in the politburo in late '79 to go into Afghanistan and the military came to Ustinov and Andropov and said we can't do this. You're asking us to carry out a task that we're not trained for, equipped for and they were told no, this is the decision of the politburo, you go back and do it.

Q: When the Soviets came in I guess it was just around Christmas time?

BARRY: Yes, it was Christmas time because I was on leave and I had to come back.

Q: Were you, was there, I won't say confusion, but I'm trying to figure out what the hell this was all about because it seemed to be one communist regime was replacing another communist regime and you know, the commitment of the armed forces into another country, is a very major thing.

BARRY: I don't think there was much debate about what it was about. The question was what kind of sanctions do we take as a result of this. So, I think I came back at Christmas and spent a lot of time drawing up the usual lists of well we ought to do this, we ought to do that. The issue of grain sales, the issue of Olympics I guess. Plus the usual small things and on the issue of support for mujahedeen covert action and all those kinds of things.

Q: One draws up these lists of sanctions, but is there a feeling of I mean you know this is a case of don't stand there, do something even though you know you're doing something that's not of any.

BARRY: Yes, I think there is a certain amount of truth to that. Although it was a clear idea that you couldn't just react by saying that we had given several public warnings about the consequences of going into Afghanistan - this is because we had pretty good intelligence of the preparations to go in before although not exact timing - you could tell what was going on and on the border then was a build up in that direction. Having given the public warnings we better do something, an action or a consequence. So, I don't think anybody who was doing this felt there doing this against their better judgment although some of things like grain sales were hotly debated at the time.

Q: Where you looking for any indicator that this might be unpopular within the Soviet Union or did it not really make any difference?

BARRY: I don't think public opinion in the Soviet Union was a factor at that point.

Q: What about within the Soviet Union were you seeing any you know doing this time were you seeing any changes in the Soviet Union as far as well, public opinion, but just the leadership or the way things were being dealt with?

BARRY: It was a period of stagnation and they themselves now call it in retrospect a period of stagnation and so there was not much going on either economic reform or political organization. It was a regime with hardening of the arteries.

Q: I imagine that the Kremlin watchers and trying to find out who was going to succeed, Brezhnev or did it make much difference?

BARRY: Yes, I think there was a lot of speculation, but after all Brezhnev hung on until when was it, '84? He held on for a long time. During that period of course we had the summit in Vienna for the signing of the START agreement and I recall we had tried to revise the agreement by putting a last minute proposal to Brezhnev to cut some more heavy missiles. But I recall coming into the Hofburg in Vienna and I was in the vicinity of Brezhnev as he was brought in and he could not even lift his legs to move up the steps. Two great burly security people had to lift him up the steps, kind of like a sack of potatoes and when I saw that I thought that anybody who thinks that Brezhnev is going to suddenly agree to a revision to this agreement that he's coming in to sign has got to be crazy.

Q: Well, did you get involved before we leave the Soviet Union, did you get involved with any of the debates over what sort of whether to arm the mujahedeen?

BARRY: Yes, there was a lot of discussion of that and there was a lot of realization, but once you put these weapons in their hands and began to encourage people from around the Muslim world to come in there you were breeding something that could not easily be controlled in the future. So, there were various kinds of arguments. For example, there was a requirement when the war was over you've got to turn back the stingers. That wasn't very realistic. There were a lot of people, myself among them, who argued that we were doing something that was irreversible, but the prevailing view in that case came from the military and the NSC. Not from the military maybe from the OSD, but not from the joint chiefs of staff.

Q: I would suspect that the military would be, it doesn't like other people to get a hold of their goodies.

BARRY: Yes, there was some talk about this falling into the hands of terrorists.

Q: Well then moving on sort of over to the Eastern European thing. What sort of thing, Poland, how did we see things in Poland in '78?

BARRY: Of course, this was a period of considerable tension inside Poland. This was the growth of Solidarity. We understood the Soviet concerns about the situation in Poland; as it is we had some pretty good intelligence sources inside the senior Polish military telling us about preparations for martial law or some kind of effort by the Soviets to put this under control. I forget when John Paul II became Pope, but that obviously had a tremendous effect on opinion within Poland.

Q: It was around '78 or something like that.

BARRY: I became a very close friend of the Polish ambassador here, Romuald Spasowski, and his wife. He later defected in 1981 and we had many long discussions. We were providing food aid to Poland and things like that. Spasowski would first of all tell what his instructions were and then tell me why he didn't agree with them. His wife was deeply religious and he was not. After

the Polish Pope came in he began to rapidly move in her direction and became a devout Catholic. I think, in fact, his family was Protestant. Wanda herself was extremely outspoken. They would go to meetings of the Warsaw Pact, ambassadors and dinners and things like that and later come back and tell me about all the things that transpired during those events. In fact, finally as he was beginning to get closer and closer to a decision not defect we had several of their things in our safe deposit box because we knew when he left he would be unable to go back to the embassy and get these things. So, we understood that pressure by the Soviet Union on Poland was getting more and more serious as time went on.

Q: Well, the feeling was that if martial law was declared the Soviets might move in?

BARRY: Yes, and that debate clearly had gone on and did go on in Moscow at the time. Again it was the Soviet military, who said that this was not something we can do, but they did have some preparations for this and we were aware of those preparations. This was not so much '79; it was more '80 to '81. This was after Afghanistan by that time.

Q: Well, was there concern after Afghanistan that the Soviets were in a sort of defensive role in the offensive?

BARRY: Yes, that was certainly the view that most people had about Afghanistan. When it comes to the Warsaw Pact and Poland, I think that was clearly seen as a defensive move to avoid the crumbling of the Warsaw Pact and of course the East Germans were egging the Russians on saying that they can't tolerate this type of discipline in Poland without having to spill over the rest of it.

Q: Were we making noises to the Soviets first of all, don't do this.

BARRY: Yes, around '80 or '81 we were saying it publicly, we were saying it privately. There was not a discussion that took place that did not have that as an underlying theme and what the consequences would be and so forth.

Q: What were the consequences seeming at the time?

BARRY: I don't think anybody was thinking military, but more of the same, more sanction. I think that after the declaration of martial law in '81, we decided to cut off grain sales to Poland.

THOMAS M. T. NILES
Office of Soviet Union Affairs
Washington, DC (1965-1967)

Russian Institute
Garmisch, Germany (1967-1968)

Economic Officer

Moscow (1968-1971)

**Commercial Officer
Moscow (1973-1976)**

Ambassador Thomas M. T. Niles was born in Kentucky in 1939. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University and master's from the University of Kentucky. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1962, he was positioned in Belgrade, Garmisch, Moscow and Brussels, and also served as the Ambassador to Canada and later to Greece. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 5, 1998.

Q: What were you going to?

NILES: I was going back to the Office of Soviet Union Affairs, to be the junior officer in a two-person section that dealt with economic issues.

Q: Tom, how were you received and can you give me some atmospheric of the Soviet Bureau? I would assume (I never served there.) that coming out of Yugoslavia, you would be a type of "country cousin." You weren't really one of the elite, but you had a little exposure.

NILES: I think I was received reasonably well. It was an extraordinary office when I was in Soviet Affairs. It was a large office, of course. When I got there, David Henry and Robert Owen were the Director and Deputy Director, but they were soon replaced by Mac Toon, who came out of Moscow, and by Jim Pratt. I can't remember where Mr. Pratt came from. Bob Barry went into the bilateral political section. We left Yugoslavia together and proceeded in parallel. Just about the time we got there, Stape Roy came into the multilateral political section, which was headed by Vlad Toumanoff. Sol Polansky was also in that section. It was a large office. Our little economic section was just two people, but the bilateral political and the multilateral political sections each had five or six officers. There was one officer, Virginia James, in the bilateral section who was a civil servant, not a Foreign Service officer. She had been there working on Soviet affairs since the time of Ambassador William Bullitt in the mid-1930s. By then, she was a lady in her late sixties. I think she retired while we were there. But she had been in Soviet Affairs for at least 35 years. She knew everyone and everything. She was really the institutional memory. She was a wonderful person as I remember. I didn't work directly with her because she was in the bilateral political section.

Q: Excuse me. I would just like to get the dates.

NILES: April 1965 until July 1967.

Q: What were the interests in your particular field?

NILES: Overall, it was a difficult time in US-Soviet relations. The Vietnam War was heating up. Soviet Union had a new leadership, Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny, who had overthrown Khrushchev in October 1964. Ambassador Foy Kohler was in Moscow. He had replaced

Ambassador Thompson in 1963. Ambassador Thompson was on the 7th floor as Ambassador-at-Large. But, in any event, we were trying to develop a better relationship with the Soviet Union, although we recognized that major progress was unlikely. We were interested in developing a dialogue with the Soviets to try to reduce bilateral tensions that as well as those that arose from our contacts with the Soviet Union in other parts of the world. We had basic stability in Europe. From the time of the Hungarian revolution onward, from say, November 1956, onward, the situation in Europe was relatively stable. Of course, we had the Czech events in 1968 to look forward to, and there were periodic Berlin crises. But, overall, at that time, Europe was fairly stable. The Middle East was an area of great US/Soviet tension, highlighted by the six-day war in June 1967. We had the problem of Cuba, and the southeast Asian problem was really moving seriously out of control. We wanted to try to minimize the possibilities of collisions with the Soviet Union, and we were looking at the possibilities of reducing and avoiding problems.

We had had one breakthrough in the summer of 1963. Ambassador Harriman negotiated the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) eliminating nuclear tests in the atmosphere and the seas. In 1964, we sold the Soviet Union a substantial amount of wheat for the first time since the end of Lend-Lease in 1945. People were beginning, for the first time since 1945, to think about trade with the Soviet Union. In the spring of 1965, a Commission was set up to study the possibilities of trade between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was headed by a guy named G. Erwin Miller, who was the CEO of the Cummins Engine Company in Columbus, Indiana. The Miller Commission studied the U.S./Soviet trade possibilities in all its aspects. They came to the unremarkable conclusion that within limits, trade in “peaceful non-strategic goods” would be beneficial to the United States. Our tiny office had responsibility in the State Department for efforts designed to encourage “peaceful, non-strategic trade” between United States and Soviet Union. There was no thought at that time of MFN.

Q: MFN meaning?

NILES: Most-Favored-Nation treatment. There was no thought of opening up export credits. There was no thought of trying to reach a settlement of the Lend-Lease, which we did in 1973. We were interested in expanding our relationship in a measured and careful way with the Soviet Union, including in the economic area. While I was on the Soviet desk, which was through June of 1967, we took a few, relatively minor steps ahead, one of which was the signature in the spring of 1967 of a bilateral civil aviation agreement. Marshall Loginov, who was head of Aeroflot and Minister of Civil Aviation, came to the United States and signed the Civil Aviation Agreement. He also signed, at the same time, the Agreement on new Chancery Sites in Moscow and Washington under which we leased the Mount Alto site to the Soviets. There are a lot of misunderstandings about that latter Agreement.

In the fall of 1972, we signed the so-called “Conditions of Construction” Agreement, negotiated by Boris Klosson. The negotiations of that Agreement were very difficult and the Agreement itself became very controversial when we got into the problems over Soviet bugging of our new chancery building. Essentially, we gave into the Soviet demand that they would do the basic work on our chancery, and we would do the so-called “finishing work.” That is how the Soviets were able to wire the chancery for sound by building into the pre-stressed concrete beams a network of listening devices were connected like a Lego set. I can’t otherwise describe it. Where

they came together, the reinforcing bars were part of the system. The reinforcing bars all came together in some way, and made the frame of this building an enormous antenna. That was a key agreement. But the exchange of property agreement was signed in the spring of 1967. Loginov signed it only because he happened to be in Washington to sign the Civil Aviation Agreement.

Q: In the economic side, was there reporting on the state of the Soviet economy? Again, like this ethnic business, in Yugoslavia, one thing we all knew, but never seemed to put together, (like your comments for the 1965 to 1967 time), was a feeling that here was a system that was going to fall apart, economically.

NILES: I don't think we had the sense that the Soviet economy was going to fall apart. Embassy Moscow, I think, did excellent reporting, as did the CIA station, on economic developments in the Soviet Union. They pointed out the weaknesses of the Soviet economy and the enormous gap between the reality of the Soviet economy's performance and the image that the Soviets sought to portray of this enormously productive, highly developed, technologically advanced economy, which it wasn't. It was, in many respects, a pre-industrial economy, which you immediately saw if you were ever able to travel outside Moscow. Driving between Moscow and Leningrad, you would see five gasoline stations over a distance of 750 kilometers. You would go through the villages along the way, and you would see that there was no running water anywhere, and everybody was going out to a communal pump. People were carrying buckets of water on yokes over their shoulders. The main means of conveyance in the villages was horseback and horsecart. All of the media talk about a highly mechanized agricultural sector producing cornucopias of grain was a total fantasy. Embassy Moscow reported that distinction between the official version and Soviet reality. But we did not foresee the collapse of the Soviet economy. I am getting ahead of myself a little bit, to the time when I was in Moscow. But when I was in Moscow, we would brief visiting groups. Frequently, people would say, "Why are you people so negative? The Soviet Union has space achievements, it is a major military power, the other great power in the world. Here you guys are telling us that it is a primitive country with an economy that is a disaster area, that the system doesn't work. What is going on here?" So, we were criticized, at the time, for being too negative. Subsequently, when it turned out that things were worse than we thought, we were criticized for having been too positive. One of our problems, quite frankly, when I got there, was that the Soviets realized themselves, at least somebody realized, that things were not going in the right direction, and this was reflected in a decision to reduce the volume of statistics that they released. The Central Statistical Administration of the Soviet Union had as its slogan: "Statistical Science in the Interest of Building Socialism." In other words, if you have to cook the books for the good of socialism, do it, and they did.

Nevertheless, when I got to Moscow in 1968 (That was my next assignment after a year of language.), the annual statistical yearbook called "*Narkhoz SSSR*" was about four inches thick. By the time I left after my final year in the Soviet Union in 1976, "*Narkhoz SSSR*" was about half that size. They had cut out enormous areas of statistical information, including almost all of the population data. Murray Feshbach from the U.S. Bureau of Census, who was the world's greatest expert on Soviet demographics, discovered by nosing around and being a pain in the neck at the Central Statistical Administration that beginning around 1965, life expectancy in the Soviet Union was plummeting. It had peaked somewhere in the mid-1960s and was going down at unprecedented speed, except at war time. They stopped publishing that data. They also cut

way back on any data that concerned investments. The problem was the Soviet Union was experiencing, by the time we got there, a significantly deteriorating capital/output ratio. This meant that they had to invest an ever larger amount each year to obtain a certain output increase on the GDP side, and the volume and value of unfinished capital construction projects was growing rapidly. By the time I left in 1976, they had stopped publishing large amounts of data on the investment program, including the amount of unfinished construction, sectoral breakdowns of the investment program, and regional breakdowns. So we were handicapped in our analytical efforts, and that was the Soviet objective. Anybody trying to work on the Soviet economy was handicapped by the fact that the Soviet Central Statistical Administration was fulfilling its mandate of “statistics in the interest of building socialism.” We knew that things were not going well, but the extent to which things were not going well was not totally clear to us.

Q: What about the government? Brezhnev was pretty much in command...

NILES: It was a triumvirate of Brezhnev, Kasegan, and Podgorny, but Brezhnev was first among equals, no question.

Q: What was our reading on the Soviet leadership? I realize you were working at the economic level...

NILES: The worker bee level.

Q: The worker bee level, but you were part of the apparatus there.

NILES: The apparatus, as you put it, was headed by Ambassador Walter Stoessel, who came back from Moscow, where he had been DCM, in 1965 to be a Deputy Assistant Secretary in EUR. The European bureau then had two Deputy Assistant Secretaries. The Assistant Secretary was Mr. John Leddy, who had been a long time Treasury employee. He came over to the State Department in the early 1960s, I believe. He was a wonderful man and very kind, as was Ambassador Stoessel. The other Deputy Assistant Secretary was an interesting fellow named George Springsteen, who was also a GS employee. He was a little rough around the edges, maybe, but a good guy basically. The EUR front office was also an interesting place because of the two secretaries: Eva Hallam, who was a little lady who worked as John Leddy's secretary and Anna May Reaker, who was a rather large and matronly lady who worked for Ambassador Stoessel. Eva Hallam was the sort of person who caused you to lose years off your age when you came into the office. She could absolutely destroy junior officers. Everybody was scared to death of Eva Hallam. Anna May Reaker was your image of everyone's favorite aunt. She was wonderful. She worked for Ambassador Stoessel. Our tactic, when we had to do something for Assistant Secretary Leddy, was not to do it with Eva Hallam, but with Anna May Reaker. We would go to Anna May to work out whatever it was, i.e., a meeting, or paper, or if we had to ask a question. You were afraid to ask Eva Hallam a question because she could be absolutely lacerating in response. It was an interesting situation.

In any case, we had the three experts in the Department who were recently back from Moscow, Walter Stoessel and Mac Toon in EUR, and Ambassador Thompson, who returned from Moscow in 1963, on the 7th floor.

Q: It had to be 1962 because he was in Washington during the missile crisis.

NILES: You are absolutely right. He came back from Moscow in 1961. I think he was in Moscow from 1957 to 1961. He was the seventh floor advisor on Soviet affairs from 1961 until 1967, when he went back to Moscow at President's Johnson's behest, very much against his better judgment, health and everything else. You also had Ambassador Harriman on the seventh floor, who was also quite well informed on the Soviet issues.

Q: He had been an Ambassador during the war.

NILES: He kept up his contacts and had spent time there. These were the experts: Ambassadors Thompson, Harriman, Stoessel and Toon. I don't recall at the time that there was any sense on our part of differences within the Soviet leadership on issues of concern to us. Kosygin was the "Premier," Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and was obviously more interested in the economy than in foreign relations. Brezhnev ran the Party, which obviously meant that he had a very important role in domestic policies - economic, social, political - as well as foreign affairs. There was a division of labor. Podgorny was the President, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, titular head of state but clearly the least of the three triumvirs. Then, you had Shelepin, who was the former head of the KGB, who was obviously a very significant personality. Suslov, the Party Secretary in charge of ideology, Shelest, who was the Ukrainian Party boss. Romanov was the Leningrad Party boss was. We speculated endlessly about the divisions within the leadership, but I can't say that anybody knew anything for sure. While it was almost certain that on issues of concern to us, there might be differing approaches among the members of the Soviet leadership, we generally did not know what those differences were. We had very, very limited contact with the Soviet leaders. In 1966, Kosygin came to the U.N. This was at a time when U.S. involvement in Vietnam was increasing, and the possibility of an expanded war was always there. Tensions were rising in the Middle East, to culminate in the June 1967 Six-Day War in the Middle East War when Israel seized the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai, and the Golan Heights. The Soviet Union supported the Arab countries. We had a number of potential flash points. Kosygin came to the U.N., after which he met with President Johnson at Glassboro, New Jersey.

Q: Yes, which was exactly half way between Washington and the U.N., supposedly, in New Jersey.

NILES: It was somewhere in south Jersey. I didn't go, even though I was in the Soviet office. Obviously, I was far, far down the totem pole and did not go to the meeting, which was an effort to find some way to reduce the level of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was without results. We didn't even coin the expression "The spirit of Glassboro." There was no spirit of Glassboro. They met, they disagreed, and they left. Kasegan went back to Moscow. President Johnson came back to Washington.

We also had ministerial level meeting each fall during the UNGA, and Gromyko would always come to Washington to see the President. I went up to the UN in September 1966 with Secretary Rusk. Bob Barry went in 1965, and I went in 1966. But I didn't sit in on the meeting with Gromyko. Ambassadors Thompson, Stoessel and Toon accompanied Secretary Rusk for those

meetings. I was the notetaker for the meetings with the Hungarian (Janos Peter) and the Polish (Adam Rapacki) Foreign Ministers. We went up as staff aides to the ambassadors, in my case Ambassador Kohler, who came back from Moscow and Ambassador Thompson. They had all this Soviet expertise accumulated in New York at the time of the U.N. Ambassador Bohlen had been there in 1965 but for some reason did not return from Paris in 1966. The only reason I know that Ambassador Bohlen was there in 1965 is because Bob Barry tells a very funny story of going up there and being with these three ambassadors, two of whom he had never met before, Ambassador Bohlen and Ambassador Kohler. He kept getting them mixed up. He knew that there were three ambassadors, Thompson, Bohlen and Kohler, but he didn't know which was which. At one point, Ambassador Bohlen, who could be a bit a very starchy and severe, but a wonderful man, said, "Now, young man, there is something you have to learn if you are going to continue to work up here. I am Bohlen and he is Kohler." Bob Barry said, "Oops." I only had two of them. I had Ambassador Kohler and Ambassador Thompson when I went up there, so I didn't get them mixed up. Aside from the U.N. contact with Gromyko and Gromyko's trips to Washington to meet with the President, there was very little high-level contact with the Soviets.

Q: What was the feeling toward the "Soviet menace" at that time?

NILES: We regarded the Soviet Union as our principal adversary and enemy. We were profoundly opposed to the Soviet system. Those who had served in Moscow, such as Ambassador Toon and Ambassador Stoessel, who had both served there twice, were familiar with the dreadful nature of the Soviet system. When Soviets referred to us as hysterically anti-Soviet, they weren't far off. I wouldn't say we were "hysterical," but we were profoundly anti-Soviet. We really hated the Soviet system. By the time I got there, I hated the Soviet system. Not for what it did to us. We were the enemy. Why should it be nice to us? But, the way they treated their own people was despicable, and what a dreadful system it was. They treated the common person with contempt and cruelty. That is what I hated about it particularly. I didn't expect to be well treated. When they treated me like the enemy, which we were, that was the way it was supposed to be. We were the enemy. We hated them.

Q: Was the thought that there might be a sudden thrust against Europe or something like that? Was the feeling that this was pretty well settled, unless there was some peculiar crisis?

NILES: We did not consider the likelihood of war between the United States and the Soviet Union to be high. But, we did not exclude the possibility. We also considered that to be something which we should devote all of our efforts to avoid. So, when I worked on U.S./Soviet economic relations from 1965 to 1967 in EUR/SOV, one thing that I did have in mind was to try to find ways in which we could reduce in a small way the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. We wanted to build, somehow, better relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, not because we had any illusions about the nature of the Soviet system, or Soviet intentions toward the United States, or anything like that. We had no illusions, but we felt, rightly or wrongly, that to the extent we could establish a slightly better relationship, build small bridges (this was the time of bridge building), foot bridges perhaps, it would reduce the possibility of a military conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. We believed this would have, and I think we were right, catastrophic consequences for everybody. That was our credo, deterrence and defense, but do what we can to find small areas of accommodation

between the two countries to try to build greater confidence and to reduce, even further, the likelihood of a conflict, which we already considered to be somewhere between improbable and unlikely. But it was not impossible. That was the problem. We worked with our allies. Not so much we in Soviet affairs, but the NATO guys, EUR/RPM, George Springsteen, Secretary Leddy, Ambassador Stoessel, worked closely with the NATO allies on these doctrinal issues. By and large, our NATO allies agreed with this. It led to the acceptance at the December 1967 NATO foreign ministers meeting of the Harmel Report, which formally codified, if you will, the two-pillar policy: Detente and Deterrence, or Detente and Defense. Maintain a strong defense, for deterrent purposes, vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, but seek detente. Up until December 1967, we had not used the word "detente" as much as the Europeans did.

Q: That was a Kissinger word.

NILES: It became a NATO word, an American word, in that the December 1967 NATO Ministerial, when we adopted in the Harmel Report, signed by Secretary Rusk, accepted the policy of "detente and defense." It lasted, of course, in that immediate context, only up to the Soviet/Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. For a while after that, we talked less about detente. But then we picked it up again when we went to Helsinki in December 1972.

Q: During this period, did you have the feeling that the NSC was sort of a body onto itself, because later, the NSC played a major role?

NILES: Not on our issues. No. Mr. Bundy was the National Security Adviser with President Kennedy. I guess by the time I got back from Yugoslavia, Mr. Rostow had become the National Security Advisor for President Johnson. Now, remember that I was at the worker bee level.

Q: I understand that.

NILES: I don't recall from my time any conflict between the NSC and the Department of State on Soviet issues or on European issues in general, but particularly for me, on U.S./Soviet issues. Secretary Rusk was close to President Johnson. I think he and President Johnson had a mutually trusting relationship. As far as I can tell, he and Mr. Rostow worked harmoniously together. State/NSC relations at that time were not really a problem. I don't believe that the NSC was as active as it became under President Nixon or that it had been under President Eisenhower. The NSC during the Eisenhower Administration, in part, because of the President's own involvement in the National Security policy, was a pretty powerful organization. President Kennedy, perhaps unwisely in retrospect, cut the NSC back substantially from what he inherited from President Eisenhower.

Q: Tom, I think we should probably stop.

NILES: I'm taking my secretaries out to lunch today.

Q: We will pick this up next time when you leave the Soviet Bureau and off to...

NILES: Off to Garmisch.

Q: Today is the 24th of June 1998. Tom, in the first place, when did you go to Garmisch to the Russian Institute?

NILES: My wife and I were married on July 22, 1967, and we then took advantage of one of the great “perks” available then to Foreign Service personnel but now no longer part of the picture, namely a first-class passage to Le Havre on the SS United States. We traveled with Peggy Barry and her son, John. Her husband, Bob, had to join us in Paris because his father was seriously ill. We arrived in Garmisch around August 5, 1967, and the course began around August 10 with a 55-day trip through Eastern Europe and the former USSR. In all, we spent 11 months in Garmisch, before going to Moscow.

Q: Could you explain what this was?

NILES: It was it called the “U.S. Army Advanced Russian Institute.” For our Army colleagues, it was a two-year program. It was part of the FAST (Foreign Area Specialist Training) program in the Army. *That* was an extraordinary program. It was anything but fast. It was rather slow, in fact. It was a four-year specialization program in Soviet studies, which included a year of language training at Monterey, a year studying at a University in the United States such as the University of Indiana, which had an excellent Soviet studies program, and then two years in Garmisch. After this, they generally sent these officers to the Liaison Mission in Potsdam, the Liaison Mission to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany. Some of them ended up at the Embassy in Moscow, but not immediately, as Army attachés such as Roland Lajoie, who ultimately became a general officer and was head of the on site inspection teams in the Soviet Union. He was also head of the Liaison Mission in Potsdam, just before the Mission was terminated at the time of German unification. So anyway, the Army guys spent two years there. The State Department people only spent one year there. There were three State Department places, at least the year I was there. Bob Barry, George Humphrey and I were the three lucky ones. We were told that there was a deal worked out under which three defense people, maybe Army officers, went to our Chinese language school in Taiwan. So, it was a cost free swap. We didn’t have to pay the Army for this extraordinary adventure that we had at Garmisch. It was a remarkable program. They originally established the school in the Nuremberg area in the late 1940s. It moved to Oberammergau in the 1950s, and to Garmisch sometime in the early 1960s. We occupied a little piece of what was called Sheridan Barracks, which was part of a former Wehrmacht Kasern, the headquarters of the First German Mountain Division. The First German Mountain Division used part of it. I think the whole thing has now been turned back to the First German Mountain Division. In any case, it was a remarkable program. It started with this extraordinary trip which lasted 55 days through Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We visited literally...

Q: It wasn’t the former Soviet Union then.

NILES: What was then the Soviet Union, what is now the former Soviet Union. We visited almost every open major city. I found during my six years in Moscow, I was frequently traveling

to places I had been with my Garmisch trip. It involved boat travel in the Soviet Union. It involved trains. We took a three-day train trip from Irkutsk to Khabarovsk on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. We did a lot of air travel by Aeroflot. We were all over Central Asia and the Caucasus. The only areas we didn't get to were the Baltic states. That was deliberate, because that would be seen as accepting the fact that they were part of the Soviet Union.

Q: That was deliberate on our part.

NILES: Deliberate on our part. We had an *Intourist* guide who traveled with us the entire trip. He obviously was an experienced intelligence officer and it was his job to watch after us. He did a good job. But we had a truly extraordinary trip.

Q: Were the Soviets doing anything comparable to this?

NILES: I do not think so. I don't know how they trained. Of course, the Soviets had Liaison Mission to the US, British and French forces in Germany, one of which was in Frankfurt, a Mission to the Seventh Army, which was the parallel mission to the one we had in Potsdam. But I don't know how they trained their people. They surely didn't send them to some place like Garmisch. Garmisch was also interesting in the sense that the faculty was all former Soviets. Most of them were veterans of the Vlasov Army, who had somehow managed to escape repatriation in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

Q: You might explain what the Vlasov Army was.

NILES: General Vlasov was a hero of the First Battle of Moscow in December 1941, who was captured by the Germans in 1942. He became a traitor, from the Soviet point of view. He went with the Germans and headed up a group of Soviet POWs who fought with the Germans on the Eastern Front. Vlasov was beheaded, I believe, on Red Square in 1945. He was captured. I think he was among those who were beheaded. There is a place on Red Square which is called the Execution Place (*Lobnoye Mesto*). It was right in front of St. Basil, the Cathedral of Vasiliy the Blessed. It was a round stone structure which stood about maybe two meters high. They would take people in there and chop their heads off. I believe General Vlasov was executed there sometime in 1945. They had this great parade after Victory Day, which was the 9th of May 1945. Maybe that was the day they did it. They brought loads of captured Nazi paraphernalia in there, the flags, and the standards and so forth, and burned them to demonstrate the victory over Hitler.

Anyway, the school was a remarkable experience. We studied Russian and Soviet History, Economics, Legal Structure, Culture, Literature, Music, Art, etc., but all in Russian. All the classes were in Russian. We had to write papers in Russian, which was somewhat laborious. Bob Barry and I had gone to early morning Russian classes at the FSI for two years in order to get there. You had to have a 3/3 in Russian in order to be assigned to Garmisch, which we were able to achieve in our two years of early morning Russian. It was worth getting up early. It was a wonderful experience.

Q: Well, we already talked about what you got from Nicky Popovic, who you studied Serbian with. What were you getting from your teachers about the Soviet Union?

NILES: I had two separate experiences learning Russian. One was with a marvelous lady, Nina de la Cruz at the Foreign Service Institute, who was an absolutely superb teacher. She was not Soviet, she was Russian, and there is a big difference. At Garmisch, you got an exposure to various versions of the “new Soviet person.” It was an eye opener. These were different people. Generally, these were ex-military officers, who had been through a pretty tough school, the Soviet Army, the Second World War, prison camps. They were tough guys. They were anything but smooth in their personal behavior and most hated each other. There were passionate hatreds within the school. Everybody was always claiming that the other was a KGB agent or a GRU agent. This kind of in-fighting within the faculty was a constant feature of the place. It was a good experience for those of us going to Moscow. It exposed us to the Soviet mentality as it was, even though they had not lived in the Soviet Union for many years. Remember, in 1967, it was 22 years after the end of the Second World War. But there were still some strong Soviet tendencies among those people. I think for the Army guys who were going off to work as liaison officers to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, this was good training, because they were dealing with former Soviet military officers. Again, they were 22 or so years removed from the Red Army, but still they were very Soviet in their mentality.

We also had a couple of recent defectors on the staff, one of whom - he used the name Yuriy Marin - turned out to be a phony defector who then redefected and had lots of interesting things to say about the school, particularly that it was a spy school. It really wasn't. There was no intelligence aspect at all, except we were going off to serve in various capacities in Moscow or in Potsdam, observing the Soviet Union. In that sense, we were intelligence officers. But, it wasn't an espionage school in the true sense of the word. Yuriy Marin, who “defected” by jumping overboard from a Soviet oceanographic research ship in the Sea of Japan subsequently re-defected. He was a useful guy, because among other things, he was more modern. He was a real, new Soviet man. He defected in 1966. By 1967, he was in Garmisch teaching us. One thing he taught us was up-to-date Soviet swearing, which is an important part of being in a country. We learned a lot of picturesque language, most of which I can still remember. He had a special course for us on swearing.

Q: Were there any divergences between the outlook of what you all were doing, you and Barry and whoever else was with you, and the military?

NILES: Well, there was. Their basic focus was different because they were going to Potsdam and we were going to Moscow. We had different objectives in terms of what we were trying to accomplish. They were part of a different program in a way. So, there were some differences, but basically, over the year, we blended in rather well with the military officers. It was a good atmosphere there. One peculiarity in our year there, 1967 - 1968, is that most of the officers in our group who finished with us - I think there were six - five went to Vietnam. One went to Korea. Not a one of them went to Potsdam. Now, this was after four years of training. So, you figure, they had trained those guys to go to Potsdam at an enormous expense for the United States, and they didn't go, at least not immediately. They went first to a tour in Vietnam and I think in some cases, they never got to Potsdam. So, it was an enormous waste.

Q: What was the impression you were getting as a civilian and this military thing of what we

thought about the Soviet military?

NILES: We were all very respectful of the capabilities of the Soviet military. We were taught that this was a formidable military force. In some ways, it was equal to the forces of the United States. In other ways, technologically, perhaps not. The weaknesses of the Soviet system and the Soviet military were not presented, in my view, very effectively, whereas the weaknesses on the civilian side: the economy, the political system, the social system, those were presented. For example, it was only after I had spent six years in the Soviet Union (I left in 1976), that I really fully grasped the extraordinary awful situation in which the bulk of the Red Army lived. You would see signs of it as you traveled around the country. The rank and file of the Soviet Army were in essentially ragged uniforms, and we know now that they lived in terrible conditions. I won't say that they looked emaciated, but when you saw them your first thought was not about stalwart warriors. These were not the troops you saw in the Red Square parades. Those were the pampered few. Of course, the Red Army officers whom we saw in Moscow looked much better. The great bulk of the Army, as we discovered subsequently, was paid practically nothing, treated terribly, and abused in the most awful ways.

Q: It's almost like a prison system.

NILES: Almost. Of course, we really only grasped this situation when we saw the Red Army in action in Afghanistan. During the Second World War, everybody on the east front suffered terribly, whether they were officers or enlisted people. It was hard to see those distinctions. They came out a little more clearly in Afghanistan. I think they came out even more clearly when the Russian, former Soviet Army, got involved in Chechnya. You realized this was a system that simply didn't work. If you look at the training we got in Garmisch, it exaggerated the capabilities of the military and presented a pretty balanced picture of the civilian side of the Soviet Union, its economy, social structure, and political structure.

Q: You had already come off the Soviet desk, but did Kremlinology come in there?

NILES: We spent a lot of time speculating with the professors and among ourselves about what was going on in the Soviet Union. Remember, that in July 1967 there had been a pretty significant upheaval in the Soviet Party structure as Shelepin and his supporters were thrown out. The full magnitude of that became clear only subsequently. At the time, we didn't know exactly what had happened at the July Central Committee plenum. Now we know that Shelepin and his people had tried to overthrow Brezhnev, using, as I recall, the pretext that the air defenses of Moscow had been shown to be deficient by the success of the Israelis against the Arabs, who were using, essentially, the same equipment.

Q: We are talking about the six-day war?

NILES: The six-day war, exactly.

Q: In 1967.

NILES: June 1967. In July 1967, the dispute broke out within the Communist Party as Shelepin

and his people tried to overthrow Brezhnev. He had support of the Moscow party boss, whose name was Yegorichev. As so often happened in the last 30 years or so of the Soviet Union, people who fell from power went off as ambassadors. V.M. Molotov was the first in that category, but no means the last. Many of the people who fell from power in 1967 went off as ambassadors. I remember Yegorichev went off as ambassador to Denmark. Romanovski went to Oslo. All these Shelepin proteges, KGB types, went off as heads of relatively small, but pleasant Soviet embassies. The last one I can think of, but I'm sure there were others after that, was Dimitriy Polyanskiy, who went to Tokyo in 1974. He knew absolutely nothing about Japan. It is the same sort of thing we do. It is interesting that these two countries, the Soviet Union and the United States were the only two "serious" countries which widely and extensively sent non-career people off as ambassadors. We did it as a reward. They did it as a punishment. The bottom line was the same: you ended up with people who weren't necessarily all that well qualified to be ambassador to wherever they were, whether it was Tokyo or Denmark. It is curious that these two countries treated their diplomatic service rather the same way, albeit for different reasons.

Q: Well, you, Barry, and Humphrey, did you know what you were going to do? By this time, you were well passed the junior officer stage. Did you know what you were going to do when you went to Moscow?

NILES: Yes. Bob was going to be the head of the Consular Section for one year and then go to the Political Section. George Humphrey was to be in the Consular Section for one year, followed also by a year in the Political Section. The Moscow Consular Section was quite different from most other consular sections around the world in that the work could be extraordinarily sensitive and had a high political content. I think it was a good system under which officers would spend one year in the Consular Section and then go upstairs to either the Political or Economic Section. I went to the Economic Section. I ended up working with Bill Maynes, who had been a Harvard classmate of mine. The Economic Counselor was Ralph Lindstrom; Chris Squire was in the Section as Science Officer.

Q: When you arrived there in July 1968, what was the situation both internally, in the Soviet Union and also American relations?

NILES: Well, first in the embassy, our ambassador was Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, who had gone to Moscow at the beginning of January 1967, replacing Ambassador Kohler. He returned to Moscow reluctantly, without great enthusiasm. He had served in Moscow already as ambassador for four years in the Khrushchev era, from 1957 to 1961. He was not in the best of health but was subjected to President Johnson's persuasive powers. I took him, his wife Jane, their two daughters, and their boxer dog to Union Station and put them on the train to New York. It was around January 5, 1967. They got on the Pennsylvania Railroad parlor car to go to New York, where they picked up the SS United States for the trip to Europe. In any case, when I got to Moscow, Ambassador Thompson was the Ambassador and Colby Swank was the DCM. The Political Counselor was David Klein, who was on his way out to head the Mission in Berlin. The Economic Counselor for whom I worked was Ralph Lindstrom. It was a relatively small embassy at that time. Everybody there was, in a way, a Soviet specialist, even in the Administrative Section. This didn't include the administrative counselor, although you could make that point, even for him. For example, the number two man in the Administrative Section

the first year was Mike Joyce, who ultimately came back to serve as DCM in Moscow in the late 1980s. He was replaced in 1969 by Stape Roy, who came from Garmisch. Thus the junior administrative officer in Moscow from 1969 to 1970 is now our only serving Career Ambassador, Stape Roy. I mention this just to point out that we had an exceptionally talented embassy staff in Moscow at that time, beginning with Ambassador Thompson and the DCM, Colby Swank, who subsequently served as Ambassador in Phnom Penh during the height of the war in Cambodia. There were some really top-flight people all the way through the Embassy. Everybody out there was really deeply committed to the Post and wanted to be there in the strongest way. It certainly was true in my case. I really wanted to be there.

Q: Here, you have people who really want to be there. They have learned the language and the culture. They are really committed. At the same time, this is not a friendly country, not a friendly system.

NILES: That was part of the attraction. We were at the heart of the enemy. We felt that. At least I felt that. I hated the Soviet system, but I had great affection for the people and the country, and a great interest in the culture and the history. Being in Moscow, for me at that time, was an extraordinary opportunity. You asked about U.S./Soviet relations. When I got out there, U.S./Soviet relations were obviously tense, but in certain areas, there were signs of progress. For example, shortly after I got there, we opened the direct air service: PanAm and Aeroflot, New York/Moscow. Juan Tripp and Herold Gray, who were the Chairman and President, respectively, of PanAm came out on the first flight. They brought this great entourage of luminaries with them, including Art Buchwald and his wife. He wrote some very funny articles from Moscow about his experiences on the PanAm plane and in Moscow. He was terribly funny at all these receptions. We had endless receptions for Harold Gray and Juan Tripp. We didn't realize it at the time, but we also had an agreement, secretly reached between the two governments to begin the SALT negotiations on the August 30, 1968 in Geneva. The negotiator was to have been, at least at the beginning, Ambassador Thompson. We knew Ambassador Thompson was going to Switzerland at the end of August because he was making his travel arrangements. He was taking his wife, and it was styled as a vacation. Then, of course, on August 20/21, 1968, came the Soviet Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, the end of the Prague Spring. There was naturally a very strong reaction in the West. Among the steps we took was to cancel the SALT negotiations, that were to begin at the end of August. So, Ambassador Thompson didn't take his trip. It was easy to explain. Almost no one on the Embassy staff knew the real reason for the Ambassador's plan to visit Switzerland, so it was easy to explain the cancellations. We were told that because of heightened tensions, the Ambassador could not take his vacation. That seemed logical to everybody. After August 21, we entered a deep freeze period, which lasted through the late spring of 1969, when things began to loosen up. Then, in November 1969, the SALT negotiations finally began in Geneva, but with Ambassador Gerard Smith, not Ambassador Thompson, as our negotiator.

Q: We are talking about a new administration.

NILES: Yes. The Nixon administration, of course, opened the negotiations. But at the end of the Johnson administration into the Nixon administration, we were in a deep freeze with the Soviets. We were instructed by Washington to have no official contacts with the Soviet government

except those of a consular nature, involving visas, passports, citizenship issues, and so forth. So, those of us in the Embassy who might otherwise have been going out and promoting trade, for example, had a lot of time on our hands. We did a fair amount of analytical economic reporting, reading journals such as *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (“Questions of Economics”) and doing airgrams on the articles for the Washington audience, and we traveled a lot. We were encouraged to travel and we did. We also got around Moscow. We reported on consumer goods availability and prices and so forth, something that was of interest to Washington. We spent a lot of time nosing around collective farm markets. We went to the theater, and musical presentations and so forth in Moscow. In terms of the normal work of an Embassy, interacting with the host government, we didn’t do much of that during my first year in Moscow.

Q: What was the reading on Brezhnev from the Embassy at that time?

NILES: Brezhnev had been a little bit accessible in his earlier role, up to the overthrow of Khrushchev in October 1964, as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. He was theoretically the President of the country, Chief of State. The head of the Party was the number one guy, First Secretary of the Central Committee. The title was changed to General Secretary, a throwback to Stalinist terminology around 1975, as I recall. Once he became First Secretary, Brezhnev was off limits to U.S. officials until Secretary Kissinger’s visits began in 1971. The second-ranking job was that of Kosygin, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. I believe that the only contact with him, again until the Kissinger process began, was when he met with President Johnson at Glassboro State College in the summer of 1966. The third member of the ruling triumvirate, Podgorny, replaced Brezhnev in 1964 as the President of the Supreme Soviets, or Chief of State. Until Kissinger opened up high-level contacts in 1971, all of the Soviet leaders were unknown quantities for us. Those who had met Brezhnev prior to 1964 had not taken him very seriously. There is a great picture of Nixon in Moscow in 1959 with Khrushchev during the so-called “Kitchen Debate,” in a little prefabricated house that we built at Sokolniki Park exhibition area.

Q: Nixon was Vice President.

NILES: Nixon was Vice President. He and Khrushchev had a famous debate about the virtues of capitalism and communism, with Nixon saying, “Look at this house. This wonderful house is typical of what Americans can own.” He was talking about a prefabricated house made by a company named “Gunnison.” I don’t know whether it is still standing now - probably not - but in 1976, when I left Moscow, it was still there. It was being used by the groundskeepers of the park as a place where they had their offices. In any case, there is a great picture from the “Kitchen Debate.” Nixon and Khrushchev leaning over and looking at the home appliances. Nixon is explaining something to Khrushchev. Among the people there is William Safire, who was a speechwriter for Nixon at the time. Peering over from one side is Leonid Brezhnev, a younger version with very wavy dark hair. He was theoretically the President of the country. I guess he was there because Nixon was the Vice President of the United States. But, obviously, Khrushchev as First Secretary of the party, as well as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, was obviously the number one guy. Brezhnev was kind of a lackey, and in that photo was clearly trying to horn in on the meeting. It was a familiar role for Foreign Service officers. Maybe people met him at that time, but I don’t think anybody from the United States had had any kind of contact with Brezhnev from October 1964 onward, when he seized power from Khrushchev,

until Secretary Kissinger showed up in 1971. Until we got into this new phase during 1971, nobody met Brezhnev, although Gromyko continued to see the President of the United States when he attended the UNGA each September. This was one of the key problems in U.S.-Soviet relations. Even though relations were terrible, there was a real need for regular, and frequent, meetings at the highest level. So, at least you know who the guy is at the other end of the line there, the adversary. What is he like? Nobody knew Brezhnev on the American side. I don't think that Kasegan and Podgorny, or the other Soviet leaders, were better known at that time. Of course, things changed in 1971/72. In 1972, we got to know most of the members of the Politburo, at least in a very cursory way. Among other things, they came to Spaso House for lunch in 1972. It is a marvelous story. We can talk about it later. I am jumping ahead.

Q: In the first place, you were there from 1968 to when?

NILES: 1971. Sol Polansky and I were the first officers offered the possibility in 1969 of staying a third year. Before that, almost all tours were for two years. Ambassador Thompson was very strongly in favor of that. His take on it was you needed to have maximum turnover so that you would have the largest possible pool of people with Moscow experience and Russian language from which you could staff the embassy. They decided, in 1969, to see whether they could lengthen the tours out a little bit and go to three, or at least have a flexible two/three policy. They offered Sol Polansky and me, for some reason, the possibility of staying a third year. We said, "Okay, we'll do it."

Q: Were you married at the time?

NILES: Yes.

Q: Was marriage almost a prerequisite?

NILES: It was except one position, that of staff aide to the Ambassador. The requirement for that position was that he be unmarried because the guy had to live in Spaso House, where he had a bedroom on the first floor.

Q: How was family life in Moscow?

NILES: It was difficult. A few of the wives felt the same sense of commitment that we did, the sense of mission. But most did not, and they had to put up with a lot, particularly if you had children, as most families did. It was not an easy place to live. I know it was very difficult for my wife. Outside the Embassy community, Moscow could be an unfriendly place. There was a fair amount of harassment of one kind or another. All of the things that you take for granted in the West, the availability of foods, services, including medical care, were problematic in Moscow. We got our milk from Helsinki. Occasionally, the Soviets would decide to jerk us around and the milk wouldn't show up or it would show up having sat in the sun for a day and a half. It would be sour. That kind of thing happened. The basic services were unavailable. They had dry cleaning, but it was awful. You would never send a garment to it. I will tell you a great Moscow story. There was a guy in the Embassy who had a very heavy overcoat. It was old, but it was very heavy and warm. He wore it through a Moscow winter. When spring came, he decided to

have it cleaned. He took it to the *Khimchiska*, the dry cleaning place. He said, "I want to have this coat cleaned." The lady who was in there had the typical Soviet attitude and treated him like dirt. She looked at him, and rather sneeringly said, "Well, we don't clean coats with buttons like that." Indeed, the coat had very large buttons on it. He said, "What am I to do?" She said, "Well, you can take them off." She gave him a pair of scissors and he cut all his buttons off and handed it to her. She said, "Well, we don't clean coats like that." There he was with the coat and a handful of buttons. That was service in the Soviet context. It was true of anything. Of course, medical services were rudimentary. We had an Embassy doctor who was a general practitioner from the CIA. He was fine, as far as he went. Anything more serious, we went out to Helsinki. Whenever ladies were having babies, they were whisked off to Helsinki, and if possible, a month in advance, so you wouldn't by some mischance have a baby in Moscow because that could be fairly risky. Women who went through it at Botkin Hospital had some pretty horrible stories to tell. My wife spent a month in Helsinki before our son was born, and while the medical care was outstanding and the Finns were great, the other conditions – notably the long separation – was far from ideal. But, on the other hand, we knew that foreigners died at Bodkin from relatively minor problems. This was supposedly the best hospital in Moscow, aside from the Kremlin Hospital, where we didn't go, except under very rare circumstances. When we had a very eminent visitor who needed special medical care, we could sometimes get access to the so-called "Kremlin Polyclinic," which was across the street from the Lenin Library. I remember that in the summer of 1975 I got Dr. Arthur Burns, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, into the Kremlin Polyclinic when he had an eye infection. In any event, life was tough. The wives didn't have, in most cases, the passionate interest in the work that we had, which tended to make all this acceptable. You have to put up with it. I'm not sure, frankly, that the wives today, subjected to that kind of lifestyle that we had in Moscow in 1968-1971, would put up with that. I think they would say, "You go to Moscow if you want to. I'll stay in Bethesda." Of course, many more of the wives now have careers. We may have more tandem couples in the Embassy today, but that is a problem in itself, finding jobs for two officers instead of one. So, that doesn't always necessarily always work easily. Again, when we were there, it was a very small, cohesive embassy. We were a small group. The diplomatic corps in Moscow tended to be rather similar. Our counterparts from the other western embassies tended to be people who were committed and passionately interested in the Soviet Union, Russian speakers and experts on the USSR. They were outstanding people. For example, today, two of my ex-colleagues from that time in Moscow are ambassadors of their countries in Washington. Christopher Mayer at the British Embassy, was in the British Embassy in Moscow at the time. Riaz Kokar, who is the Pakistani ambassador here, was in the Pakistani embassy in Moscow at that time. Immo Stabreit, who was the FRG Ambassador here in the early 1990s, was a Moscow colleague. There are quite a few others. Jim Collins, who is our ambassador in Moscow now, was in the Embassy at that time, in the Political Section. Stape Roy was there. Bob Barry was another Moscow veteran (he served in Leningrad, too) who rose to the top of the Foreign Service. It was, as I say, close-knit, and I think, a high-quality Embassy.

Q: Well, you arrived there very close to the time that the Soviets moved into Czechoslovakia.

NILES: That changed the whole environment for us.

Q: Did this come as a surprise or had this been more or less expected by those people?

NILES: For us, in the Embassy, the timing and the way it was done, came as a surprise, but the idea that the Soviet Union was going to have to do something about Dubcek and Smrkowsky, did not come as a surprise. The idea that the "Prague Spring" was seen as a particular threat by Walter Ulbricht in East Germany didn't come as a surprise at all. But, the idea of a military operation... Well, we thought, and Ambassador Thompson thought, that the Soviet Union had within the Czech party people upon whom it could rely who would do the job for them. But, we did not think they were going to have to invade the country to allow those people to come to the fore. That is in fact what happened. It is possible that Brezhnev, Kosygin and the others made a mistake and they could have gotten rid of Dubcek, and installed Husak, Bilak, Indra and the others without invading the country. I have a feeling that they could have done so.

Q: Correct if I am wrong, but this was the beginning of what became known as the "Brezhnev Doctrine," which was, "We are not going to let any country... Once Communist, and that's it. The Soviet Army will move on you."

NILES: Exactly. A tragic doctrine for the Soviet Union, I must say, both in terms of what happened in Czechoslovakia, but more tragically than that, in Afghanistan. It was one of the nails in their coffin. It didn't bring about the collapse of the USSR in and of itself, but it was a tragic mistake for the Soviet Union, and brought on all kinds of difficulties. Of course, it essentially began the physical, social and economic destruction of Afghanistan, which goes on to this day. This is straying from the path, but the Soviet Union set that process in motion itself in 1974, when they engineered the overthrow of Zahir Shah, the king of Afghanistan, who was friendly enough to them, but they decided they wanted to have a Communist government in charge, under the King's relative, Mohammed Daoud.

Q: With the Brezhnev Doctrine, were we seeing a new attitude on the Soviet Union or was this just more of the bloody mindedness of the Soviets at that time?

NILES: The Brezhnev Doctrine was a rationalization after the fact. The basic Soviet position was what is ours, is ours, and we will talk about yours. They regarded Czechoslovakia as something that they had taken fair and square in 1948, with the overthrow of the Benes government, engineered by Andrei Vishinsky and Valery Zorin. They figured Czechoslovakia was theirs and we ought to keep our hands off, stop playing games in "their" territory. They could not accept the reality that the "Prague Spring" was essentially an indigenous development for which the United States and NATO, while supportive, were hardly responsible. Of course, the message of August 1968 was essentially the same as in 1956 in Budapest. Then, probably wisely under the circumstances, but tragically, the United States and our NATO Allies stood by. But, the Brezhnev Doctrine, as I say, was a rationalization after the fact. It was basically their way of saying what we have taken is ours and keep your mitts off it. The impact on U.S./Soviet relations was very negative at the time. The reaction lasted roughly into late spring, early summer of 1969 when we began the process of relaxing a little bit the sanctions and unilateral measures that we had adopted toward the Soviet Union, and loosened up a little bit. As I say, the SALT negotiations began in November 1969. In the State Department, the officer who was responsible for implementing that policy on behalf of the Nixon Administration was Ambassador Toon, who was serving at that time as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European Bureau

under Assistant Secretary Martin Hillenbrand. Ambassador Toon had Ambassador Stoessel, who went out to Warsaw in 1969.

Q: In the Embassy, was there any attitude toward the departure of the Johnson administration and the arrival of the Nixon administration?

NILES: I don't think we regarded this as terribly important in terms of what we were doing. There were those who supported Nixon or Humphrey in the election certainly. But, in terms of what we were doing, or trying to do in Moscow, the election was not regarded as an enormous watershed, or an event which would usher in major change. In fact, Nixon had the reputation of being a hard liner on issues involving Communism, both domestically and internationally. He had spoken during the campaign rather negatively about relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. So, there was no reason to anticipate that President Nixon and his team would usher in a new policy toward the Soviet Union, nor did we anticipate it.

Q: Of course, I take it, at this point, there was no such thing as a dialogue of an American desk officer in the Soviet Foreign Ministry saying, "Hey, Tom what is this new President mean?" This type thing at any level, didn't happen, correct?

NILES: No. We were cut off from those kinds of contacts under the decisions taken in August 1968 by President Johnson. So, we had no contact at all. I'm sure Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, was sending back very cogent analyses of the President, Secretary of State and the new National Security Advisor, with whom he quickly established a contact. Dobrynin had been in Washington, by that time, for eight years. He was a superb diplomat in his way. He was devious, charming if he wanted to be, tough, with an unflinching line.

That line, which he successfully sold to a series of American presidents from 1961 to 1986, when he went back to Moscow, was, "Gentlemen, you have an extraordinary opportunity to deal with the current Soviet leadership if you are flexible and make it interesting for that leadership to deal with you. But, I am warning you. If you don't deal with this leadership, there is a new leadership, which will much more difficult for you, lurking behind it." He always referred to "new" people as "the dark forces." He warned us that the dark forces were going to eat our lunch if they took over. They are really, tough, mean guys. Of course, he used this line to refer to Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev. It was always whatever leadership is in power, they are prepared to deal with you. But, the "dark forces" behind them are really going to kick your butts. By and large, people took this seriously. It is amazing. The advantage that Dobrynin had was that the people with whom he was dealing on our side always kept changing. They couldn't necessarily remember back and say to Dobrynin that he had told them that same thing about the previous leadership. The institutional memory was provided by the working stiffs, such as myself, who had heard Dobrynin deliver that message before and could alert our leaders to Dobrynin's approach. It was remarkably consistent.

Q: Of course, we have always used Congress, on our part. We always say...

NILES: Of course. "We would love to do this, but Congress won't let us."

Q: Did you have the feeling at the time that Dobrynin was a good conduit? In other words, was he reporting back accurately, and that sort of thing?

NILES: I think so. Well, I am not aware of cases in which he did not. There may be cases in which Dobrynin's analysis was wrong, but I doubt that he deliberately misled his bosses in Moscow. The penalty for that sort of behavior in the Soviet system could be pretty tough. Of course, it is always possible that Dobrynin got it wrong. We all make mistakes. I'm sure that even a brilliant analyst like Dobrynin, who spent considerably more than half his professional life in Washington and knew us well, could make mistakes. By and large, I think Dobrynin was a good interpreter of the United States for his masters in Moscow. He did a good job. He tended, in many ways, to overshadow his counterpart in the American Embassy in Moscow. This was never greater than during the times when Secretary Kissinger was in the National Security Council and the State Department. He preferred to do it himself. He preferred to deal, not through the Embassy but through Dobrynin, or to travel to Moscow and take it on himself. I believe he was motivated in part by the view that the Soviets were less likely to leak things to the press than was the State Department or Embassy Moscow. Dobrynin knew that, and took advantage of it.

Q: Did you all feel that during this? We are talking up to 1971, on this particular go around.

NILES: Let me say this. Ambassador Thompson left because he was not well. He had cancer and died in 1970 or 1971. But, he left at the beginning of 1969. He was tired, not feeling well, and somewhat disillusioned by the path that U.S./Soviet relations had taken. He may even have left in December 1968. I'm not quite sure about that. Anyway, we had a fairly lengthy interregnum. In the summer of 1969, Ambassador Jacob Beam arrived. He had been our ambassador in Prague. He had served in Moscow, I think as DCM, in the 1960s. He was a wonderful guy. He was a very warm and caring person. His wife, Peggy, was a great leader of the community. She was a terrific ambassador's wife and wonderful person. They were very much loved by our group in the embassy. But, Ambassador Beam was never part of the policy process, at least as it was conducted by National Security Advisor/Secretary Kissinger and President Nixon. There are a couple cases that made that clear.

Q: You say Secretary Kissinger, but was he at the time? He was National Security Advisor at the time, right?

NILES: Correct. He replaced Secretary Rogers in August 1973, as I recall. In the preparatory phase of the May 1972 Nixon visit to Moscow, then National Security Advisor Kissinger, came to Moscow several times. At least on the first of those occasions, in the summer of 1971, he came and Ambassador Beam got the word from the Soviet protocol section that National Security Advisor Kissinger was in Moscow at the government guest house and would like to see him. Kissinger had been in Moscow for two days at that time with his team from the NSC. He had been working on what became SALT I, which was signed during President Nixon's visit to Moscow in May 1972, and working, of course, on aspects of the Vietnam War, trying to persuade the Soviets to be helpful in getting us to a settlement, as well as on other sensitive issues that he worked on with the Soviets. The Embassy wasn't engaged in this at all. After August 1973, when he became Secretary of State, he could no longer make secret visits of that kind, and the Embassy was at least involved in terms of making these administrative

arrangements. But, in 1971, his airplane flew into a military base, and that was it. Ambassador Beam was not in on the issues that were at the center of the U.S./Soviet relationship at that time, particularly the SALT negotiations and the negotiations on the Southeast Asia issues.

Q: During this period, you were in the Economic Section. In many ways, while we spent a great deal of effort, at least publicly, on figuring out who was standing next to whom, on the Lenin tomb and all that, the real story was the economy, in a way, as far as the liability of the Soviet Union.

NILES: Ultimately, I think that turned out to be the case. The Economic Section of Embassy Moscow was among those who consistently predicted some tough times ahead for the Soviet economy. We cited two very negative trends: One was the deterioration of the capital/output ratio, which made clear that the Soviet economy was becoming increasingly less efficient because they were having to invest an ever greater amount each year in order to get a given amount of increase in GDP.

Q: Gross domestic product.

NILES: Gross domestic product. Even Soviet statistics made that clear. During my first tour, we were able to calculate that and we did. We pointed that out to Washington, noting that the USSR had to invest more and more in order to achieve essentially the same increase in output. Even if you accepted their growth figures as being valid, which we did not, but even if you accepted the Soviet statistics, it was clear that the economy was becoming less efficient. The other key indicator was one that was spotted not by us in the Embassy, because we didn't have the expertise and access to the data, but by a remarkable guy who used to come out to Moscow each summer from the Bureau of the Census, Murray Feshbach. Murray Feshbach detected in the late 1960s, during my first tour, that the life expectancy of the Soviet population had peaked, and was declining, which was unheard of in a modern society.

Murray ultimately wrote a very good book on this with Alfred Friendly, Jr., called *Ecocide*, which describes how the accumulation of environmental problems contributed to this sharp decline in life expectancy of the Soviet people. Massive industrial pollution, heavy smoking, poor diet, and high alcohol consumption all contributed. Interestingly enough, by 1973 or 1974, the Soviets realized that those statistics revealed some embarrassing realities, and they stopped publishing them. In 1968, when I first arrived in Moscow, the Soviet annual economic statistical survey, *Narkhoz SSSR*, was about four inches thick. By the time I left in 1976, the 1975 or 1976-version was about half that size. They had stopped printing large quantities of statistics that showed how bad things were becoming. The investment statistics were no longer published in a form that permitted their calculation of the capital/output ratios, and the populations statistics were cut back so that you couldn't calculate life expectancy. Murray Feshbach's analysis had appeared in the West in public. Because Murray was an internationally-recognized expert, he was able to gain access to the Soviet Central Statistical Administration (TsSU), which we could never do, and he obtained data from the TsSU which was never published. He was good at that. He was a clever guy, and a good Soviet analyst.

Q: On your trips, were you able to get out and to see how the economy was going? I say

economy, but I'm including agriculture.

NILES: Yes. There were two ways we did this. One, the Agricultural Attache took long field trips through the Russian Republic and the Ukraine in the spring, summer and fall. He would go the same route each year so you would have a standard of comparison. We traveled with him. The economic officers would travel with the agriculture attaches.

Q: It was a policy to always have two officers, right?

NILES: Or three. These trips were always by car because you had to drive along the fields to see what was going on. Of course, that was not easy, in part because of the Soviet travel controls. They could close one road "for reasons of a temporary nature," and you couldn't go to a third of the Ukraine, or something like that. Also, travel conditions were terrible. There were five gasoline stations at that time between Moscow and Leningrad, a distance of 750 kilometers. Half the time they would be out of gas or out of the kind you wanted. You carried gas coupons for 76, 84 and 88 octane gas so that you would be able to buy whatever the station had. The cars would sputter along. But, we took those trips, and they were interesting ones. We were always followed by the KGB, but so what. Then, the other trips we took, we would fly or take the train to a certain region and try to nose around. When we arrived in a city, we would give the local protocol people a list of things we wanted to do. If we achieved one out of ten, it was considered a success. If you went to Kharkov, for instance, you would ask to visit the Kharkov excavator plant. If you went to Lugansk, you would ask to visit the locomotive plant. Rarely did you get to see what you wanted, but sometimes the local officials would allow you to see something less sensitive, but that was still interesting. Sometimes they would say, "Well, you couldn't go to any factory," or they would give you some factory that was of less interest. But any direct insight into what was going on in the Soviet economy was, in some small way, of interest to us. It was important to get out and wander through a town and try to talk to people. It was also very important on our trips to just wander around town, checking out the prices and the availability of consumer goods. One interesting thing about the Soviet Union was that once you got out of Moscow, Kiev, and Leningrad, availability of manufactured consumer goods tailed off very radically. Services were practically nonexistent. They were bad even in the three big cities, but once you were out of those three favored places, forget it. Even in large, relatively cosmopolitan cities, a city like Odessa, you had trouble getting rudimentary services and manufactured consumer goods. Of course, Odessa had a well-deserved reputation as being the place where you could get anything you wanted if you knew where to look for it, and had the right kind of money. But, we would go around and check prices, and report all this information. People in Washington seemed to be interested in our reports. We felt as though this was of use to somebody. We found it constructive. The exception to the general rule on the availability of consumer goods was the situation in the Trans-Caucasian Republics. In Tbilisi, Yerevan, and to a degree in Baku as well, people lived pretty well. But, it was interesting to go down there and report on it to find out why it was better in Tbilisi, for example. In part, it was because the Georgians were more adept at obtaining merchandise. Things were better there.

Q: In a way, that area resembled the Levant. These are merchants, wheelers and dealers.

NILES: They certainly were that. They got things done that simply didn't happen in the Slavic

parts of the country. But, these trips were a valuable means of giving Washington a picture of the whole country, as opposed to Moscow or Leningrad.

Q: During this time, basically, we were looking at a place that doesn't work, particularly when the west was moving ahead very rapidly.

NILES: Well, it clearly didn't. But, one interesting thing is that frequently with non-official visitors from the United States, we were often regarded as almost pathologically anti-Soviet, unable to see the positive side of things. We were criticized for being much too negative. I can remember briefing groups of visitors whose reaction was "This is the other super power. It can't be this bad." I would say, "Well, in some respects, it is probably worse than I am telling you." They would say, "Well, the military side, as far as we can tell, works great. Look at the space program." To which my response was, "But they can't produce an automobile or a decent meal." We had a funny experience in 1968. I will never forget this. We were in the Hotel Ukraina in Moscow, which was a dreadful hotel. This was across the Moscow River from our Chancery. I was with friends from the United States. This was a guy who had worked very closely with Senator Robert Kennedy. When Senator Kennedy was assassinated in May 1968, the Ford Foundation gave this guy, Tommy Johnston and his wife, a trip around the world to help them adjust to the fact that the Senator had been killed. Tommy's wife is French. They stayed in the Ukraina Hotel. There was a line in the lobby to get coffee. So, we were standing in line for coffee. Directly in front of us were some French Communists, who were also waiting for coffee. The line moved glacially. The French Communists were talking among themselves, in French of course, and saying things like, "Well, you would think after 50 years of building socialism in one country, you could get a coffee in this hotel." It was a good question. Why, 51 years after the Revolution, did it take an inordinate amount of time to get a coffee in this presumed high-class hotel, which was in fact a piece of junk. People from the West sometimes accused us of being too negative about the Soviet Union. Then, when the whole thing fell apart and people realized that the system had been rotten to the core, we were criticized as having not seen that rot, and having been too positive about the Soviets. So, you can't win. But, at the time I was there, we frequently had visitors who would come and say, "Well, gosh, this is a great accomplishment to this country." We would try to explain that while this was true, the overwhelming majority of the people are totally cut off from those accomplishments, and much of what goes on in this country has nothing to do with it.

Q: Were you seeing any reflection? You had been removed from the whole business of the anti-Vietnam thing, because you had been at Garmisch and then at Moscow, just when this whole thing was cranking. But, by the time you were in Moscow, the real Vietnam protest movement, particularly among the student bodies of the United States and much of the intelligencia, or whatever you want to call it, was really going at great guns. Did you get any reflection of that concern about your country and what was happening there or having these people coming and being true believers of what the Communists were about, or anything like that?

NILES: Well, we felt the problem, certainly, as Foreign Service officers in Moscow in 1968-1971. We were subjected in the Soviet press to an endless barrage of attacks on our policy, of course. They attacked us on Southeast Asian policy, but we were also attacked on policy in the Middle East, and compared to the Nazis on one thing or another. We were attacked on policy in

Europe, so we were attacked across-the-board. Cuba was another subject they attacked us on. Being attacked by the Soviets certainly didn't cause us to think that our policy was wrong. It rather inclined us to think that if they are attacking us, we must be doing something right. It was a painful period for us, no question, the whole Southeast Asian experience, although as you say, we were cut off from it. At the time of the invasions of Cambodia and Laos, we were in Moscow. We really missed out on the domestic reaction to Kent State, for example. At the time of the assassination of Senator Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, we were in Garmisch. We would get these reports after the assassination of Dr. King from friends who were in Washington. Of course, we were reading the *Herald Tribune* about the riots here, and you saw these pictures of the capital with smoke hanging over it. We got reports from friends that were really incredible. Sitting in the Bavarian Alps in May 1968, it was almost impossible to envision what was going on in Washington. I can remember all of us talking about this, wondering at what was happening.

Q: There was our incursion into Cambodia in May 1970 which caused the Kent State shootings and much protest. It also had members of the Foreign Service picking younger members signing letters of protest. Did that hit you at all?

NILES: No. I think it probably reflects the fact that (1) we were isolated; and (2) we were in Moscow. In its way, I think it made us more patriotic, if that is the word, and more red, white and blue all over, because we were under such attacks constantly from the Soviets. It wasn't to say that all of us in the Embassy thought that the incursion into Cambodia was a grand idea. We didn't. However, I think we were less inclined to... We weren't working directly on the problem the way people like Tony Lake, Dick Moose and others, on the NSC staff, were working on Southeast Asia.

Q: I was Counsel General in Saigon when that happened. I thought, "What the hell?" They were shooting at us from there and had a sanctuary. It depended where you were. But, I didn't feel any of this until I got home. I am still kind of learning about it, even today, because it depends where you were. This is a situational thing.

NILES: I agree. Also, we were not working on the problem so we tended to be less focused on it.

Q: Did your mother ever get out?

NILES: She did get out, but she came only after I left. In 1982, she made a trip back to the Soviet Union with a group from her college. She went to Wellesley College. It was interesting that when she went she told them who she was and that she was born in St. Petersburg, in 1913. The KGB was clearly interested in her. They singled her out for special treatment. She had some really bizarre experiences wherever she was, in Moscow, Leningrad, Samarkand, Bokaro, all around.

Q: Did you have any particular stories or problems about the KGB? We are talking about the 1968 to 1971 period?

NILES: Not really. I mean, we were all subjected to harassment, close tailing, when we walked around the street, particularly when we did our retail price surveys, which we spent much time

doing. People would walk along behind us, bumping into us, and elbowing us, trying to knock us down. Even when we were out for non-work related purposes, we were followed from time to time. But it was usually very demonstrative. They wanted to demonstrate to us from time to time that they could follow us, and that they knew where we were, and so forth. That was relatively harmless. Every now and then, particularly as the Jewish Defense League became more active in New York, and harassed the Soviet UN Mission there, we would be harassed in return. Automobiles would be vandalized, and mirrors would be ripped off. Antennas would be ripped off. Tires would be punctured. This was all organized by the KGB because no ordinary Soviet citizen would dream of going up to a diplomatic vehicle and ripping a mirror off. People figured they would get in very deep trouble, as they might well have done, if the police weren't in favor of doing that. We had that to contend with. It was a nuisance, an annoyance, but not a fundamental problem.

Q: What about contact with the artistic community? Was that on a different level? Were you able to have other than just attending performances?

NILES: There were two artistic communities, particularly in the area of the visual arts. Less so, I think, in music and ballet. One community was the official community. If you wanted to deal with the official artists, official sculptors, official musicians, official dancers, you could do so through official channels. If you wanted to deal with people who were not state approved, you could go out and find dissident artists, painters who were not members of the League of Artists, which was another way of describing what a dissident artist was. We had contacts with the latter group, particularly during our second tour (1973-76) when they were much more open and active. They were interesting, entertaining people. We bought paintings from them, particularly during our second tour. But even during the first tour, we met a few of these people. We went to their parties. In some respects, they were crazy. One thing I came to understand in the Soviet Union is that when the Soviets said that a certain dissident was crazy and had been confined to a mental institution, you had to see a certain logic in that. If you were a Soviet citizen, and you chose, of your own free will, to say, "I don't like this system and I'm going to resist it in some way," you had to be a bit crazy. Those people went through so much and suffered so much for their art, it was truly amazing. Leave aside being incarcerated in a mental institution, which was the worst thing that could happen. You had to be slightly crazy to resist the system. So there was a type of crazy logic to the Soviet version of things. Who else but a nut case would say, "I am going to stand up and say to this overpowering system that I won't conform. I won't do this. I won't do that. I won't paint the way you want me to paint. I won't sculpt the way you want me to sculpt. I won't write the way you want me to write. The hell with you." You have to be slightly crazy to do that. Some of those people, as a result of official pressure, really had gone off the deep end, but overall they were wonderful, and courageous people.

Q: Then, you left there in 1971?

NILES: We left Moscow in July 1971. Let me just mention something before we leave Moscow. In the fall of 1970, we began to loosen up a little bit on the trade front. Trade and export licenses had been very tightly controlled in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. It was tight before that, but particularly tight afterwards. We began, gradually, to loosen. The American companies began to make some significant sales, which we helped them with, to the Soviet

Union. This happened particularly in the automobile and truck business. There were a few companies, the Gleason Gear Company of Rochester, New York, the LaSalle Machine Tool Company, Kearney and Trecker of Milwaukee, Giddings and Lewis of Fond-du-Lac, and Cross Machine Tools, that made equipment of this kind and began to make some sales. Just before I left, in the spring of 1971, we began to have prominent business people coming over. That began to gain momentum during the rest of 1971 and into 1972. Of course, in May 1972, we had President Nixon's visit. When I left, in the summer of 1971, we had already begun the process that would lead to the "detente period" of the mid-1970s.

Q: Why did that happen?

NILES: The period of so-called *detente* between the US and the USSR led to a major increase in the size of Embassy Moscow, and they simply did not have enough people with Moscow experience and Russian language skills to staff it. They needed me, or so they said, to head the new Commercial Office, which was located outside the Embassy and was assigned the task of promoting US-Soviet trade.

The remainder of my time at USNATO coincided with Ambassador Rumsfeld's first months at USNATO. He left the sinking ship of the Nixon Administration in March of 1973 and came to USNATO as Ambassador. It was his first real exposure to national security policy, but he was a very quick study and did a very good job as Ambassador. He was particularly adept in my time with him during the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 when we went to DEFCON III and may well have been on the brink of a war with the USSR in the Middle East. That required a great deal of careful management at NATO, and I thought Ambassador Rumsfeld handled it very well. He was a tough boss, but it could be fun to work with him. I introduced him to squash while we were in Brussels. He was a fierce competitor.

Q: So when did you go back to Moscow?

NILES: We went back in November 1973.

Q: What changes did you notice?

NILES: Moscow was largely unchanged. It was still a dark and generally unfriendly place. The Embassy was the same but more crowded. Our office, the Commercial Office, was down the street from the Chancery and was bright and cheerful – with a blue and yellow color scheme and modern furniture and equipment.

Q: Was the work more or less the same?

NILES: Fortunately not. I had three other officers on my staff - one from Commerce and two from State – and we were really on our own. The Embassy largely left us to our own devices. Our nominal boss – Economic Counselor Noble Melancamp – one of the most bizarre people I ever met in the Foreign Service - was not too interested in what we were doing. The Charge when I arrived, Adolph (Spike) Dubs, who was murdered by the KGB in Kabul in February 1978, was a great guy. He was replaced in the summer of 1974 by Jack Matlock. And at the same

time, Walter Stoessel, who had been Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, came out to Moscow. It was a delight to work for him, and he was quite supportive of what we were trying to do in the Commercial Office.

The US Embassy Commercial Office at that time really was unique in Moscow. Since we were doing something totally new, there were no fixed rules – Soviet or American - for our activities. I was told to promote US/Soviet trade, and so we set out on an active trade promotion program which include lots of small exhibits and demonstrations in our fancy office space. The USSR Chamber of Commerce and Industry – largely a KGB-run institution - had a monopoly on such events and gave us a lot of grief at the beginning, but we cut a deal, on our own authority, under which if they allowed us to conduct our little shows, we would guarantee that the US Department of Commerce would participate in their large international exhibitions. By and large, it worked. The key was that the Chamber of Commerce passed the word to the KGB guards at the door of our office that Soviet citizens were allowed to come in for a specific event.

But to conduct this program, we had to be fairly casual with the rules – both Soviet and US Government. By the time I left in the summer of 1976, we had amassed a fleet of cars and delivery vehicles, all Soviet-made, and were conducting a thriving barter business in order to keep our facility maintained and our shows operating. For instance, we had a show in 1975 for the Coca-Cola Company, which was trying to dislodge Pepsi from its monopoly position in the USSR. The then-CEO of Coca-Cola, Paul Austin, came to Moscow and brought 250 cases of Coke, all done up in English and Cyrillic lettering. When he was finished, he had 200 cases left, which he gave to us. Those cases of coke were like a box of gold bars. We used them to bribe Soviet customs officials to get exhibit materials out of customs; we paid for support work by Embassy local employees with cokes. Early in the game, my colleagues and I decided that if we were going to do the job, we simply could not be worried about some of the rules. To reduce our costs, we bought our rubles in Brussels and Vienna for 20 cents from street traders instead of \$1.11 from Gosbank. At one point we persuaded Sears, Roebuck to have a show in our office on merchandising technology, and the then-President of Sears, Dean Swift, came out to Moscow for the occasion. They had some display items, including a rack of suits what they left with us. We used those suits – Johnny Miller polyester leisure suits – to acquire all sorts of goods and services in Moscow.

I believe that we made a significant contribution to the development of business ties between the US and the USSR, although it turned out to be somewhat ephemeral when problems arose with the SALT II negotiations in March/April 1977, Sharansky was arrested in 1978 and even more so when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979.

Q: Did you get involved in any of the other sides of the Embassy's work?

NILES: From time to time, yes. When Secretary Kissinger came, I was sufficient senior on the Embassy staff to be included in the luncheons and dinners, which was interesting. It was a chance to meet Gromyko and talk with him. He could actually be a pleasant, witty interlocutor, if he wished. At one of those events, I met Boris Ponomarev. He was a legend in international Communist Party activities, a Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in charge of relations with “non-ruling Parties” and a candidate member of the Politburo of the Central

Committee.

In the fall of 1975, the Department got the bright idea that we would cut a deal with the Soviets to swap grain for oil. So far so good. But the key objective for Washington was to persuade the Soviets to give us a price break on the oil while paying world-market prices for wheat, corn and soya. The goal, which was fairly transparent at the time, was to put a dent in OPEC's ability to set the world price for oil.

Charles Robinson, at that time Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, a businessman who was quite an expert on shipping and other aspects of international trade, was given the unenviable task of negotiating this deal. He was assisted by Dean Hinton; Ambassador Stoessel and I joined from the Embassy side. Our Soviet interlocutors were Foreign Trade Minister N.S. Patolichev, First Deputy Minister Kuzmin and Deputy Minister Komarov. There were four rounds of talks. The meetings went on for hours at a time, in part because Patolichev was a marvelous story teller. He was always being reminded of some story by something Robinson said. I can remember one of them today. In any event, we came up empty except for a one-page memorandum of understanding under which both sides undertook to promote trade in grain and oil, with no mention of prices.

One of the more painful sides of my second stay in Moscow was the microwave crisis which broke out in February 1976. I will never forget that, either, but it was no joke. Around February 15, Ambassador Stoessel called all the officers and employees with security clearances (which included my wife, then working as the Consular Section's Secretary) into a meeting to inform us that since 1959, the Soviets had been shooting "non-ionizing microwave radiation" into the Chancery building. The power of the radiation had gradually been increasing, and in 1975 it reached the level of 15 microwatts per square centimeter, which exceeded the Soviet health norm. Surprisingly, our health norm for this sort of hazard was 100 times higher than the Soviet norm at that time, but we soon lowered it to the Soviet norm, and ultimately below. (This particularly affected operators of ATC systems.) In any case, there was quite an uproar in the embassy, and we began a long back and forth with the Department about the risks and what could be done to avoid them. On the first day, we were introduced to a team of Washington experts who were there to explain the issue to us. It included a gentleman named "Dr. Pollock" from George Washington University. He was described as "an expert in the field," but when my wife asked what his "field" was, they refused to tell us. That was not too encouraging. We subsequently learned that his "field" was oncology.

In any case, we felt very let down by the Department, and this bad feeling was accentuated by a series of warnings from Washington, said to have come from my old friend Larry Eagleburger, who was then Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary for Management, to the effect that Secretary Kissinger was becoming very cross with us because our questions and complaints, which had gotten into the press, were annoying the Soviets and having a negative affect on the SALT II negotiations. We were primarily concerned about whether we were candidates for cancer. The whole experience left a bad feeling about our second tour in Moscow and a bad feeling about the Department of State. I believe that the Department never came to grips with the health risks to which the Embassy Moscow staff were subjected due to the microwaves. There was an abnormally high number of deaths due to cancer of colleagues who

had served there, including Ambassador Stoessel, who died from leukemia.

Another interesting part of the second Moscow tour was President Nixon's July 1974 visit. It was sad affair, put on as part of a bigger trip with stops in Cairo, Tel Aviv and Brussels, designed to save the Nixon Presidency, which was, of course, beyond salvation. It was interesting to watch the floundering Administration close in the Kremlin, where the President, Secretary Kissinger and General Haig stayed. It also gave us a chance to meet Brezhnev, Kosygin and the other members of the Politburo – a most unimpressive lot. I had the momentous responsibility of arranging Mrs. Nixon's program. But even that was interesting because it gave me a chance to observe the Potemkin village techniques followed by the Soviets, who did things such as repave the streets in front of the places she visited the night before the visit. In one case, the combination of shoddy work and hot weather caused the newly-laid asphalt to give way under the weight of the big cars we used.

In any event, we left Moscow in July 1976 for reassignment to Washington, after nine years in the field, and a year at the National War College.

WILLIAM ANDREAS BROWN
Political Officer
Moscow (1966-1968)

Ambassador William Andreas Brown was born in Winchester, Massachusetts in 1930. He joined the "Holloway Program" which was part of the Naval Reserve Officers Training Program and went to Harvard University, graduating with a Magna cum Laude degree. In 1950 he went to Marine Corps basic training in Virginia and later served in Korea. His Foreign Service career took him to a multitude of places including Honk Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, USSR, India, the UK, and Israel. His career includes an ambassadorship to Israel as well as several positions in the State Department, Environmental Protection Agency. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November of 1998.

Q: Moving to Russian studies now, I would like to get a picture of the Foreign Service at this time and how it operated. It sounds as if your Career Counselor was yourself and your wife.

BROWN: That's right.

Q: Did anybody say, "Hey, Mr. Brown, why don't you become a Sino-Soviet specialist?"

BROWN: No. On the Sino-Soviet network, Marshall Bremant was the then incumbent of the Sino-Soviet slot in the embassy in Moscow. I had known him at language school in Taichung. Obviously, this kind of specialization was a way into, if you will, the big time in terms of assignment to a major embassy, getting on the map, and so forth. I just thought that this was the thing to do, and it was an exciting course of action. It was apparent to me, beginning in 1961, that a split was opening up and widening between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of

China, and that this would bear very fundamentally on our national interest. That is, depending on how things developed.

So I put in for Russian study and got it. By this time I had pretty strong ideas about how language training should go. Once again, I was a little bit older than some of the other students, but I burned the candle at both ends under the great teacher, Nina De la Cruz. She was a magnificent instructor. I plowed ahead. I communicated with Marshall Bremont, who was then on the job in Moscow. He was sending me clippings from Pravda and Izvestia. In other words I was determined that, just as I had graduated from Chinese language training, able really to read the newspapers, I wanted to be able to do this when I arrived in Moscow. I realized from correspondence with Marshall that this was crucial.

So I did extra work on the Russian language so that I would be able to read the Russian language press. Through Nina De la Cruz, I engaged an elderly Russian lady, who was not on the staff, and I really burnt the candle at both ends. This really paid off, I would say, by comparison with some other graduates from the same course. By the end of the Russian course, unfortunately, they were just barely at the threshold of being able to read the press in Russian. If they didn't get the right slot, if they got into consular, administrative, or other work which didn't require them to read the Russian newspapers, they could easily fall short, in this respect.

I arrived in Moscow in the summer of 1966, able to read Pravda and Izvestia. This ability was as important as I thought it would be, because Marshall Bremont on my first day would say, "Mrs. Gandhi [Indian Prime Minister] is arriving in Moscow. Here is the Soviet press coverage of her remarks yesterday. It's all yours to prepare a report." The other thing that happened was that, either on my first or second day in Moscow, a defector got through the Soviet guards in front of the embassy and came into the embassy. He was a Chinese. I felt that I had to handle that case. It was highly potent stuff.

Q: You were in the embassy in Moscow from 1966 to when?

BROWN: From 1966 to 1968. When I arrived in Moscow, notwithstanding all of my reading and all of my preparations, it was a bit of a jolt. I was in a communist society. We were bugged, followed, and restricted, and made to feel it, even more to the point. The embassy was very hierarchical. The reports that it was putting out were top flight in terms of quality, and the editing and hierarchical process was very rigorous. It was quite a change for me, having come from my own post and suddenly being subordinated to being the low man in the Political Section.

Q: Who were the Ambassador, the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], and the Political Counselor?

BROWN: The Ambassador at the time was Foy Kohler, who was an old pro. The DCM at the time was John, well I forget his last name. Gene Boster was the Political Counselor. The Political Section, as usual, was divided into two units, covering Internal and External Affairs. I was in the External Unit, so I was reporting to Alex Akalovsky, who had been an official interpreter for appointments high level Americans had with Nikita Khrushchev. He had now come into the Foreign Service. This was his first assignment as Deputy Political Counselor. He was a real

taskmaster.

Among my colleagues were the following: covering Africa was Allen Davis, later Ambassador; Middle East was Walter Smith; covering Latin America was Bill Price; and I had all of Asia, from Afghanistan to Japan. The biggest part of this job was following Sino-Soviet affairs.

At that time the Russians were preparing for their great, 50th anniversary celebration of the Communist Revolution in 1917. The split between the Chinese communists and the Russians was deepening dramatically. President Lyndon Johnson had moved to major escalation in Vietnam, which we were bombing heavily, occasionally striking Soviet shipping in Haiphong harbor. The Soviets would periodically call us in to protest against this or that strafing or bombing attack. I remember occasions when we queried Washington about these allegations, and the Department of State denied them. I remember one time when the Russians gave us photos of holes in ships. They said that one or two crew members had been killed. There was a great manufactured outcry in the Soviet press, demonstrations against us, and so on. So our relations with the Soviet Union at this time were about at their worst. They stayed that way during my time in Moscow.

Q: Who was the Soviet Foreign Minister at this time [1964]?

BROWN: Andrei Gromyko was the Foreign Minister. Leonid Brezhnev was the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [CPSU]. They were settling in and rewriting the history of the CPSU. They were writing out Khrushchev and writing themselves in. That took us into the fabulous period leading up to 1967 because they were now rewriting the whole history of the Communist Revolution and who did what and so forth. Of course, this rewriting included the Sino-Soviet aspect and the treatment of Mao Tse-tung. Mao had hitherto been written up as a great hero of the Proletarian Revolution. Now he had to be blackened, downgraded, and vilified, and I witnessed all of this process.

Meanwhile, the Chinese communists were doing their own rewriting of history. It was getting increasingly nasty during my time in Moscow. By 1968 a few bullets were flying here and there, there was some roughhousing and so forth.

Q: You're talking about incidents between the Chinese and the Russians.

BROWN: The Chinese and the Soviets, yes.

Q: Had they yet had that battle over the Ussuri River?

BROWN: No, that came a bit later. However, the Soviets were strengthening their positions along the Ussuri River. I managed to convince my subsequent Political Counselor, David Klein, who had previously been Economic Counselor, that he and his wife, and I, should travel out together to Khabarovsk. The Soviets declined to show us anything, and we couldn't arrange any appointments. David Klein was so angry that he decided that we would go back to Moscow. I said, "No, that's exactly what they want you to do. Let's continue on. We have permission to continue on to Nakhodka," (North of Vladivostok), where there was a newly-opened, one-man

Japanese Consulate. This Consulate was operating out of a hotel. I said, "Dave, that's exactly what they want. They want us to give up in frustration and go back to Moscow. Let's not do that."

The only way we could continue on to Nakhodka was to travel for a very long period down that railway line. We would only have a couple of hours there in Nakhodka and would have to get on another train back. I said, "Let's do it. They want to discourage us, but let's do it." This trip was great, because it enabled me to see the enormous flow of military hardware down that line, where the Soviets were building up their position along the Ussuri River.

We also had a very useful meeting with the Japanese Consul General in Nakhodka. It was amazing what a colleague could give us in a couple of hours. He was a senior, experienced diplomat who knew his business. Although he was very restricted in where he could travel geographically, he was able to give us a pretty good picture of Nakhodka in those days.

In the professional field back in Moscow the Soviets knew what I was after, and they were not about to make life easy for me. So I could not get appointments in the Foreign Ministry. I had to resort to other means. By special, diplomatic pouch, I subscribed to "People's Daily," which was published in Beijing. It was forbidden by the Soviets to be sold in Moscow. I would compare "People's Daily" as I got it, and FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service, an official, U.S. publication] as I got it. The FBIS daily report contained a read out of Chinese, as well as Soviet broadcasts. I would read between the lines of the Byzantine Soviet press coverage.

I went to the lengths of attending the defenses of doctoral dissertations at the African-Asian Institute of Oriental Studies. Although their system was grossly distorted, the Soviets still went through the motions. The Ph.D. candidates still had to defend their theses in a public forum. One could read in the evening Moscow News as to when and where these theses would be defended along with mechanical, engineering, science, and other dissertations. The reason that I would go there would be to pick up whatever grains of information that I could.

I could see in operation the likes of Mikhail Kapitsa, who was a Professor of Chinese Affairs at Moscow University. He was also a former Ambassador and was on the Collegium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was a big, tall, hearty man. I used to talk to him in the corridors. Kapitsa was aware of what I was up to. He had been a young interpreter between Stalin and, I guess, Zhou En-lai and some Chinese communist delegations. He would throw me the odd bone here and there. For example, an historical note. It was all slanted, of course. He would say that the Soviets knew all along what kind of fool Mao Tse-tung was, an agricultural bumpkin, an opportunist, and so forth. "Because of the exigencies of the period, we went along with it," he would say. He would say that Mao had engaged in all of these excesses and so forth. I was reading those kinds of tea leaves and engaging in extracurricular activities.

Q: Were you given any training in the fine art of Kremlinology? I spent five years in Yugoslavia, reading "Politka" and "Borba." This was not really my bag. I didn't have to do that, but when you're doing that, that is, trying to read this stuff, you really have to develop some expertise. Did you have any training in how to do this?

BROWN: We studied at the FSI [Foreign Service Institute] before we went to Moscow. There were reference books, the occasional lecture, and tapes of commentaries on Russian affairs. I did as much as I could to absorb this material. I was engaged very heavily in reading this kind of material before I got to Moscow. There was a lot of classified information on the Soviet system as well.

However, there's nothing like on the job training. We also had the benefit of a few other people there in other embassies. The British and the French were very interested in Sino-Soviet relations, and so were the Japanese. I used to meet in the various "tanks" [secure conference rooms] at the Japanese and American Embassies. On a confidential basis we would share information.

Mind you, you couldn't exist on this alone. We were expected to handle other affairs as well, on an ad hoc basis. I actually welcomed this. I traveled through the various republics of Soviet Central Asia. I traveled there with an Australian embassy officer. I also traveled to the Ukraine and the Caucasus with our Agricultural Attache. I volunteered to do that. That was a real eye-opener as far as Soviet agriculture was concerned.

Q: Can you talk about this, because this was just about the time that Khrushchev opened up the virgin lands of Soviet Central Asia. What was our impression of Soviet agriculture that we were picking up?

BROWN: Of course, agriculture was an enormous subject in Soviet propaganda and central planning. The Soviets knew that the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Government more generally, wanted to know everything that we could about their agriculture. They were not about to tell us. As a result we sent people to the Soviet Union like Bryce Meeker, a career agricultural expert who followed developments in the Soviet Union and China as a specialized, reporting officer.

He would dutifully go into the Soviet Ministry of Agriculture. Essentially, they wouldn't give him the time of day. They would say, "You know more than we do," and that kind of thing. By now we were beginning to get satellite coverage of the state of Soviet agriculture. By now Bryce Meeker and his predecessors over the years had developed a system for covering the country. They were severely limited in their travels and couldn't get to the virgin lands, at least not easily.

However, the bread basket of the Soviet Union remained the Ukraine and South into the Caucasus area. These guys developed a system of taking an embassy car and driving for enormous distances, always with a partner. They were always looking for someone to travel with, because of Soviet provocations and so forth. So I put myself on the list to accompany them.

There were plots of land which they and their predecessors had selected years ago. They had notebooks, and we would drive as fast as we could. Then we would slow down as we passed a designated 10 kilometer stretch on the right or left hand side of the road. Sometimes we would just cruise slowly past these Ukrainian or Caucasian fields and note the state of the crops. Occasionally, we would stop, get out of the car and take a little stroll in the fields, and so forth. We were under constant surveillance. The Soviet security people following us would get out and

look at what we were doing. We would stay the night in hotels. The Soviet security people in essence selected the hotel and picked the room as well! They would run provocations if they could, involving some nice-looking young lady.

For me this was a real eye opener as far as the backward plight of Soviet agriculture was concerned. I think that that was very influential for my overall education on the Soviet Union. It came in as a kind of radar in other incarnations. I got to see parts of the Soviet Union that my job normally didn't call for me to visit, but that was useful, too.

In this way I got to visit the capitals of Kazakhstan, of the Kirghiz SSR [Soviet Socialist Republic]...

Q: Whose capital was Frunze.

BROWN: Yes. We were trying to get as close as we could to the Chinese border with the Soviet Union, and the security police were always closing us off from it. I think that they knew that I was a Sino-Soviet specialist. There were also other reasons. So much of their nuclear production, launch facilities, and nuclear pollution were taking place precisely in those areas.

Q: Also, there were aircraft facilities there.

BROWN: Oh, yes. I was a Sino-Soviet watcher, but I was also getting a first class, hands on education on the way things ran there.

Q: How did you feel about this? Later on, some 29 years later, the Soviet Union collapsed essentially because of its economic deterioration. Somehow, we had had the impression that the Soviets were 10 feet tall.

BROWN: I'll raise this point because in 1972 I was in the National War College. I got into a very interesting discussion with a very senior guy from DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency], who rose to a very high position in that agency. I was telling him how primitive Soviet agriculture, their cities, and city life were. From my viewpoint, and speaking as a non-economist, the whole Soviet economy was very limited. This man said, "Okay, Bill, but I'm telling you that they put up first-class missiles. That's why, in a sense, they can put up some first-class satellites with these missiles."

For me this represented the great dichotomy in the Soviet Union. They were sinking so much of their money into that. (End of tape)

Q: You were saying that they put so much of their resources...

BROWN: They were putting so much of their resources into a competitive arms race, satellites, and the whole range of military equipment. At the same time they were so pitifully backward in so many other areas. Even during the great, 50th anniversary celebration of the foundation of the Soviet Union [1967], when they boasted of producing so many tons of steel, so many tons of grain, and so forth, it was apparent that they remained significantly backward. I would say that

the Soviet system was almost literally rusting away. If you saw one Soviet city, you'd seen them all. These cities were very drab and certainly not exciting.

There was a great deal of alcoholism and absenteeism from work. The shortages of food were really something to behold, apart from the staple foods. Bread was there in the stores. For the 50th anniversary celebration, in 1967, they tried to do some window dressing in the more fashionable stores, and so forth. However, Soviet food consumption was pathetic as far as meat was concerned.

So, as I said, I went to Moscow as a Sino-Soviet watcher, but I got a much broader education than that. It was a difficult situation. Work in the embassy was difficult. I was convinced that the Sino-Soviet split was far worse than had been depicted. I tended to describe it in more dramatic ways than some of my superiors were prepared to accept. However, of course, that's life.

Ambassador Foy Kohler was replaced by Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson.

Q: Ambassador Thompson was returning to the Soviet Union, wasn't he?

BROWN: He was returning to the Soviet Union. He had played a major role in previous administrations and in the negotiation of the neutralization of Austria.

By now the Vietnam War had deepened to the point where its impact on Soviet-American relations was worsening all the time. Ambassador Thompson was sent to Moscow in no small measure to wait to see whether the Soviets under Kosygin and Brezhnev would be willing to play a fruitful, productive role in ending the war. Alas, it was not to be.

We had many visitors in Moscow. This was a rather fascinating point. One visitor was a gentleman named Richard Nixon, the former Vice President of the U.S. and later the President. I believe that he came to Moscow in 1967 as a private person, having been defeated in his gubernatorial campaign in California [in 1962]. We tried to make appointments for him. He wanted to see Brezhnev, the Politburo, and so forth. Richard Nixon could not get a single appointment in the entire Soviet apparatus! Not even an appointment with a dog catcher. We were embarrassed and so forth, but that's the way it was.

We sent him out to Kazakhstan on a side trip. When Nixon returned from there, Ambassador Thompson, obviously in an effort to make Nixon feel better, held a session up in his office. Nixon held forth on NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], the world, and so forth. I was a dyed in the wool closet Democrat, but I must say that I was impressed with Nixon's handling of that session. I was very impressed, indeed.

Let me say a word at this point about the man I called my KGB [Soviet Secret Police] handler whose name was "Nick." Most of us had a contact who was a KGB officer, whether we wanted one or not. Nick had served in the Soviet embassy in Washington and maybe in the Soviet UN Mission. He was always affable and an easy-going guy. He worked out of the "House of Friendship." Nick was the kind of guy who would say, "How's the work going? Are you getting appointments? Can I help out in any way? I know it's difficult," and so forth. Occasionally, we

would get together. I dutifully and immediately reported contacts with Nick. Nick was a KGB Colonel, as it were, and co-author of a book on "How to Subvert American Officers." When you talked to him, you knew when you were hearing things. [Laughter]

I said, "You know, Nick, Nixon is in Moscow." He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, he's been unable to get a single appointment." He said, "Oh?" I said, "You're making a big mistake, Nick." He said, "Well, you know, his reputation as a hardliner," and so forth. I said, and remember this was 1967 when I said all of this: "Nick, obviously we're going to have Lyndon Johnson reelected President. A Democrat will be the next President, no question about it. Johnson has made a lot of progress with promoting the Great Society and so on. But you never know with this kind of individual. You people would be well-advised to take out a little insurance policy and be nice to Nixon." Or words to that effect. Well, it was not to be, and Nixon did not get a single appointment during this visit to Moscow. He got on the airplane and flew directly to Bucharest, [Romania].

In Bucharest President Ceausescu rolled out the red carpet, wined and dined Nixon, and he never forget that.

Q: This relationship with Ceausescu really made an impact on Nixon.

BROWN: Years later, when I was in New Delhi, President Nixon flew through with Secretary of State Kissinger. I was the motorcade officer. The next stop was to be Bucharest. There President Ceausescu did everything, with the red carpet, salutes, dancing, and everything. Nixon responded very well for Ceausescu's earlier graciousness.

Anyway, another visitor to Moscow was Henry Kissinger, that is, Professor Henry Kissinger. I had word that I should meet him and take care of him, because he was connected with David Rockefeller [President of the Chase Manhattan Bank]. I remember driving out to Sheremeytvo Airport, which is a good distance outside of Moscow. I was sort of muttering to myself: "I'm a Harvard man, and all of that, but what am I doing meeting a Harvard Professor, driving him in to Moscow, putting him in a hotel, and so forth."

I think that Kissinger was attending a Pugwash Conference, or a Pugwash-like Conference. In addition...

Q: You might explain what Pugwash was.

BROWN: "Pugwash" was the name of a place where a series of meetings of good thinking people on various sides got together informally. They included people in and out of government who discussed the possibilities of arms control and disarmament. A very prestigious crowd of people on all sides.

Kissinger had another agenda as well. That was with a Japanese outfit which had arranged with him that he would meet with and debate a Soviet figure named Zhukov. Zhukov was an old, ideological hack from "Pravda." The subject matter was scheduled to revolve around Asia and the world. I'll never forget Kissinger saying to me: "I'm making tapes of this and I want you to

send these back to Washington for me through the diplomatic pouch. I want to make sure that I have, on the record, exactly what I said.”

I said to myself: “Who does this guy think he is? Using the diplomatic pouch? He's just a private citizen.” Well, the next time I saw him, I was holding the door open for him. [Laughter]

Another visitor to Moscow turned out to be Chester Bowles. Bowles was coming through Moscow as Ambassador to India, en route back to his post in New Delhi from consultations back in Washington. He and his wonderful wife, Steppy, routed themselves through Moscow on the way back to New Delhi. At that time we were between Ambassadors in Moscow. Toby Swank was the DCM and the Charge d'Affaires. He didn't like Bowles. Bowles had carried out a mission to Cambodia, while Swank was stationed there. Swank's nose was out of joint as a result. Swank called me in and told me: “Chester Bowles is coming to Moscow.” I said, “Yes.” Swank said, “You're the Asian affairs expert. You handle him.” I said, “Yes.” Swank said, “I'm just awfully busy, so I want you really to take care of Bowles.” In other words, I was to entertain and take care of him. So I did.

Bowles' departure from Moscow was delayed for an extra day, so we had him on our hands for something like three days in all. He and his wife were a charming couple. I had always idolized him as a great, American figure. As we sat in the VIP lounge in Sheremeteyevo Airport, prior to his leaving, Bowles said to me: “You know, you're just the kind of guy I need.” I thought: “Wouldn't it be great with Lindsey Grant covering communist China!” Bowles said that he would like to have me also replace Roger Kirk, (later Ambassador to Romania), as his Soviet specialist. He added that he would like to combine this because a personnel reduction in force was taking place at the time in the Foreign Service. So I would be both a Soviet and Chinese Communist specialist. Ambassador Bowles said, “Why don't you come to the embassy in New Delhi?” I said, “Mr. Ambassador, I'd be delighted, but I've never served substantively in Washington. Everybody tells me, including Foreign Service Inspectors, peers, and superiors, that I'm headed for Washington. I don't think that it's possible to do a tour in New Delhi at this time.” He said, “Well, let's see what I can do.”

A week later a cable came in to Moscow, ordering me transferred to New Delhi. So I left Moscow. I had witnessed the great, 50th anniversary celebration of the Communist Revolution and all of that hype. It was really something to see that the Soviets really wanted to celebrate this anniversary. I had also witnessed the deepening of the Sino-Soviet split to the point that I went down to the train station and saw Chinese students departing for Beijing. These students had deliberately fabricated scuffles with the Soviet police so that they could go back to Beijing, with apparently bloody bandages on them. They knew what they faced in the Cultural Revolution, which was then at its height. The Cultural Revolution was an ideological and almost religious phenomenon, something like the Salem Witch Trials in American history. It was amazing.

At the train station I saw the Chinese Charge d'Affaires and his senior staff, standing in a semi-circle, holding copies of Mao Tse-tung's “Little Red Book,” looking at a bunch of Chinese students who were extra bandaged, having manufactured the scuffles with the Soviet police. Some of the students were in stretchers and some of them were heavily bandaged. These two, semi-circles faced each other. It was like something right out of a religious service. Somebody

would say, in a low voice: "Turn to page such and such." And someone else would read: "You cannot sail the seas without a helmsman." Then someone would say, "Chairman Mao is our great helmsman. See page such and such," and someone would say, "Our Great Leader, Mao Tse-tung, says," and so forth. It was like a church service. And off the students went on their way back to Beijing.

As the students' train pulled out of the station, some of them leaned out of the last car and shouted out in Russian: "Long live the friendship between the Great Soviet and the Great Chinese peoples!" And surrounding the train was a bunch of Soviet police goons yelling at the Chinese students: "Svoloch" ("Bastard!") [Laughter]

As I looked back on it, the assignment to Moscow was painful, and it was hard work. We suffered the rigors of family separation. Two of our daughters were in their early teens, and they had to be put in school in Vienna and later on in Copenhagen. That was a big wrench for us at the time. Obviously, I hated the Soviet system. I didn't like, and no one would like the office layout of the embassy, along with all of the restrictions and provocations. However, it was a great experience.

Q: Were you personally provoked at all? Did you get any attempts at personal attacks at all?

BROWN: When we were on the road, as I said, some nice-looking women would come up and try to interest us. My wife would get provocative behavior from Soviet women. They would ask her: "Is your husband unhappy?" There were times when one might pick up the phone and hear one's own voice. Or the phone was clicking in such a way that you knew you were being bugged. It was tough to serve at the embassy in Moscow.

Q: In the Political Section what was the prognosis for the Brezhnev and Kosygin regime at that time? They were fairly new on the scene.

BROWN: They were new on the scene. They were busily trying to strengthen the Soviet system. As I said, among other things, they had the benefit of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Communist Revolution. So, in a sense, they were in charge of the sacraments. They could pull off, and did so, a great, world communist gathering, to which even the Cubans and the North Koreans sent delegates. This effort was obviously structured at the expense of the Chinese communists.

However, the Soviets were experiencing increasing difficulties, of course, in dealing with the European situation. There was the Yugoslav phenomenon. By the way, some of the best diplomats I ever ran into in those days were specifically the Yugoslavs.

Q: I remember that both in China and in the Soviet Union the Yugoslav diplomats were often our best sources of information.

BROWN: They were first class. They spoke excellent Russian. They knew the system and they had a certain amount of entree by virtue of their communist credentials. After all, a Yugoslav Ambassador would feel that he was entitled to meet significant, Soviet Communist Party figures,

and not with the shadows that we met with, such as government bureaucrats. They would meet with communist party officials. That's where the real power was. Of course, they were trying to work this status for their own benefit. So there were a lot of fascinating things about the Yugoslavs.

One thing I would like to mention before I leave this account of my time in Moscow, was the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War in 1967.

Q: This was also called the Six-Day War.

BROWN: At the time there was a very small but active Israeli embassy in Moscow. By this time I was getting used to demonstrations. There were anti-American and anti-Chinese demonstrations. It was interesting to observe the way that the Soviets mounted them, these so-called spontaneous demonstrations. I remember getting a phone call from a journalist who said, "The Soviets are about to mount an anti-American, anti-Israeli demonstration. It's going to come right down Tchaikowskava Boulevard later this morning."

So I passed the word and, sure enough, all the traffic on the street was diverted. First of all many water trucks were deployed in semi-circles around the Israeli and American Embassies. Then hundreds of police goons appeared in trenchcoats around the Embassies. The traffic stopped. Then a long line of heavy military or police trucks appeared on Tchaikowskava Boulevard, a very wide thoroughfare, and parked opposite our embassy, bumper to bumper. These trucks were loaded with police. In the trucks and behind were police officers with radio equipment. At long last came the demonstrators, predominantly Arabs and with a sprinkling of Afro-Asian, Third World protestors, with their Soviet keepers along with them.

They were still very far away, but opposite our embassy they found that the scene was not quite what they expected. Between themselves and the embassy was an enormous amount of space, with all of these water trucks and hundreds of police goons protecting us. Then there was the long line of police cadets or troops, armed, and riding in these trucks which were parked, bumper to bumper. Their own people were locking arms and guiding them. In other words, they couldn't stop. So they went past us on a guided route, turned the corner, and headed for the Israeli embassy, where they did the same thing. I became well acquainted with spontaneous demonstrations during my time in Moscow.

Q: Didn't they have a demonstration where ink bottles were thrown against the front of our embassy? Some of the windows were broken, and the Soviet Government ended up paying for it. I'm sure that the Soviet feeling about African and Arab students must have been...

BROWN: I had a fascinating, introductory experience to this kind of feeling. My wife, Helen, and I, together with our family, chose to come into the Soviet Union by a route that was very rare for those days. I deliberately chose to come in on what I think was the "KRUPSKAYA," a Soviet vessel which went from London to Leningrad, via Copenhagen and perhaps Stockholm, although I'm not sure of that, and Helsinki. Then we took a train into Moscow. We debarked and spent several hours in Helsinki. At this time I assisted a dark-complexioned gentleman who was an Indian. He had a lot of baggage to take care of. He was so grateful for my help. He said,

“How can I repay you?” I said, “Don't worry about it.” We struck up a conversation. It turned out that he was a graduate student at Lumumba University in Moscow.

Anyhow, he said that he wanted to invite us to visit Lumumba University. I said, “Look, you should know that I'm going to be a Political Officer in the American embassy in Moscow. You're an Indian student. I don't want you to feel uncomfortable about this.” He said, “No, no. I don't care. I'm independent and I'm in my last year at Lumumba University.” So I said, “Fine.” Well, by golly, some time later he got in touch with us. He came and had Thanksgiving dinner with us.

He also invited us to visit Lumumba University: Helen, myself, and our two older daughters, who were then in their early teens. He got us into the university, past the guard and so forth. We went up to his room, which he was sharing with a Latin American student and an African from Kenya or some place like that. At the sight of us the word went out, and suddenly, the room was filled with black students from different parts of Africa. They were pouring out their hearts on the terrible experience of being black students in Moscow. Their difficulty was, as they put it, the more Russian they learned, the more they could understand the insults which were thrown their way, and so forth. This was a real revelation.

Q: I interviewed a whole group of African students who had attended the University of Sofia, [Bulgaria]. They were tired of being called, “black monkeys.”

BROWN: On an agricultural trip in Orel, South of Moscow, between Moscow and Kiev, I was traveling with the American Agricultural Attaché and a Canadian. This Canadian was a French-Canadian who fancied himself as a liberal. After the first night in Orel he was becoming a very strong, conservative, anti-Soviet person.

Well, you know the Soviet system. There are very few bars outside of Moscow. In those days drinking alcoholic beverages was done in hotel restaurants, and heavy drinking it was. The whole system was set up. Your room had been set, and your table was already designated. As we came down, we found that the dining room was crowded to overflowing. Every seat was taken, and every table was occupied except one that was empty. On this table was the American flag! [Laughter] The three of us sat down at this table. Our colleague was a Canadian, and I felt that it was sort of insulting to him. So I took the American flag and put it aside on a radiator, or something like that. The maitre d. came over, picked up the American flag, and dramatically placed it in the center of our table. After a while, through the doorway appeared a black man. He made straight for our table. Efforts were made to intercept him, but we said, “No, no. Let him sit down.” Here we were in the provincial city of Orel which, by the way, had been overrun by the Germans during World War II.

We struck up a conversation with this black man, who turned out to be the brother of Tom M'Boya of Kenya.

Q: Tom M'Boya was a labor leader. He was a science major, wasn't he?

BROWN: I'm not sure. I'm not sure whether he became Prime Minister or not, but he was a very high-ranking person. I said to him: “What in the world are you doing here?” He said, “They

stuck me here. You don't know what it's like. Children come up to me and say, 'Why don't you wash?' People call us 'monkeys.' Can you get me out of here?" This was the cry of many black students at the time. They asked us for help in getting out of the Soviet Union. We would say, "Look, you have to get a Soviet exit visa. We can't do that kind of thing for you."

It turned out that this man had had an argument with his brother, Tom M'Boya. Tom got so fed up with him that he said, "I'm going to send you to the United States," or some such place, "on a student program." He was so angry that he went across the street to Tom's bitter rival, Oginga Odinga. He said to him: "Send me to Russia," which was arranged. It was amazing! We had amazing experiences in the Soviet Union, especially on the road there.

Before we move on to another subject, this trip gave me a chance to visit Vilnius, Lithuania, and Riga, Latvia, with my wife and my boss, the Political Counselor. These places were under Soviet occupation, of course, but it was remarkable that the tone and atmosphere were so different from the rest of the Soviet Union. The Lithuanians and the Latvians were just dying to get out of the Soviet Union. I couldn't imagine at that time that they would finally make it, as they did. It was a remarkable and great learning experience.

I then went to India.

Q: Let's go into a couple of additional questions about the Soviet Union. We had seen the Sino-Soviet split, which was getting bigger and bigger. At the same time, by 1968, we were deeply involved in the Vietnam War. Both the Soviets and the Chinese communists were supporting North Vietnam. You must have been looking for splits there and trying to start something.

BROWN: Yes. Among other things the Soviets and the Chinese communists were each charging the other with selling out North Vietnam. The Soviets were saying: "We're sending goods to North Vietnam. They have to travel on Chinese railroads, but China is holding up these shipments." The Chinese would say, "That's rubbish. Besides, you're not sending the right materials. You're only paying lip service to proletarian internationalism," and on and on. This enmity between Soviets and Chinese reached the point, and this was a tell-tale sign, that the Soviets began to make public exposes on Chinese intelligence.

I remember reading an article in "Za Rubizhjon," a weekly Soviet publication. Its name means "Overseas." It was a relatively more sophisticated, journalistic vehicle for Soviet propaganda. This publication carried an expose of the Chinese communist intelligence apparatus in, let us say, Switzerland. I took this article to a colleague and said, "Wow! When they go so far as to start attacking each other's intelligence service, then you know that it is really bad news." Usually, that kind of material is kept...

Q: These countries are still members of the communist community...

BROWN: Service in the Soviet Union was a great experience, professionally. It was tough in many, many ways. However, it armed me for a whole series of upcoming tasks.

Q: What were you getting about the Cultural Revolution in China? You were there at the

embassy in Moscow from 1966 to 1968. What information were you getting about Sino-Soviet relations at that time?

BROWN: What we were getting, of course, was what the world press and our own press were saying about this. We got U.S. commentaries on it. As a Sino-Soviet specialist, I was getting material hot off the press in "People's Daily," which was published in Beijing. I received copies of that, under a special subscription, one day after publication in Beijing. So I was not trailing very far behind events. There was remarkable stuff in it.

FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] was giving us their take as well. I was also reading "Pravda," "Izvestia," and special pieces that the Soviets were putting out on the horrors of the Cultural Revolution. The Soviets pictured the Cultural Revolution as destroying a communist society, as they had known it, and as we all had known it. I was getting an awful lot of information on it.

Of course, I couldn't be in touch with Chinese diplomats in Moscow. However, there were other sources of information as well. I would go past the Chinese embassy occasionally and would learn that there was to be a spontaneous anti-Chinese demonstration in front of the Chinese embassy. Following this advance warning, I would position myself outside the Chinese embassy and, sure enough, loads of trucks would appear on side streets filled with Soviet security police. First would be the plain clothes police, then uniformed police, and then factory workers. These people would be trucked into Moscow and provided with loudspeakers.

I remember one case when these workers were provided with a chainsaw. These workers sawed down the exhibit which the Chinese communists had just set up within the Chinese embassy grounds on the latest successes of the Cultural Revolution. The exhibit had some anti-Soviet propaganda in it, so the workers in this spontaneous demonstration came with a chain saw and just sawed the whole thing down! I'll never forget what a little old lady did. She was just passing by, but these little old ladies can be fearsome in such circumstances. Never underestimate the power of women, and particularly little, old ladies! I remember an old lady standing next to me and yelling: "Chornaya Neblagodorzhnost" ("Black ingratitude"). In other words, she was indignant that the Soviets had given the Chinese billions of rubles in aid when, after World War II, the Russians were so down and out, and "Look what the Chinese have done to us," and so forth. Feelings like this ran very deep.

Q: What were you getting in terms of what the Cultural Revolution was about, at that particular point?

BROWN: Of course, I was getting information on the Cultural Revolution from American and European sources. I got the Chinese version of what they were saying about themselves. I was getting a deliberately distorted Soviet version of events in China. I was in touch with the Japanese, French, and British Embassies.

Q: At that time the French had just recently opened relations with communist China. Of course, the British had always maintained their embassy in Beijing. The Yugoslavs also had their embassies in both Moscow and Beijing. Sometimes it was a little difficult to understand the

reason for the Cultural Revolution. We now understand that it was Mao Tse-tung trying to tear everything down and start all over again.

BROWN: Yes. This reminds me of something else. It was in Moscow that I received a pitch, if you will, a real feeler from a Mongolian. This was interesting, very interesting. He was from "MONSANTE," which was their equivalent of "TASS," the official news agency. I don't recall exactly how it started, but somehow this guy accidentally bumped into me at a reception, or something like that. He said, "Look, I'd like to get together with you. I'd like to have you over to my apartment." His kids were wearing the kind of clothes that my daughters were wearing. You know, high collared boots and mini-mini skirts. [Laughter] They wanted hi-fi and so forth. He said to me quietly: "You know, don't you think that it's time to open up diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Mongolia? After all, look at the crazy things that are happening in China. You know how we feel."

I dutifully reported this conversation. Nothing came of it immediately, but something was to come of it later on. This was a feeler.

Q: I think that when President Kennedy first came into office...

BROWN: As I said before, J. Stapleton Roy and Curt Cameron, both distinguished American diplomats, were given Mongolian language training at the FSI [Foreign Service Institute], or through the FSI, in the United States. However, nothing happened. Now, I'm speaking of 1967 or 1968, I got this feeler from this Mongolian guy a couple of times. It was abundantly clear that this was a directed feeler for U.S. recognition of Mongolia. However, Washington had other things on its mind at this point. In any case, this stuck with me, and it had a direct relevance later on.

Q: How about Soviet relations with India at this particular time? We'll get to India later on, but...

BROWN: The Indians were warming up in their relationship with the Soviet Union at this time. You have to remember, and we'll talk about this later, India had suffered a horrible, humiliating defeat in the Himalayan War with China of 1962. The war was short and very sharp, and the Indians were thoroughly humiliated up in those high mountain engagements. The Indian Army was not a mountain Army. The units of the PLA [People's Liberation Army] which faced the Indians were a mountain Army.

Secondly, there was continuing tension between India and Pakistan. Pakistan was increasingly linked with China.

Thirdly, Mme. Indira Gandhi had come to the fore as Prime Minister. I think that she was a graduate of the London School of Economics [LSE]. Whatever else you want to call it, it tended to be a Fabian Socialist type of institution. Mme. Gandhi had a soft spot, to put it mildly, for the Soviet Union. This was infuriating to President Lyndon Johnson. On the one hand she was taking hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars in U.S. aid. At the same time she was transiting Moscow and making increasingly critical statements about U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, and what

she called colonialism, and so forth. She made these statements at a podium in Moscow, obviously aimed at us. The Johnson administration was understandably furious with Mme. Gandhi. This was another thing that made New Delhi sort of spicy as a place to serve.

Q: By the way, the French, had rather recently arrived on the China scene. I think that this was in the period of the mid-1960s. Did the French seem to be getting anything out of their contacts with China?

BROWN: A little bit, but remember that, like all Western Embassies, they were terribly restricted. Their embassy had been opened fairly recently. They really didn't pick up much from the Chinese. I can't remember specific details, but the French were appalled, as all of us were, at what was going on in China, in human terms. Yet France was conscious, like all of our NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] partners, of the enormous Soviet threat and the fact that there was some utility in having a relationship with the People's Republic of China.

Q: By the way, speaking of the Soviet threat, when did you leave Moscow in 1968?

BROWN: I think that I left Moscow in the spring or early summer of 1968.

Q: Was Czechoslovakia playing any role by the time you left Moscow?

BROWN: That raises a fascinating question. The Prague Spring was in full spate as I was getting ready to leave Moscow. It was a remarkable thing, locally, to see the reactions among Czech diplomats.

My wife and I had an argument at the time. She said, "The Soviets are going to invade Czechoslovakia." I said, "Now, Helen, you have to realize that there are enormous stakes here." The Soviets had just celebrated the 50th anniversary of the communist revolution, and there was a great spell of brotherhood, and so forth. Obviously, the Soviets were very unhappy about what was going on in Czechoslovakia and how it could impact elsewhere in Eastern Europe, including Poland and elsewhere. I said to my wife: "Granted all of that, but I can't imagine that the Soviets would invade Czechoslovakia at this time." She said, "Well, you may be the expert, but I'm telling you that the Soviets are going to invade Czechoslovakia!"

I remember one foggy night in Moscow, coming home after midnight after a very late social function. Suddenly there appeared, overtaking my car, a very strange, military vehicle. It was one of these large armored cars. It was not a tank track vehicle. It had a great, white stripe painted down the back. It appeared and then it was quickly gone. I said to myself: "I just wonder whether there is some sort of maneuver going on that might have some relevance to Eastern Europe." Naturally, I reported this incident to our Defense Attaché. They grilled me and so forth, but I told the Defense Attaché that I did not think that the Soviets were going to invade Czechoslovakia.

WILLIAM J. DYESS

**Assistant Administrative Officer
Moscow (1966-1968)**

Ambassador William J. Dyess was born in Alabama in 1929. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Alabama. He served in the U.S. Army from 1953-1956 and entered the Foreign Service in 1958. His career included positions in Belgrade, Copenhagen, Moscow, and Berlin, and an ambassadorship to The Netherlands. Ambassador Dyess was interviewed by Charles Taber on March 29, 1989.

Q: You went to Moscow and were there from 1966 to 1968.

DYESS: At the time, Copenhagen was a stopping-off place for the American ambassador, so Foy Kohler was by there a couple of times. I told him that I wanted to study Russian and I wanted to go there. I guess he asked around Copenhagen. Anyhow, the first thing I knew, I got Russian language training. I came back and I was back here for a year for Russian language training. Then I went to Moscow and Ford Cola was there. He was there for about a better part of a year and then Tommy Thompson came back for his second tour. I was there only two years. At that time, that was the standard tour. We have since lengthened it, but then it was a standard tour.

Q: Was that a tough job? Was it difficult doing business there?

DYESS: I found it difficult to live there because I found the place terribly oppressive. The first year was almost a repeat of my experience in Belgrade. I wanted to be in the political section, but I went there as the Assistant Administrative Officer.

The assistant administrative officer in Moscow at that time -- I don't know how it is now -- was a language officer. He was usually a political officer. He could be an economic officer, but usually he was a political officer who dealt with the Soviets to keep the embassy alive. You had to go to the Soviets for everything, for theater tickets, travel, just everything. It's not like any other place that I think you and I might ever live or hope to live. You had to go through the UPDK (*uprovlennia po diplomaticheskoi korpusu*), as they call it, the Soviet administration.

So I dealt with the Soviets and I felt that I was wasting my time at first. My boss, Sandy Menter, who's a good friend -- we've been friends for many years -- belonged to the poker circle that Tommy Thompson had. For me to be down on the ground floor doing the administrative work when all the political types were well above us. Like I told Sandy one time, it's like being out in Las Vegas and being out front checking the bags, helping people get settled in the hotels, while you can hear the roulette wheels spinning inside, the cards being shuffled, and so on. You feel you're missing the action. I was missing the action.

I was wrong again. For my level, it was the best job that I could have had in Moscow because I got to see inside the Soviet bureaucracy. I was the only one who did at this time because relations were not particularly tight. We were not in the thaw. I was looking inside. I could see how the Soviet bureaucracy operated. For instance, we needed a new elevator in the embassy and there was a Soviet official who ordered the elevator without clearing it with us. We did not want

the Soviets to put in this elevator. We wanted it to be American because we knew they would use the opportunity to bug the embassy. I fought with this guy for months and months and months. We came to very harsh words. Finally, one day I knew I had won because I went over to call him again delivering a new protest over, and I learned that this particular Soviet engineer had been transferred. I knew the thing was over. They gave it up and they had an elevator which they could never use because they couldn't put it in any other hole. It was built expressly for that particular shaft.

I dealt with the Soviets a lot and that was a very useful thing to do. When I became a political officer, subsequently, I did very little. I went over to the Foreign Ministry a few times and took notes and so on. Basically, all I did was what the other political officers did which was to sit there and translate the press, which you could do back here in this country. So it was the first job that was the good job at that time.

Q: I guess that's often true. As you say, the consular job, the administrative job can often get you wider and broader contacts.

DYESS: Particularly if you are a new officer, and almost certainly if the society is not an open society, if it tends to be closed at all.

Q: Svetlana defected maybe while you were there in 1967.

DYESS: Yes, she did. It was a very touchy thing. I guess about the most interesting thing that I did in the Soviet Union, other than my official work, was making contact with artists. You see, these are mostly Russian paintings here -- avant garde, underground. We got to know a number of artists and bought things from them, and went to the theater, went to museums looking for little pieces of protest. At one time it looked as if Khrushchev was going to raise the curtain a little bit. It was a thaw. Some of these paintings were exhibited, but they didn't stay up very long. They were taken down. It was clamped down again. I followed this community and, as I say, I had some friends there, but tried never to play games with the Soviet authorities. I traveled a fair amount and we were always tailed, but again I tried not to -- with one exception where we did play a game. But I tried never to play games. We would just let them go with us.

The only time my wife and I played, we were down in Tbilisi and they just had their new subway system installed. We thought we'd take a ride on it. We got on -- it was very, very cold -- and we rode from the city out to the outskirts in the suburbs. Then it comes out from under the ground and it's on top -- elevated system like ours here in Washington. We were being followed. We got out and crossed under to the other side to go back in town, because all we wanted to do was just to ride on this thing. This guy followed us over. The train pulled up, and everybody got on. To this day I don't know why I did it, but I didn't get on. I stepped back at the last minute and pulled my wife back. That poor guy had to step back. The train pulled out and we went to the end of the platform where there was a little glass enclosure. We stood inside this glass enclosure waiting for the next train which must have been 20 minutes away. That poor soul was having to stand out on the platform freezing to death. He was not in adequate clothing. He just had to wait. Finally, the train came and we did the same thing again. Then we got on. He got on and he sat down. So we sat down right across from him. Everybody in the car was looking at us, staring at us, staring at

our clothes, our shoes. The shoes are the way they tell that you're a foreigner. Everybody was staring at us except this one guy, and he couldn't look at us. He was looking at everything else in the car but us. I have about a dozen stories about being followed, but I never played a game except for that one. I wished I hadn't done it because, if you play games with them, they can get angry with you and make it unpleasant.

JONATHAN B. RICKERT
Staff Aide to the Ambassador
Moscow (1966-1968)

Jonathan Rickert was born and raised in Washington, DC and educated at Princeton and Yale Universities. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963, serving tours in both Washington and abroad. His foreign posts include London, Moscow, Port au Spain, Sofia and Bucharest, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. In his Washington assignments Mr. Rickert dealt primarily with Eastern and Central European Affairs. Mr. Rickert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Well you had mentioned before that Ambassador Foy Kohler had selected you to be staff aide in Moscow in the Department. The assumption was that he would still be there. Was he there when you finished your tour in London and did you go to that position or did you do something else in Moscow?

RICKERT: He was still there but his departure was already scheduled. So, in October of '66, I transferred to Moscow and I had about two weeks with the Kohlers and my predecessor, Richard McCormick, and then there was a fairly brief interregnum – a couple of months, six weeks or so – over the Christmas holidays and then Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson came in January of '67.

Q: And you were then his staff aide?

RICKERT: So I was his staff aide as you probably know, at that time, and *still* in one form or another, the Ambassador's staff aide lives in the Ambassador's residence, Spaso House. I lived in what was a two-room apartment on the ground floor where it had previously been the billiard room, and an attached bedroom that's been expanded and other facilities had been added since then. But, I was very much a member of the family. I had two meals a day with the Ambassador and his wife and three daughters – not breakfast, but the other two meals. If they were out, obviously not, but in principle, two meals a day for which I paid. We had an arranged schedule, a payment, and I was, in effect, the live-in GSO [General Services Officer] at Spaso House as well as I was responsible for the staff of 17 which included three Italians, two Chinese Communists and a bunch of Russians. The Chinese are interesting. They were technically Chinese Communists. These are two gentlemen named Tang and Chin who were brought by journalists as house boys to Moscow – an American journalist – around 1940 or so. Then the journalist left and they couldn't go back to China for one reason or another. They both married Russian women and

they got employment with the embassy.

Q: In the early post-war period or ... ?

RICKERT: Well, I think during the war. I'm not sure exactly when. They're mentioned by George Kennan. He devotes a page to them in one of the volumes of his memoirs. They were both there when I arrived. But Chin was suffering from terminal cancer and died shortly thereafter. I was responsible for arranging for a burial in the local cemetery. His widow didn't want him to have an autopsy, for reasons which I didn't know, which was standard procedure in Moscow at that time. And it was difficult for the American embassy to request the Soviets not to perform an autopsy on him – an officially Chinese Communist. But we did do a diplomatic note, which was the first diplomatic note I ever wrote, which asked on behalf of the former American embassy employee that they not do an autopsy and they didn't require the autopsy.

The funeral – Russian style – the coffin was placed on a flat bed truck and driven to the cemetery. It was in the winter, it was snowing; it was like something out of a Russian movie. In a very dignified but unceremonious; it was placed in the ground and covered over with no ceremony at all. Nearby, I remember there was a Soviet burial taking place with an off-key brass band and long speeches about the comrade and all that he had done for the cause. It wasn't the way I would want it, but that's the way it was done in those days.

Q: Now, in addition to basically being the manager of this household staff and taking care of problems in residences that had occurred, you had other duties, too, in the chancellery, the embassy, in the ambassador's office or did somebody else do much of that?

RICKERT: Well, I did have other duties but Ambassador Thompson didn't use a staff aide the way some other people would. I did a lot of protocol stuff, guest lists and arrangements for events and served as a form of communication with the embassy staff. But on substance, he did not use me directly. As time went on – I was there for two years – I kind of latched onto the clerical section and was able to get some additional duties, which in those days in Moscow was a lot of reading of the press and reporting of what was in the press, and I did some of that. But I didn't do a great deal for Ambassador Thompson other than the things we already mentioned.

Q: It seems to me that in this period there was often a rotation program. I know of officers about this time who went to Oberammergau and then came to Moscow and often they would start in the GSO section and then go in to the political section. So there'd be a rule, sort of an organized rotation. You really didn't do that.

RICKERT: No. I know exactly what you're speaking of and many of my friends and colleagues did that. Usually, many of the tours were two years – well they were virtually all two year tours – but one spent in one section and one in another. There were jobs in admin that were often the first year. There were jobs in consular that often were the first year. There were two jobs in an unusual section. It's known through all of Moscow – it was the publication procuring office. Two FSOs who did that would do it for a year. It was a lot of traveling and somewhat difficult, wearing work and then they moved on to the political section or the econ section or some other part of the embassy. So, many of my colleagues and friends did do that. I did not. My job was

unusual in almost every respect in comparison to the other jobs that existed at the embassy at that time.

Q: Did you get involved with visitors much?

RICKERT: Yes. That was actually one of the most enjoyable things about the job because there were a lot of very interesting people who used to come, and many of them stayed in the Spaso House. The most interesting was, of course, Richard Nixon, who came and stayed for about five, six days at Spaso House. I had a chance to meet and talk with him, which was very interesting.

Q: At this time he was out of ... ?

RICKERT: He was gearing up for his successful run for the presidency.

Q: In '68?

RICKERT: In '67. Well, this was in '67 but he ran in the '68 election.

There are some interesting things that happened there internationally that are worthy of note. The Soviets decided – by everything I could tell – that he was a “has-been” and they did not pay any attention to him. He had no official appointments, although he asked for them. He asked to meet with his old nemesis Khrushchev, of course, that I understand, but that was not permitted. No Soviet official of any standing saw him. As a result, Ambassador Thompson had to try to keep him occupied and he did two things that I recall. One was a reception for the foreign and American press corps at Spaso House, which was sort of a press conference. There was a lot of skepticism among the press as to whether Nixon was going to be there.

After he lost the election for governor in California, then they sent him out to Central Asia for sight seeing on the trip to various places, to raise his profile as an international expert. The Russians were doing nothing to help him. From Moscow, he went to Bucharest. In Bucharest, Nicolae Ceausescu treated him as if he were sitting president. As we'll see later on, that paid off, because the first visit that President Nixon made to a Warsaw-Pact country was not to Poland, not to the Soviet Union, but to Bucharest, Romania, with consequences that in various ways are still being felt. But I think that the Soviets missed that treating him as an important political figure. They wouldn't have had to give him – not royal treatment but – he was still a significant person and they must have calculated that whatever intention he gave them, whatever they gave him, might assist him in his bid to become president which they didn't want to do. The Romanians bet on a long shot and cashed in big. So that was one.

Other people who came during that time were McGeorge Bundy and his wife – they came and stayed at Spaso House.

Q: He was still ... no longer National Security Advisor ...

RICKERT: No. He was ... out. The McNamaras came. Robert and Laura McNamara came, and I ended up being his tour guide in Moscow for a couple of days. The Thompsons were away at

that time and he had the courtesy of staying, and he knew that he was allowed to stay at the residence. George Romney came ... kind of a feeler-bit for his presidential attempt. On the diplomatic side, Chip Bohlen came for a visit.

Q: Former ambassador?

RICKERT: He was former ambassador. I think he was in Paris as ambassador. Of course, Ford Collins was there when I arrived. And Opportune came on a visit. He was the office director. Charles Faire, a former diplomat who had lived in Spaso House, had been a colleague of Ambassador Thompson's during WWII. Katherine Graham came, Susan Mary Althaus, Martha Schlesinger, Robert Ellsworth – he came with Nixon and was later to be ambassador to Brussels and was sort of an aide to Nixon. Carl Kaysen, who had been at Kennedy's white house who was then director of the institute for advanced study in Princeton. Sol Hurok came. Lillian Hellman, Dinah Shore and of course, Anatoly Dobrynin came for meals occasionally. Gunnar Jarring, he was the Swedish Ambassador and you probably know from his ... He was one of the early Cyprus mediators under the UN, perhaps the first.

Q: ... and very much involved in the Middle-East also, with the United Nations.

RICKERT: Yes. He was a very distinguished Swedish Ambassador to Washington. My about-to-become-wife worked for his embassy, so I got to know him and his colleagues, but that comes a little bit later.

So there were a lot of interesting people who showed up. In many cases I was involved with taking them sightseeing and showing them around. I spoke Russian, and I usually spoke reasonably well, and that was one of the little perks of the job. There's one little Sol Hurok story I'd like to tell. He came to lunch one day. He gave his definition of U.S.-Soviet cultural exchanges. It's not a correct one, but it's amusing anyway, and in his definition was the following. He said: "They send us their Jewish violinists from Odessa, we send them *our* Jewish violinists from Odessa." He had a nice sense of humor.

Q: What would you say about the general state of U.S.-Soviet relations in this period that you were there?

RICKERT: It was difficult because of primarily Vietnam. Llewellyn Thompson had been sent to Moscow – I would have to say, by all appearances, somewhat against his will by President Johnson – to negotiate an _____ treaty. Thompson was extraordinarily closed-mouthed on that. I knew nothing of what was going on with those negotiations, as was appropriate. I had no need to know. But that's what he spent his time doing on those afternoons when he was away from the office. But the cloud of Vietnam hung over everything. And then, of course, in August 1968, there was another event in Prague which complicated things from our side. So, I wouldn't say that relations were openly hostile, but there was a considerable reserve. I would speculate that the fairly new Soviet leadership, which was Kosygin and Brezhnev at that time, also was still consolidating itself. There was still some movement and jockeying and being a leader in the Soviet Union was not a job with a guaranteed tenure. So, there may be that there was some absorption and seeing where the chips would fall there as well. Eventually Brezhnev ended up

being the unchallenged leader and remained so for a number of years, but in the late 60s it wasn't quite so clear yet.

Q: Who was the DCM there?

RICKERT: The first DCM was John Guthrie, a very interesting fellow. He was there for the first year. He had been teaching in Japan when WWII broke and spent WWII digging Japanese coal mines and learned Japanese. He was requested by Emory Swank, who was there for the second year. They're both very nice and good professionals.

Q: Okay, anything else we should say about your assignment to Moscow from 1966 to 1968? When in '68 did you leave?

RICKERT: I left in ... oh, that would have been in summer of '68.

Q: So you were there during the Prague ... difficulties? Prague spring and what followed.

RICKERT: Yes. That summer was, of course, a very uneasy one. In the earlier part of that summer, there was great speculation that the Soviets would invade. I remember we had one USIA officer at post of Czech origin named Jaroslav Verner, Jerry Verner, who followed all this with great interest and anxiety. Because he had a personal stake, it seemed, in the good things that were happening under Dubcek and was obviously dismayed when things went bad.

But, later in the summer, it seemed as though the situation had stabilized, so the attack on August 21st of '68, came as a surprise. In fact, the evening before, I had met a Swedish diplomat friend and spent the evening playing tennis at the Czechoslovak Embassy – they have their own court – with two Czech diplomats and a Swedish friend, Loserich Greendale. Somebody invited me to play doubles, and then we went in to the embassy and drank some Czech beer and the two diplomats gave no indication at all that anything untoward was about to happen. But the next morning, or during that night, the tanks rolled and the next morning it was in the press.

There are a lot of incidents that happened in Russia that were of interest, to me at least. Some of them had to do with Ambassador Thompson, and I recorded those in a separate memo which I can provide. One of Thompson's daughters told me that she wants to write a book about her father and I collected several pages of recollections of my days with him. I could provide them.

Q: Well I'd suggest that we'd append this to your oral history transcript. I don't think we necessarily need to repeat all of that here if you have it recorded.

RICKERT: I have it written down, and I've even added to it occasionally as I recall other things. Memory's a tricky thing and sometimes out of nowhere an incident or an event will pop up; one I've forgotten for a long time. So, it's in my computer and I just added something the other day that I thought of.

There are a lot of interesting things that happened that didn't involve Ambassador Thompson. I travel a lot in the country, which was a fascinating experience. In those days, you have to get

permission from the government organ that was responsible for the caring, feeding and oversight of foreigners.

Q: Foreigners in general or foreign diplomats?

RICKERT: I suspect ... well, certainly foreign diplomats. Probably there were other branches of the KGB that took care of other foreigners. But in order to travel anywhere... One must recall that from Moscow, there was a 25 mile radius beyond which one couldn't go without permission, except for certain designated routes. One could drive to Leningrad. There was a route south that one could go on for a certain distance, but any other travel had to be approved. The travel plan had to be submitted 48 hours in advance, and they issued the tickets and made the hotel reservations so you could always be sure that you got a room that had electronics. This made a lot of trips impossible. I was in demand for travel because a lot of people did travel, and we had to travel in pairs for security reasons. I was single, so people often asked me to join in on consular trips and I made a consular trip to Kursk with Bill Farrand. He and I went to Kursk, the site of the greatest tank battle of all time. When two American women were injured in a car accident, this consular officer at the time went down to provide consular support, but he had to have someone to go with him, and I was selected. I visited, one way or another, a lot of places.

There was a lot of concern about attempts to compromise American diplomats by the KGB. The honey-trap was the most famous and much talked about – the only time that I had an experience with that particular approach. It was in the metropolis of Ufah and there was a publications procurement trip with, probably Bill Price, a very nice fellow ...

Q: I know him.

RICKERT: ... and a wonderful traveling companion. He was the Publications Procurement Officer, and I was shot-gun with him. We went to Ufah, and we went around, and we went to the bookstores and bought things, and then we went to the only hotel that was fit for foreigners, I suppose – only barely so – and had dinner. We sat down in a big empty dining room with a rather pathetic combo, nothing in front, playing music badly. As we sat there and ordered our dinner, two young Russian guys came over and said, which is common in the Soviet – was common in the Soviet Union – anyway, they said, “you mind if we join you?” There were a lot of empty tables. We said no and they sat there and spoke to each other in Russian and we spoke to each other in English and one of them said, “Do you speak Russian?” And we said yes, and then the conversation started.

I think they were legit. They were recent university graduates who had been sent to Ufah – they're engineers – to do some form of national service. They were bored to tears and very curious about the outside world. We talked about all sorts of things. The Kennedy assassination – they were convinced that it was the work of Lyndon Johnson, because he was the one who benefited from it, so who else could it have been ... and other things of that sort. They wanted to know about the United States. But we were sitting there and talking very amiably and drinking vodka and two young ladies came over and one of them said to me and Bill, they said, “My friend and I have been listening to you and you speak such excellent Russian but we can't tell ... are you Czech or are you Polish?” And we said no, we're Americans. “Oh, _____

_____ [unintelligible Russian]” They went on and on, and we tried to ignore them, but they didn’t go away. So eventually they said, “Could we sit down with you?” One sat next to me, and the other next to Bill. We really kind of ignored them in the conversation, but one of them sitting next to me finally leaned over and started whispering and said, “This is such a fascinating conversation, why don’t we go to my room and continue it?” I pretended that I didn’t understand or hear and then she tried it again and it became impossible not to respond. I had a stroke of vodka-fueled genius, and I said to her in terms that she would certainly understand that Bill, who looked a little older than I did, I said: “Do you see that man over there? He’s my boss and I can’t do anything without his permission.” She made a half-hearted attempt on Bill, which got nowhere, and that was the end of that.

Q: [chuckle]

RICKERT: [chuckle] But, there were things like that which happened.

Q: The requirement to travel with another officer, another American, was an embassy requirement?

RICKERT: That’s correct. That’s correct. While we were there, one of our military attachés, who was traveling with his British colleague, was drugged and put in a compromising position for photographs and that sort of thing. These things did happen, so it wasn’t just some fairytale. These kinds of things did happen. People did have approaches of varying degrees of seriousness.

Q: Okay, anything else we should say about your assignment in Moscow?

RICKERT: One of the things I had to do as staff aide was keep track of the provisions in liquid and solid. When I took over the job, the store room in Spaso House I had to make an inventory. Everything in it was sold by Ambassador Kohler to Ambassador Thompson. I found that there were five bottles of rye whiskey there, and I didn’t know what they were for. Eventually I found out that they had been bought for John Foster Dulles, who drank rye whiskey, when he was Secretary of State. It was expected before the Gary Powers incident, the U2 incident, that they’d be coming to Moscow. Someone had gotten the whiskey for him. Why he needed five bottles, I don’t know, but I suppose that was just being cautious. But they were still on the inventory and being sold from one ambassador to the other, untouched.

Q: Six years after or so. [laugh]

RICKERT: Yes, that’s right. They may still be there, for all I know. Russia was fascinating. The Seven Day War took place while I was there. I recall walking down the street in Moscow, just as that was going on, and hearing someone blasting from a window in June, I think, so it was warm and sunny. They were blasting out the window on the biggest loud speakers that person could muster. It was the theme song from Exodus. Russians that I spoke to at the time said, “Why is it that we always end up backing the scum bags?” Or Russian words to that effect. They were not very fond of Arabs and Muslims and other people that they found themselves aligned with.

Q: Did you know of Russian Jews of that period during your ... ?

RICKERT: No, I didn't. This was before. Of course, in the '60s, embassy people kept very close. They had good relations with the outstanding Russian Jewish dissidents. There were a few old friends of the Thompsons who may have been Jewish, but that was incidental. They were Russians first, Jewish second, and some of the later ones became Zionists and more open to being willing to declare their Jewish background.

Q: Now Llewellyn Thompson had served in Moscow once before?

RICKERT: Twice.

Q: Twice before.

RICKERT: He'd been there in WWII. Then he'd been ambassador in the late '50s.

Q: Oh, this was his second time as ambassador?

RICKERT: Second tour as ambassador, which I think, in part, accounts for the lack of overwhelming enthusiasm in which he approached the job. I don't even imply for a moment that he wasn't totally and completely dedicated, but I think if he had his choice, he might have been in some place else at that particular stage in his life.

A couple of other things: Going to Easter services and Christmas services in Zagorsk, which was then the head of the Orthodox Church, the name has changed to something else. The cathedrals in Moscow were always very interesting in an officially Atheist country. There was a lot more attachment, at least to the outward signs of religion, than I would have expected. People said it's only old women, but on those occasions you would see quite a range of ages and even of social classes. You saw some people who were clearly not peasants or workers. That struck me. Of course, since 1989, there has been something of a revival of the Orthodox Church in Russia, not to mention the appearance of other churches which existed, like Baptist and others, but were extremely carefully monitored.

Going back to the household staff at Moscow for a moment ... The elderly Chinese gentlemen who didn't die, who was named Tang, had difficulties seeing. When he was outside of Spaso House he wore glasses, but he refused to wear them in the house. We asked him why, and we said he should wear glasses, and he said, "No, only the master can wear glasses in the house." He knew how to serve, and all the things that he needed to do – although he had been superseded as the senior butler by an Italian named Clemente. One of the best pieces of advice that Dick McCormick gave me before he left was, "Never allow Tang to serve white wine by candle light." Because he'd miss the glass, and I did see that on occasion. The other thing that Tang did was to keep water for mixing in drinks like whiskey and water in gin bottles. But, on at least one occasion, he mixed up the gin bottle with water and poured a mixture of gin and scotch, which wasn't quite well received.

Q: Okay, I think we probably ought to stop at this point, Jonathan. It's about the time that we had agreed on. We'll pick up next time with any last words about Moscow and go on to your next

assignment okay?

RICKERT: Okay, sounds fine.

Q: Thank you.

We're picking up the oral history interview with Jonathan Rickert at the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. My name is Raymond Ewing. It's the 26th of September, 2003. Now when we stopped last time, we were just about finished with the assignment – it was your second overseas assignment to the embassy in Moscow – you may not remember exactly everything you said nine months ago, but is there everything particularly important that you would want to mention and we'll go on to the following assignment.

RICKERT: Well thank you, I'm glad to be back and to be picking up where we left off. I don't recall exactly how far we got in to Moscow but the one thing that I need to mention and I believe I did not mention back in December was the fact that I met my wife-to-be in Moscow in January of 1968. We became engaged that summer and married eventually. It's important because the personal aspect of foreign service life is of equal importance to the professional, and also because, since my wife is from Sweden and was working at the Swedish embassy at the time we met. It's one we'll see through the ensuing chapters of this great saga. I have been to Sweden many times without knowing enough that would make some sense, but in any case, we're still married after 35 years, which is unfortunately not the case with all of our contemporaries.

WILLIAM T. PRYCE
Publications Procurement Officer
Moscow (1966-1968)

Born in California and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Pryce was educated at Wesleyan University and the Fletcher School of Tufts University. After service in the US Navy he worked briefly for the Department of Commerce before joining the Foreign Service in 1958. Though primarily a Latin America specialist, Mr. Pryce also served in Moscow. His Latin America assignments include Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, Bolivia and Honduras, where he was Ambassador from 1992-1996. Ambassador Pryce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

PRYCE: I knew that I was going to Moscow and I knew that my first job would be as a publications procurement officer. I don't remember when I knew that. You trained to a slot. Not everyone in the class knew where they were going but I think most of us did. At least three of us were going to Moscow at the same time, another junior officer, myself and a USIS officer.

Q: You got to Moscow in '66?

PRYCE: I got to Moscow in the summer of '66.

Q: You were there until when?

PRYCE: I was there until the summer of '68. My first year was as the publications procurement officer which was a wonderful job.

Q: I understand it got you all over the place.

PRYCE: It got you all over the place.

Q: Can you explain what the publications procurement officer did?

PRYCE: I would go around and buy books that were supposed to be available easily, either through exchanges or on the open market, to satisfy the needs of various government agencies back in Washington. The Library of Congress had an exchange with the Lenin Libraries but they were never getting the books that they needed so basically you would go out and buy them in bookstores. There were a whole series of government agencies that were interested in these books. You would go around and make the rounds of the stores in Moscow and then in various other cities buying everything from physical abstracts to modern poetry. I remember that one of the hardest books to get and what everybody wanted quickly was, for example, when they would come out with an edition of Voznesensky, the poet, or Yevtushenko.

Q: Yes, they weren't completely in bed with the regime.

PRYCE: That's right. They were somewhat independent and slightly avant-garde. Everybody wanted to read the book as soon as they could and find out how many copies there were. You actually made sort of, how shall I say it, friendly acquaintanceships with the people at the bookstores who for example often had quotas to meet. You would go around at the end of the month, you knew that you had a number of books that people would be interested in, and buy at the end of the month to help them fill their quota. It also helped them have a friendly attitude so that when, for example, the Yevtushenko book came in they would save a copy or two for you because there was a tremendous demand.

As I say it was a challenge, it was hard work. You went out, you bought these books, you came back, you were visiting other cities, you wrapped them up, took them back and put them in the basement of the embassy. Once every two weeks or so you would go down and sort out the books that you had bought and decide who needed them. It was interesting because you didn't have much time so you had to go in and look at the titles, make a quick judgment as to whether it would be interesting for someone. For example you might get a book that looked like a very interesting treatise on physics but it might just be a textbook. You didn't have that much time so you'd say well it's probably interesting so I'll buy three copies. I can remember being down there sorting out books and saying gee whiz, I wish I had bought more copies of this or why did I buy ten copies of this and who can I send it to?

It really opened up the country because you had to try to get around and go to various cities. One of the interesting things was it was difficult to get to travel because there were three different

way that the Soviet government would keep people from traveling. One, you had to send a formal diplomatic note two full working days ahead of time requesting permission to travel. We always said we didn't need permission so we would send a note informing them of our intention to travel but they could call back and say we are sorry but you can't go to this or that city. That was one way to block us. The second way is that you had to get airplane tickets to get to these places and sometimes they would say we're sorry but there are no tickets. You also needed a hotel room and sometimes there were no hotel rooms. Then there were a number of times when the city was closed and I can remember that there was a phrase that you heard so often which was the city of Kiev is closed for reasons of a temporary nature. It might be there were troop movements, tanks were going through or whatever it was.

I can also remember that there were times when you visited one of these cities, let's say Kazan. You'd get there and you'd get to four or five bookstores and word would get out, the Amerikanski are here and all of a sudden the stores would close. I can remember there were all kinds of reasons why these bookstores were closed. Zakrit was the Russian for closed and one of the reasons was zakrit chot, that means it was closed for audit, or zakrit savital [inaudible] (*Russian word*) which means that it was closed for sanitary day, it was their day to mop the floors. There was a little game of cat and mouse situation.

Q: I assume you would go on these, as was our practice, always with somebody else?

PRYCE: That's right, you always traveled with somebody else. We were harassed at times, yes. You would be followed, often closely and sometimes not. It was interesting. One of the things that a young book clerk would sometimes joke about was they would say "stovash druiip," who's your friend, the person behind you. Some of these guys were so ham handed, some of these KGB agents, they would be reading books upside down watching what you were doing. They made attempts at seduction. They were difficult at times and it was sometimes difficult but you never were, at least I was never physically abused. Some of the military attachés at times were. You were followed and sometimes had a difficult time.

Q: What was your impression outside of Moscow of the Soviet Union?

PRYCE: For one thing it was and in many ways still is, in many parts of the Soviet Union underdeveloped and there was a thin veneer of sophistication both economic and cultural. The Soviets tried to keep people from seeing what was really happening in the countryside. They had an Intourist system of special hotels, special trains, special everything which insulated the country from foreigners. They didn't want the foreigners to understand what conditions were really like and they didn't want their own people to interact with foreigners.

The system often broke down in small towns. For example there were never enough restaurants to go around so in those days you didn't have a table to yourself. You would go into a restaurant and you'd sit down and if there were places at the table someone unknown to you might come down and sit down because they needed a seat. Often with us they would come over and put a little American flag at your table so that nobody would come and sit with you. We often just sort of left that flag and sat at some other table. You got to know people for a temporary period of time.

I would say that the Russians, the Moldavians, almost the Latvians and Lithuanians and the Gurdezies all were fairly friendly people. The people themselves had a great admiration for the United States. We tried to get to know any Soviets which was very, very difficult. We tried to do as we tried to get to know our counterparts at the Foreign Office. I learned that you could never invite one person from any office because they would never come. They always had to come in pairs. For example in the Foreign Ministry it had to be two people from the exact same office. You couldn't invite someone from the Americas section.

In fact when I moved out of the book buying business and into the political section I was responsible for U.S. bilateral relations which meant I was the low man on the totem pole. I was the low man on the totem pole but I also handled the Middle East and Latin America. If you invited somebody from the Americas section and somebody from the Middle East section they wouldn't come. You had to invite two people from the same section and one person would come and talk and the other person would sit in the corner and just watch. It wasn't always the same person; sometimes they would switch. It was really a repressive regime.

I had a friend that was obviously passed on to me by the ambassador's former aide whose job it was to keep tabs on me. I was his subject. I knew who he was and I knew he was a KGB agent reporting. He had some cover job and he could get plane tickets when other people couldn't. He would invite you to his house once in a while. I'm not sure it was his house or some house set up for him. It was again a cat and mouse game but you could get individual impressions of Soviets especially when you traveled because they couldn't control always. You could often sit on a plane with somebody temporarily where you could get a real conversation and the feeling of the Soviets.

Q: What was the interest of the Soviet citizen that you talked to in the United States?

PRYCE: One, they were very, very interested in what our economy was like. They obviously had been given a lot of propaganda. They were wondering what a capitalist economy did with poor people. They were always interested in what happened to minorities. They were also interested in music, culture and in the ability to have free thought and discussion; there was a great deal of interest in that. There was also as I say really a positive attitude toward the United States. I remember at one point, I think it was in Yerevan or maybe Baku...

Q: You're talking down in the Caucasus?

PRYCE: Yes, in the Caucasus. ...being taken to a museum of World War II and the guide made of special point of saying "Won't you please come back to the back part of the museum. There is a little area that shows a siege." And he says "Look at that truck, it's a Studebaker." They remembered Lend-Lease where the United States had supplies they had given to the Soviet Union during World War II.

Q: When you were down in the Caucasus or in the Kyrgyz or Kazakhs or other places, were you picking up any reflections of it's them and us with us being the Kazakhs and them being the Russians?

PRYCE: Oh yes, very definitely, very clearly. That's one of the things that we were trying to observe. Most of the top positions in all of the governments were held by Russians and that was resented by the local populace. There was very clearly the feeling that it was them and us. In the Baltic republics, Latvians and Lithuanians, but also certainly in the Caucasus and to a lesser degree in the Ukraine, Belorussia and in the far east, you really had people who to them the Soviet Union, and Moscow, was a distant place and almost a foreign country.

Q: Did you find that you were treating the Baltic countries, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, differently because we've never really recognized the Soviet occupation of those? Was there a different approach even at your level?

PRYCE: Not really, no. There was a recognition that many of the people in those republics resented, more than most, Soviet domination. People would tell you frankly, "I have to speak Russian and I have to work with the Soviet bureaucracy or I won't get anywhere." There was a resentment again that most of the senior officials in those countries were Russian as opposed to Lithuanians, Latvians or Estonians.

Q: When you arrived in the Soviet Union our ambassador was Llewellyn Thompson, is that right?

PRYCE: No, I think when I arrived it was Foy Kohler.

Q: What were you picking up as sort of the junior officer and brand new there, what our attitude towards what the situation was in the Soviet Union at that time and the threat of the Soviet Union? What was the feel of what it was going to do?

PRYCE: I think there was a feeling, certainly with Ambassador Kohler who was only there for about six months, that the Soviet Union was a dangerous power. It was still seeking to expand its hegemony and we needed to know as much as we could about what it was doing. I remember the difference, Ambassador Thompson replaced Ambassador Kohler, and this was his second tour. I think that he had a viewpoint that Soviet society was developing to a point in which it was eventually becoming, I wouldn't say more democratic but certainly it was becoming closer to a democracy than it had before. There would be a gradual evolution within the communist system which would force it to become less despotic. There would eventually be an increase in the level of cooperation between the two countries.

Q: When you arrived I guess in the summer of '66, who was the top dog? Was Khrushchev still there?

PRYCE: No, it was Brezhnev.

Q: This was very early Brezhnev.

PRYCE: Right.

Q: What were you getting within the embassy of what type of person was Brezhnev?

PRYCE: Brezhnev was a conservative, not very imaginative, skillful politician who had no interest in much changes. Khrushchev at one point remember had really tried to open up the country. Brezhnev was not interested in opening up the country. He was not interested in allowing much intellectual interchange. He was pretty stoic, repressive.

Q: What was the feeling towards the threat? Did we consider that things were on a sort of a hair trigger?

PRYCE: My recollection is that we thought it was an animosity but, no, I don't remember us believing that there was a hair trigger situation. There was a constant worry about what might happen because of the tremendous ability to mutually self self-destruct. There was a feeling that there was no way that we were going to change the Soviet approach and so we had to defend against it. We had to try to find out as much as we could about intentions. If there were openings, if there were weaknesses, that the Soviets were to be taken advantage of. But there was not a feeling that they were about to have.

Q: I'm probably over-exaggerating this but I have the feeling that during the time of Kissinger it was basically with Nixon in charge of foreign policy, there was a feeling at least at that level that the Soviets were maybe going to dominate over the long run. We had had problems with Vietnam and all and we had lost a certain amount of confidence. That might not have been true but this is the impression that I have. At the time we are talking about, we are involved in Vietnam but it is not the be-all and end-all. Were we feeling that we could outlast the Soviets at that point?

PRYCE: Yes. I think that in the embassy we felt, certainly I think Ambassador Thompson felt, that we had to be ready for a confrontation, we had to be strong, but that there was probably not going to be a confrontation and that in the end that we would survive; not only survive but our system would prevail. I think Ambassador Thompson thought it was a question of time. He would not have been surprised by subsequent developments.

Q: Because we are talking about a little more than 20 years later, the Soviet system imploded on itself because of internal problems. Were we seeing any of that?

PRYCE: Not really. Probably Ambassador Thompson saw it more than anybody. I remember having a talk with him as I was leaving and he was saying that he thought the two systems would come closer together and that there would be a better understanding. He felt that in the long run there would not be a confrontation if we kept strong. I think he felt that the Soviet Union would have to change.

Q: You were there in October 1967 which is known as the October War, the Six Day War, and things got kind of harried at one point where it looked like the Soviets might be giving massive troop supplies to particularly their Syrian allies, and the Egyptians too at that point. How did this particular period, it was only a short time but do you recall anything?

PRYCE: There was a lot of tension, a lot of tension. Clearly we were on opposite sides on a

conflict and there was worry about escalation. There was worry about the Soviets' involvement. We certainly didn't want to have a confrontation but my recollection, and as I say I haven't really focused on it in 30 years, was that although a confrontation was possible, neither we nor the Soviets wanted it.

Q: Were there any high level, presidential, vice presidential, senatorial visits or something that you got involved in during this time?

PRYCE: There weren't many visits in that time but one that was the most interesting was not-yet President Nixon. He came to the Soviet Union and he was looking for advantage in the elections. The Soviets I think did not want him to become elected and they froze him out. As a result he had time on his hands and he came to the embassy at work time where he gave a brilliant exposition of his thoughts on foreign affairs. You saw the good side of Nixon, the able side of Nixon. We were very fortunate to get his candid first-hand thoughts about where the country might go because the Soviets wouldn't see him.

Q: This is one of the sort of enigmas. Really there is a great deal of respect for Nixon as I do these interviews, in foreign affairs. He really had a first class mind. He really thought these things through and yet he couldn't stand the Foreign Service in a way or at least he was very suspicious and yet the Foreign Service of all organization had...

PRYCE: That's right. I think many presidents have not a distrust but a lack of full confidence in the Foreign Service. Presidents are often interested most in the loyalty and they are not sure whether objectivity will help. If you had to pick between objectivity and loyalty, I'm not sure how you would pick, as it shouldn't be. Obviously in the Foreign Service you should be objective. There was I think a respect for the Foreign Service. There was respect for Nixon's ability.

One other thing was later on in the opening of China where he had the courage and the political ability to make that move. This is just an aside but I remember when I first came into the Foreign Service and Walter Robertson was the assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, you felt you were putting your career in jeopardy when you expressed an opinion that maybe we ought to be thinking about dealing with the communist government in China. That was absolutely not acceptable to the policy levels at the State Department. Obviously people did talk about it and obviously people did make recommendations but you did it with some peril.

Q: Did you get a feel for the Soviet, maybe East Bloc corps of our officers because it was competitive? Did you get a feel for the type of person they were?

PRYCE: Well, able, very able. I am trying to think back. There was a little bit of a Soviet club which frankly I was not a part of; I did not spend the bulk of my career in Soviet Affairs. A group of Soviet complete experts and people like Malcolm Toon and Jack Matlock. They spent the great bulk of their career on the Soviet Union so there was a great deal of knowledge; it was respect. I think that there was also a little bit of feeling that it was a closed circle.

Q: With your experience in the higher reaches of diplomacy as an aide to Tom Mann, if you

mentioned the Dominican Republic thing to the other officers did their eyes glaze over?

PRYCE: No, no. Obviously there was a high interest in the Soviet Union but it was not to ignore other things that were happening. No. There were people who were interested in Vietnam, people were interested in the Dominican Republic. There were broad gauged people and there were people who were sort of Soviet internal specialists who would tend to stick with the Soviet Union but there were many very able people. I can think of Kurt Kamman for example, now our ambassador to Colombia who was deputy head of INR. He had been in Cuba, was not really a Sovietologist but he was an expert in Russia. There were a number of broad gauged people like Bill Brown who later became head of our interest section in China and I think ambassador to Israel. There were a series of people who had broad interests. But there was also the sort of club of people like Bill Lewis, Mac Toon, who were Soviet experts. I later worked on Soviet affairs where I ran the educational cultural exchange programs for students and I again had a great deal of respect for the people that were involved in Soviet affairs.

Q: While you were there was there any feeling about the Soviet intellectual group, intelligentsia? Did they seem to play a part, somewhat comparable to that by the intelligentsia in France and all? Were they seen as a target for us?

PRYCE: Very, very definitely. As a matter of fact they were our principal targets because they were the kind of people that you could get to know. I was mentioning to you this KGB agent that was my contact. He knew what we were interested in. We gave him nothing but he would get tickets to plays that were avant-garde where they would push the envelope, as you would say. There was a Soviet intelligentsia who were very unhappy with the Soviet Union, very unhappy with the repressive controls. There was samizdat, which was a self-produced press with people running off mimeographs at night.

One of the things Joan and I did was we invited every week as many Soviets as we could. We started out with locals in the embassy and then we moved to intellectuals, we moved to artists. We got to know a lot of the Soviet artists who were only interested really in expanding their understanding of art. When they would come to your house, they'd pay their price which was to go around the next day to the police station and give a complete dump to the KGB as to what they had seen or heard at your house.

When I left the Soviet Union, we gave a big party for all of the Soviets that we'd gotten to know, I guess about 60 people in this very small room. There was a lot of noise and a fair amount of food and drink. A number of people opened up at this very last party figuring that the microphones couldn't catch the people talking about how much they admired the United States. A couple of them were saying what they had to go through to maintain the contact they had with us. I remember one guy saying, "You know they were always asking me what I was doing and I told them I was coming to this American residence because I was interested in what was going on and I was a loyal Soviet. I knew that I would not betray my country and that there is no reason why I shouldn't go and I have no reason not to go so I kept going and I have nothing to apologize." But he said they asked him every time.

The Soviets were always trying to find out if you were making anti-Soviet remarks; if you said

anything that was derogatory toward the Soviet Union or obviously if anything you said would be a weakness. But there were a number of Soviet intelligentsia who seriously questioned the regime and were unhappy with it. It was understood that they would like to see a more democratic regime.

Q: Were you under personal or official instructions to be careful when you were getting together with people not to use this as a time to sort of attack the Soviet system? What was your approach?

PRYCE: Your approach exactly was to be careful. You basically explained the U.S. system and you were trying to get attitudes, elicit attitudes of your colleagues about the Soviet system or about the United States. You were careful not to take the lead and criticize because what you were interested in was to listen. You might encourage them to criticize or to just ask how they felt.

Q: You left there in '68, what was your feeling about whether the Soviet Union and Soviet-American relations? You had seen the monster, you had seen the elephant, what did you think about it?

PRYCE: I thought that obviously, one, it was still the other power. I remember feeling that it was a very challenging experience. It was very difficult because you really couldn't penetrate very deeply into society. It was very difficult to do your job and to understand and interpret what was going on because it was so restrictive. A lot of the reporting that we did was out of the press. We would put interpretations on it but it was really hard to get good intelligence from your Soviet contacts. I think to answer your question more directly, it was a feeling that this is our major adversary and we want to continue to understand as much as we can about it. I was surprised, I must admit as most people were, with the implosion of the Soviet Union. I thought that was going to be 30 years away. I thought it would happen but never so quickly.

Q: There is a tendency particularly by our military and others who painted the Soviets as being ten feet tall and in later years and all, did your look at the Soviet system, as you were saying a lot of things didn't work.

PRYCE: Oh yes, very definitely.

Q: I always think, I was in Yugoslavia at the same time and I always think of lift nerodi, which is the elevator that doesn't work which was usually always in any hotel. It didn't work very well and the Soviet Union was much worse than Yugoslavia. Did this have an effect on you?

PRYCE: Certainly, certainly. As I started to say, you understood more closely that a great many parts of the Soviet Union were really underdeveloped countries especially for example in the Caucasus or in some ways in the Ukraine. The Soviets spent a lot of money on their military and they spent a lot of money on creating a veneer but the average citizen lived very badly and the system didn't work very well.

One of the things that I felt very strongly about - I'll jump ahead to when I ran the educational

cultural exchange program - the Soviet intelligentsia would come over here and I always felt and still feel that this is one of the reasons that the Soviet Union imploded was the exchange system. I can remember people coming over here and saying, [inaudible] (Russian phrase), we have this too, when they knew damn well they didn't and we knew damn well they didn't. The comparison was tremendous in terms of the standard of living and the stage of economic development in the two countries. Having lived there you knew, at least you felt, I was always a little skeptical of some of the intelligence estimates as to how powerful the Soviet Union was because you knew the system didn't work very well.

Q: You left the Soviet Union in '68, where did you go?

PRYCE: I went to Panama.

YALE RICHMOND
Russian Language Studies, Foreign Language Institute
Washington, DC (1966-1967)

Counselor for Public Affairs
Moscow (1967-1969)

Yale Richmond was born in Massachusetts in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree in 1943 from Boston College, thereafter he joined the Army from 1943-1946. He then receives a master's degree from Syracuse. His career included positions in Germany, Austria, Russia, Poland, and Laos. Mr. Richmond was interviewed in June 2003 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: By this time what were you doing, working on your Russian?

RICHMOND: At the end of '66, I went to FSI for a year of Russian language studies, and then to Moscow in the summer of '67.

Q: How long were you in Moscow?

RICHMOND: Two years.

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

RICHMOND: It was initially Tommy Thompson and then Jake Beam, for whom I had worked in Warsaw.

Q: How did you find the embassy?

RICHMOND: There was no USIS post. We were integrated into the embassy. We had a press and cultural section which in any other place would have been a USIS post. We were a part of

the embassy. We attended all the staff meetings. I had the rank of counselor for press and culture.

Q: This is equivalent to what, the top USIS job?

RICHMOND: Yes, it was the PAO.

Q: Looking at that time, how were relations when you arrived there in '67?

RICHMOND: Bad. Vietnam was heating up. Vietnam was a constant problem during those years.

Q: This was the last part of the Johnson administration.

RICHMOND: Yes. Vietnam was really creating problems. Then there was a meeting of the Communist Party organization which took a very hard line against the United States. It was very difficult for us to do anything. Then came August 20, 1968: the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which further set back U.S.-Soviet relations and they did not recover until Nixon was elected and came into office in January '69 and turned over a new leaf. The Soviets turned over a new leaf, too. That was the beginnings of detente.

Q: Let's talk about this. How did you find dealing with the Soviet press or did one deal with the Soviet press?

RICHMOND: I didn't. We had very little contact with them. They had nothing to do with us. By agreement between the 2 governments, they limited the number of correspondents in each other's country to 26. They were the ones who were trying to report on what was going on in Moscow. But we were often a source of their information. The ambassador would hold a Friday afternoon session with the American correspondents in his office. I attended that. He would discuss what was going on in the Soviet Union that he thought they should know.

Q: I would have thought that in many ways the correspondents would get out more than our officers could.

RICHMOND: They had difficulties, as we did, with travel. Most of the Soviet Union was closed to travel by foreigners. Anyone who wanted to travel whether he was an embassy officer or an American correspondent or a British correspondent or a French correspondent had to file a travel plan 48 hours in advance. 48 hours in advance you had to tell them where you were going to go, what you were going to do, where you were going to be, whom you were going to see. They would run that by the KGB and they would approve the travel or not approve it. Even areas that had been previously open would suddenly be closed for "reasons of a temporary nature," which means they didn't want any Westerners in that town at that point. The job was very difficult. Our correspondents were often harassed. Embassy officers less likely, but correspondents were often harassed by the KGB if they were poking around too much.

Q: What about your operations there?

RICHMOND: One thing, we were managing the exchanges program. There were all kinds of little problems that had to be attended to. Housing. The main problem for American scholars and students was access to archives in which Russian lethargy and inefficiency was as much a reason as the KGB. Housing was very bad, particularly in Leningrad, and still is today for students and for other people if you read the "New York Times." The third was travel. During semester breaks or at the end of their studies, most of the Americans wanted to travel in the Soviet Union and see what things were like outside of Moscow or Leningrad. The Soviets would deny that in most cases. Whereas the Soviets in the United States could go anywhere. We had closed zones, but for official people in the embassy and UN mission but not for students. Anybody on the exchange program was not subject to our closed zones. They could go anywhere provided we knew in advance where they were going.

Q: Was there any movement in the U.S. to say, "Hell, if they're going to do this to us, we're going to do that to them?"

RICHMOND: Yes. There was. That came up all the time. However, when Kennedy was elected President, he offered to do away with this closed zone business if the Soviets did it also. They turned him down. That offer was made several times in different administrations and every time, the Soviets turned it down. Their military and their intelligence services did not want foreigners poking around in various places.

Q: Were you able to get out and around a bit?

RICHMOND: Yes, I got out as much as I could. I went to Leningrad several times, to Georgia, to Kiev, I traveled with some of the American performing arts groups in Siberia... A visiting American organization or institution was always an excuse to tag along and go with them.

Q: How were these American performers received?

RICHMOND: Anything American was always a box office attraction no matter what it was. The Soviets had a great curiosity about the world beyond their borders because it was taboo, because it was closed to them. So anything foreign was attractive. You couldn't judge the audience reaction by the press reviews because the press reviews were always very guarded. In our country, we're used to seeing a press review in the morning after. In the Soviet Union, it might be as long as a week later because they had to be cleared by people all the way up in the political hierarchy before they could print it.

Q: Did you have any problem with these traveling groups?

RICHMOND: No, never.

Q: I would think something like jazz groups would be very popular.

RICHMOND: Jazz was popular, but the Soviets even had a problem with jazz. We sent all the major established jazz groups under the exchange program. We sent Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Dave Brubeck, New York Jazz Repertory, Preservation Hall from

New Orleans, but the Soviets turned down jazz groups that they thought were too avant garde. They also turned down American ballet groups that they thought were too avant garde. If something was traditional and established, okay. If it was something new, they saw it as dangerous.

Q: Did you get any chance to talk to the cultural movers and shakers in the Soviet world?

RICHMOND: When I was there, it was a difficult period and it was very difficult and dangerous for Russians to have close relations with Americans. But some of my predecessors and people who followed me did have very good contacts with Soviets. I recall I met a lot of important people at diplomatic receptions. Moscow had a large diplomatic community. You were always getting invitations to cocktails 6-8 and you went to the extent your time permitted because that's where you could meet Russians. We would invite people to our diplomatic parties and they would come if they had a written invitation which they could show to the Soviet guard outside our residences or outside the embassy.

Q: Was there much free flow or talk when you got in there within a reception?

RICHMOND: It's often been said that anybody who served in that part of the world automatically looked behind him before he opened his mouth. It's quite true. I found myself doing that years after I had left Moscow. You looked around to see who was listening. You were very careful what you said. In Eastern Europe, there was no problem. In Czechoslovakia, there was a problem. Less in Hungary. And no problem in Poland. Poles didn't give a damn. The Poles would tell you whatever they wanted.

Q: Was there a buildup to the Soviet clampdown on Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring? Was everybody wondering how far this would go?

RICHMOND: Oh, yes, this was a real test for Ambassador Thompson. Washington kept asking him, "Are the Soviets going to move or not?" It's all been written up. This was the kind of cable that didn't get broad distribution in the embassy, but I think Thompson comes out looking rather good on this.

Incidentally, a little sidebar on this. I was in Finland the night the Soviets invaded. I had taken my summer leave with my family, a wife and 3 little children, for 2 weeks. We were on our way back with a station wagon loaded with goodies for the next year or so. We drove up to a town on the Finnish side of the border and stayed overnight in a hotel planning to drive non-stop to Moscow the next day. I woke up Sunday morning, August 20, and went out of the hotel to check my car and it was deathly still on the street. There wasn't a person in sight. I knew something had happened. I ran back to the hotel and asked the clerk what had happened. He said, "The Russians have invaded Czechoslovakia and we Finns are wondering if we are next." It was a very tight situation. There I was in neutral Finland with a wife and 3 kids. Should I stay there? Should I go back to Moscow? I had a shortwave radio in my car. We listened to all the newscasts from all the radio stations we could. My wife and I decided we could go back. So we went across the border and they let us back in again and we drove back to Moscow listening to all the radios, wondering if World War III was about to start.

Q: How was the drive from Leningrad to Moscow?

RICHMOND: Terrible. A 2 lane road. Bumps in the road. Few gas stations. I remember stopping at one place to get gas and I asked if they had any water. They said, "Yes, around the back." They went around the back and there was a well with a bucket. So I had to pick up a bucket of water to put in my radiator.

Q: Did you spend overnight there?

RICHMOND: You could spend overnight in Leningrad if you made reservations in advance.

Q: How about when you were in the Soviet Union, were you followed most of the time?

RICHMOND: A lot of embassy officers were followed. I'm not aware that I was followed. They knew who I was. They knew I was not CIA or intelligence service. I tried to do everything just as I would in any other country. I was not paranoid. I made a decision early on that I was going to treat the Soviets just as I treated people in any other country and I was not going to be harassed by this. It worked. They knew everything I did because phones were monitored – perhaps our offices, too. I had nothing to hide.

Q: How did you treat the 3 Baltic states – Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania?

RICHMOND: That's an interesting story. In the beginning, there was strong opposition in the United States to our including the 3 Baltic states in our exchange agreement because we did not consider them part of the Soviet Union. They had embassies or legations here in Washington with which we maintained the fiction of reciprocity. But I changed that. I'm very proud of this. Until I got to Moscow, we would not allow American students to study in the Baltic states. When I was in Moscow, we got a cable from the State Department that IREX, who was going to nominate an American of Lithuanian origin who spoke Lithuanian and wanted to study in Vilnius, and did the embassy have any objection? I went to Ambassador Thompson and said, "Look, it's time to end this. It's in our interest to have that American go to Lithuania and study." We changed the policy.

Q: Did you get any feedback or kickback?

RICHMOND: Not at all. Years later when I was on the exchanges staff in Washington, we wanted to send American exhibits to the Baltic states. I called in the representatives of the Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian communities. The three of them sat around my desk and I said, "We have this big exchange program with the Soviet Union. We want to send our orchestras, our dancers, our jazz groups, and our exhibits to the 3 Baltic states. Do you have any objection?" They said, "No, but don't quote us on this." This is how a mid-level official can often change policy. He can push it in one way or another.

Q: How did your family like the Soviet Union?

RICHMOND: My wife at that time – we’re now divorced – was one of these native born Americans who can learn any language in 6 months. She was fluent in Russian, Polish, German, French, Italian, Spanish. She loved it. She was out all the time. We had a Finnish nanny living with us who took care of the kids. My wife was out all over the place.

Q: How big was your American staff?

RICHMOND: When I arrived, we had 4, including myself, 5 with a secretary. Then we lost one. Somebody was PNGed and didn’t come back. Then we had an operation called BALPA, Balance of Payments, where all missions abroad were asked to analyze their staffs and see if they could give up a position or 2. I, to the consternation of Washington, USIA, gave up a position. I said, “There is not a hell of a lot we can do right now. We’re doing it very well with the staff... We’re one man short.” I gave up a position. My colleagues in Washington were furious.

Q: Did they get out and around?

RICHMOND: Yes, the ones who spoke Russian, and everybody had to speak some degree of Russian to get assigned to Moscow. They did get out. It’s awfully difficult on a small staff. In a place like Moscow, you’re deluged with telegrams from all over the world. There’s a temptation to sit at your desk and read those telegrams. I made it a practice to get out of my office every day to do something, no matter what it was. Every time I got out, there was something worth seeing. I stumbled across something that was very interesting.

Q: This is the thing of fighting the tendency to end up reading the newspapers and sitting at your desk, which you can do back in Washington. How about the local staff?

RICHMOND: The local staff in Moscow was presumed to be working for the KGB and they were, we knew it. So there was not much you could do with them. We had in the American embassy what we called “cult up” and “cult down.” A cultural section up on the 8th floor which was behind the Marine guard security. A cultural section down which was open to the Soviet public. People could walk in, if they dared to go by the guards. We had a little library there and a lot of the American students would come in, and the African students came in, too, because that was the only Western library... No, the French had a library. And we were the only other one.

Q: Any problems with people trying to defect to the embassy while you were there?

RICHMOND: No, not while I was there. There was a case of a famous Pentecostal family who defected and snuck into the embassy and had to be put up there for several months until it could be arranged for them to immigrate. But that happened after me.

Q: By the time you left, were you there when Nixon came in?

RICHMOND: Yes, I was there. Nixon was inaugurated in January 1969. I left in June 1969. Over those 6 months, everything opened up. Everything changed. We were able to do things we couldn’t do before. Because of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the State Department had suspended all high level contacts with the Soviets, which in retrospect was a very stupid thing to

have done. We weren't allowed to see any high level Russians. They couldn't see us. We didn't send any orchestras, have any exhibits. All that changed when Nixon was inaugurated.

Q: Did you get any feel for the hand of Henry Kissinger while you were there?

RICHMOND: No, but he came to Moscow once as a Harvard professor. We would often get telegrams to "meet and assist," which meant a trip to the airport and it usually took 3 or 4 hours out of your day. Once we got a telegram that a professor from Harvard named Henry Kissinger was coming to Moscow. "Please meet and assist and provide appropriate assistance." I used to tell my staff Harvard professors were a dime a dozen coming to Moscow in those years. I sent my press officer instead, so I missed a chance to meet Henry Kissinger in Moscow.

Q: You left there in '69. Did you really feel that there had been a change?

RICHMOND: Oh, yes. That was the early stirrings of detente. That was followed by these high level visits – Brezhnev to Washington and Nixon to Moscow – and these 11 cooperative agreements that I talked about. It was the start of the joint space missions that we had with the Soviets.

Q: Did you ever find yourself acting as embassy spokesman?

RICHMOND: I was the embassy spokesman, which was very tricky because your TV and radio and press correspondents, when there's a story they're reporting on from Moscow would always try to get the embassy to say something. You still see it today: "The embassy spokesman said..." "I was the embassy spokesman. You had to be very careful because what you were saying was for the record. Lyndon Johnson had in his office 3 televisions tuned to CBS, NBC, and ABC, and anything you said was on one of those televisions. If Johnson didn't like it, you heard about it.

Q: Did you have any problems?

RICHMOND: Not a problem, but a humorous story. (end of tape)

There was a Scandinavian Airlines flight that flew from Kabul to Stockholm with a stopover in Moscow and it was a drug route. The Soviets were aware of this. They would often find some Westerner, including Americans, and they'd arrest them for possession of drugs, which was a very serious offense in the Soviet Union. We would do our best to keep it quiet and negotiate, get them out of the country as fast as possible because these things often escalated up to a very high level and created a problem in bilateral relations. Once we had such an American arrested and we managed to get him out. After we got him out of the country, the Soviets broke the story. The Associated Press guy called me and said, "Yale, you didn't tell me that you had an American in the Soviet Union in prison." I said, "You didn't ask me." He said, "Every time I call you from now on, I'm going to end my conversation and ask, 'Do we have any Americans imprisoned in the Soviet Union?'" He did that for several months and then he stopped doing it – and again one was in prison.

Q: How did we work it? Was it more a matter of letting things quiet down and then quietly

shipping them out of the country?

RICHMOND: Yes, it was a question of the state of relations. What else was in play? Whether the Soviets wanted to create an incident or whether they did not want to create an incident. Very often you could work this out.

Q: Did you have any counterparts in the Soviet system?

RICHMOND: There was an office of cultural relations with foreign countries in the ministry of foreign affairs. I had a contact there whom I regularly dealt with. I asked him once for his home telephone number. I said, "We have a lot of problems that come up over the weekend, so I may have to call you. Can I have your home phone number?" He refused to give it to me. Later on, I found that he lived in the building right next door to the embassy and he wouldn't tell me that either. He was strictly business. He was KGB, by the way.

Q: Most of the people you had to deal with were probably KGB?

RICHMOND: In exchanges, yes. Not all of them, but most of them. But I must say that some of them were pretty straight guys. They were smarter than the rest of them. They were more outspoken. They would tell you things, particularly in the Soviet embassy in Washington, that no Russian would ever tell you in Moscow. We had a very nice working relationship with the Soviet embassy people here. They would help us out on things we wanted to do - certain limits - and we would help them out in exchange. I visited one of them after the Soviet Union collapsed and the poor guy was broke. He was going to the ministry of foreign affairs every day to eat lunch in their canteen because it was subsidized.

Q: You were dealing with a very difficult society. During this whole time that you were working in the Soviet Union, was there the feeling that - this still had 20 years to go - the clock may be ticking on the system?

RICHMOND: No, I had no feeling at all. The military and the KGB and the Communist Party were securely in charge. In fact, many American scholars will tell you that the Gorbachev reforms did not have to happen, that the anti-Gorbachev coup that the army and the KGB staged could have been successful if the people who led it had had more guts, if they had had more courage. They backed down. But the Soviet Union, the KGB and the army and the Party, they could have clamped down on it. They could have continued for another decade perhaps. The economy was falling apart. Everybody knew that. Anybody who served in Moscow knew that the Soviets were not 10 feet tall, that we had overestimated their strength year after year. But what was holding it together was this police force.

Q: Did you get any feel for the divisions within the Soviet Union? It broke up into Belarus and Ukraine and the Stans and the Baltic states.

RICHMOND: Very little. Anybody who stuck his neck out would have it chopped off. There were dissidents. We knew that. This happened after the Helsinki Accords, another chapter in U.S.-Soviet relations. But after the Helsinki Accords were signed by the Soviet Union, all of

these dissidents started speaking up, especially the Soviet Jews who wanted to emigrate to Israel and other countries, and became more emboldened because they were given freedoms under the Helsinki Accords, and the Soviet Union was obliged to respect those agreements.

Q: Did you get any feel during the time you were there about the Soviet Jews? Was this a defined group more or less? Did it have aspirations or anything that we were interested in?

RICHMOND: There are so many ramifications to that. There were a lot of Jews in very high ranking positions, but never in the top spot. Very often you would visit an institution of some Soviet office and the number one person in charge would be a Russian and his deputy would be a Jew who really ran the operation. But you knew enough not to cultivate those people. You could only get them into trouble by seeking them out. But here and there, you would meet people at diplomatic receptions, but they were always very careful what they said.

Q: But we had no equivalent to a program or targeted thing?

RICHMOND: No.

Q: To any of the ethnic groups?

RICHMOND: No, except in our Voice of America and Radio Liberty broadcast and in our magazine, "America." We distributed under the terms of the cultural agreement a "Life" sized photojournalistic magazine, a very pretty magazine and highly prized by its recipients. I have a chapter on this in my book. We were allowed to distribute 50,000 copies plus 2,000 distributed gratis by the embassy. Every time we published an issue – it was a monthly – we would check to see whether it was distributed. Very little was distributed through the kiosks in newsstands. Most of it was by subscription, which was very good because only the important people were allowed to buy subscriptions, so we were reaching the important people that way.

Q: Did the Voice of America, was it running a policy somewhat different from what you were doing?

RICHMOND: I worked at the Voice one year. I was in charge of broadcasts to Vietnam. We took our guidance from the State Department in those days. It was the voice of the U.S. government and there was no difference in policy. Radio Liberty was somewhat different. It had much more of a free hand. It was funded by the CIA, but the CIA gave them a relatively free hand in what they could do and say.

Q: Did that cause any problems for you?

RICHMOND: No. They were both heavily jammed. I saved Radio Liberty once, possibly from extinction. We were asked in September of '68 to monitor Radio Liberty for a week and give us a report on whether it could be heard above the jamming. I volunteered to do it because I have a degree in electrical engineering and I had a shortwave radio in my car. I drove around the city of Moscow at night 7 days in a row and wrote down where I was, what frequency, and the headlines of the news over the jamming. Then I'd go back to the embassy and send a cable out right away

to Washington and Munich. I proved that you could hear Radio Liberty above the jamming. When I came back, I went through New York and saw Howland Sargeant, who was the head of the Radio Liberty Committee, a former Assistant Secretary of State. He told me I saved the radio station and my cables showed that you could hear it above the jamming.

Q: When you left there in '69, was it with some reluctance? Things were beginning to open up.

RICHMOND: After the Nixon administration came in, Frank Shakespeare, a former official in radio, was appointed director of the U.S. Information Agency. On his first trip abroad, he came to the Soviet Union to open an American exhibit called "Education USA" about the American educational system. I took him up to Leningrad. Before the exhibit opened, he made a preview tour of the exhibit and he focused on the books. The exhibit had a library of books on that subject. This was a library of books on education. He went through it and pulled out a couple of books that he didn't like. He put them on a table and said, "I don't want those books in here." Well, we had this problem with previous USIA directors and we figured this was another one we'd have to educate. So, we were in a room that was used by our exhibit guides – we had about 20 American guides there who spoke Russian, most of them college students, and they were on the floor of the exhibit interpreting, engaging with the Russians and answering questions. They had a room where they would retreat for a smoke or a cup of coffee. We were in that room. There were these books on the table and Frank Shakespeare was there. His assistant, Teddy Weintal, was there. I was there. Pic Littell, the assistant director for Eastern Europe. And Jerry Verner, press officer. I said to Littell, "What do we do about this?" He said, "Look, we've had this problem with every USIA director. We might as well face this one now." So, I said to Shakespeare, "What's wrong with these books?" He started going through them. There were 2 textbooks that teachers were to use with classes and there were photos. One book was of the city, and one was of the country. The one of the city showed various photos of life in a large American city – New York, Boston. And the teacher was supposed to ask the class, "What does this mean to you" and stimulate a discussion. Shakespeare didn't like several photos in there. One photo showed a kid in a slum in a backyard sitting in a bathtub that had been discarded. We started discussing this. Shakespeare said, "I don't want anything that shows badly on the United States." Jerry Verner said, "Look, this represents the prosperity of the United States. The Soviets would be amazed to see that someone would discard a bathtub in an alley. You don't see that anywhere in the Soviet Union. This shows how rich the United States is that people throw away used bathtubs." Shakespeare kept getting hotter and hotter under the collar and finally he stuck his finger in my chest and said, "Look, our mission is to overthrow the Soviet Union. Anyone who doesn't understand that doesn't belong in USIA." He looked me right in the eye. This room had to be bugged. It was where the American staff rested and talked. I said, "Oh, no, Mr. Shakespeare, that's not the policy of the State Department. We want to live with these people in peace." He got apoplectic and he blew up. They had to get him outside, walk him up and down the street to cool him off. I did not go back to Moscow for a third year. I was an FSO-2 at the time. I was held up for promotion to class one until Shakespeare resigned. After Shakespeare resigned, the next promotion panel promoted me to class one. He resigned because of differences in policy with the State Department. This is going in my memoirs after I consult a libel lawyer.

Q: My understanding is that you can't really libel a public figure if it's not done for malicious purposes.

RICHMOND: Shakespeare's differences were well documented.

ROBERT WILLIAM FARRAND
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1966-1968)

Consular Officer
Moscow (1968-1970)

Mr. Farrand was born in Watertown, New York in 1934 and graduated from Mount Saint Mary's College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964. He served in numerous posts including Kuala Lumpur, Moscow and Prague and was named ambassador to Papua, New Guinea in 1990. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: This is the 17th of May 2001. Bill, 1967, how did you find, you took Russian I take it from '67 to '68 sort of?

FARRAND: Roughly.

Q: How did you find Russian?

FARRAND: It is a majestic language. It's a marvelous language. At that time of course, it had a cache which perhaps today it doesn't, but I viewed it then and view it now as the mother of the Slavic languages. I suspect that's wrong. I suspect they would say that's not anywhere near correct, but given the importance of the Soviet Union at that time I was anxious to study it and enthusiastic about the idea. In fact, maybe had I not gotten Russian language training I might have just decided to move on into something else. It was kind of my determination that if I could go to the Soviet Union then I might stay in the Foreign Service. That has its flaws, too, not being a Soviet expert, just a journeyman coming in from the side, but it was okay.

Q: Did you pick much up about while you were taking the language, did you get much of a feeling from most of your teachers and from your area studies about the Soviet Union? How did you find the training?

FARRAND: The teaching of the language itself was better than the area studies by a wide mile. Area studies could not, there was a very fine fellow, I forget his name, forgotten his name who was in charge of area studies and he sought to do what he could to bring the cadre of language students up to a certain level of understanding of the Soviet Union, but you had so much on you and it was only once a week and it was on a Wednesday afternoon or whatever. I did not find that very effective and there was a great disparity among the students themselves in their level of understanding. I perhaps because I was interested would fall in the category of someone who had never really studied the Soviet Union, but through newspapers and magazines and being

interested in things, I suppose I had a modicum of understanding that might have been in keeping with the rest of the class. Although several others, one had a Ph.D. in Russian history and another in literature, so you couldn't deal with that.

Q: In your group that was studying Russian at the time, do you remember any of the names?

FARRAND: Oh yes, yes. People who did quite well, there was Sheridan McCall who became deputy director of the Soviet desk and later deputy chief of mission in Stockholm. There was Michael Wygant, Michael went on to become ambassador in the South Pacific about the time when I was there. He was there before me. William Maynes, Charles William Maynes, who left the Foreign Service. He was picked up by the Carter administration, made assistant secretary for international organizations and then became for a time the founder or at least the editor of foreign policy.

Q: I've interviewed both Mike Wygant and Bill Maynes.

FARRAND: Well, there you are. So, they were both in the language study and their wives and you know it was a good class.

Q: Did you know what you were going to do when you went to the Soviet Union?

FARRAND: Well, because I was still a junior officer, my presumption was and because I had more or less kind of put my name forward to go to the Soviet Union as I've indicated, a lot of people didn't and wouldn't have wanted to, but I did want to. I knew that probably I would be good in one of the lower rung starting jobs in the embassy when I got out there and in fact, that was the case. They made me vice consul. There were three consular officers. There was a consul and two vice consuls. The consul was Robert Barry who has done wonderfully in the Foreign Service.

Q: Bob's still in Bosnia right now.

FARRAND: We were together in Bosnia. He was in a different organization. A fellow who had gone to Garmisch, just prior, both Bob and this fellow had graduated from Garmisch Partenkirchen which put their Russian on a whole different level from mine.

Q: This is the additional training at the military school of Garmisch at the Department's Detachment R?

FARRAND: And so, all of the young officers except for McCall and for Wygant, the young officers had gone to Detachment R so all of their Russian was considerably behind theirs.

Q: You were there from '68 to '69 probably?

FARRAND: Summer of '68 to the summer of '70. Yes, we're talking Moscow.

Q: What was the situation, vis-à-vis, when you arrived, what sort of relations between the Soviet

Union and the United States when you got there?

FARRAND: Well, it was the great period that we now call stagnation, at that time I don't think I heard that word very much, but Brezhnev was, well, let's see '68, Stalin died in '53 and Khrushchev was pushed out in what year?

Q: Oh, '64 or something, '65? So, he'd been out for four or five years?

FARRAND: Yes. Brezhnev was still very much in power. The KGB was in power and at its strongest or at least at a very strong stage. Brezhnev was a man, what can I add to millions of words written on Brezhnev? All I can say is there was this sense of stodgy stability at the top of the Soviet government committed to control at all costs. I had never been there before. I was a little in awe in the first weeks and months. I was in the consular section and as a result I had a tendency to see some ugly things, as you do when you're in consular work. Bob Barry was the consul and another fellow, George Humphrey, who left the Service, and I were the vice consuls. We rotated between the two of us every six months. There was a heavy concentration of official visas because Soviet delegations would go to the United Nations, Soviet delegations would come to the United States and, of course, it was reciprocal. So, we had to have a careful set of rules of which I became familiar in time on the job. There I didn't have a special course, but I had been consular officer, had taken the consular course when I first got in the Foreign Service three years earlier. I had been consular officer for nine or ten months in Kuala Lumpur where I did everything virtually everything because there was only one officer. I got very close to FAM 7 and 8 and 9.

Q: These are the consular Foreign Affairs Manuals. These are the instructions of what the rules and regulations of how to do.

FARRAND: Foreign Affairs Manuals. Yes, I got very close to them. I knew that. Then I went to the Soviet Union and it was almost as though you put those blue books on the side because there was another book and it was called Annex A or something. All the sheets were salmon colored, yellow colored, salmon colored, as I recall. It was not as thick as the others, but it was very precise on all sorts of techniques and procedures one needed to follow in granting a visa to a Soviet citizen or official. That was a whole new world and that was not trained. We were not trained in that prior to going out. So, I had to learn that on the job. There was no part of the consular course back here that took in that.

Q: When you were there, you said you saw some ugly things. What did you see, as a consular officer?

FARRAND: Well, I don't want to get into you know, story telling.

Q: Well, story telling is important in this type of interview because it gives a flavor for the time.

FARRAND: One of the things that happened that gave me an incite early on into the Soviet Union and what a secret police system entailed. I'll just talk about two out of many. The first was three young people, Americans, the Vietnam War was on and they were in the generation of

opposing the war and they went over and out into the world. They found themselves in, as I recall in Afghanistan, in Kabul and they were what I guess you would call, hippies, whatever you want to say something of that generation. It was three young men. One young man who was a son of a wealthy family in New England. One young man was the son of a sharecropper, a Mexican sharecropper in the southwest of the United States, probably California. The third young man I forget. They wanted to go. This was just prior to my coming. They wanted to go from Kabul to Stockholm because Stockholm was the center of liberal acceptance of anti-war types.

Q: And people who were denouncing the selective service and they found refuge there.

FARRAND: In Stockholm, Sweden. They wanted to go from Kabul to Stockholm. Now there's ways you can do that of course. You can get on an airplane and you can go to, I don't know some major point in the Middle East and then you can fly to Rome, Italy and then up to Stockholm or you could go to Frankfurt, or you could do a number of things. They didn't want to spend the money doing that and they knew if they got to Stockholm and had some marijuana, I think it was marijuana in this case, hash, hashish. I never did know the difference, anyway hashish. They went to a bazaar and a trader saw them and said that he could sell them the hashish and they were going to invest what money they had, they didn't have a lot, even the rich fellow didn't have a lot, the parents had cut him off. They were going to take the money, spend it on hashish, then they were going to smuggle it across the Soviet Union into Stockholm, Sweden and on the basis of the hashish they could live fine because they would cut it up and sell it and they would be just fine. Now, this fellow that sold this to them, this trader in the markets of Kabul, said, "I not only will sell it to you, but I also have here, right here a suitcase that I can sell to you, too, that has a secret compartment." Being young men of discernment and quick eye they saw this as a great idea.

So, they bought from this fellow and they put their hashish in this secret compartment and they went to the airport and they flew from Kabul to Tashkent, in those days it was the Uzbek Republic and they set down the airplane and were met there by police who took the bag and confiscated the hash and put them, arrested them and put them in prison, put them on trial and Bob Barry's predecessor, the consul, one of the finest Foreign Service officers I've ever met, named Samuel Edwin Fry, Jr. Yes, he's taller than you are. Sam was the fellow that had to go down there to Tashkent and sit through those trials and counsel these people and write up reports and Sam and I became friends at that point. I got there early, left my family behind for about three weeks. Sam and I became close friends and remain, but he taught me a lot about that case and his successor, Bob Barry, my boss had to take over responsibility for the case, but inevitably there was a lot of skol. Now, these three young men were put in prison. I'm going to draw this to a close. They were put in prison and they were transported occasionally whenever we asked for consular access to Moscow and we learned that by asking we quickly learned, Bob Barry was a real Soviet hand expert and had worked on the Soviet desk in the bilateral division. So, he had worked with a lot of this mucky stuff on this side of the ocean and so he brought that stability to that situation. We knew that their prison conditions in Tashkent were deplorable for each of these three men. We knew that one of them; the son of the sharecropper was a defiant sort. He wasn't going to be broken and he was put into solitary. Now, we would put a note in to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MID, and we would ask for consular access. They would then start their song

and dance every time, song and dance, every time, song and dance. So, no sooner than we'd meet with them, then we would prepare and within a very few weeks we would put another note in because we knew it would take a couple of months to get the access, but we also knew that having those boys flown into Moscow from Tashkent that they would be washed, they would be cleaned up and that they would be given some food so that they looked okay. They would be threatened we knew and I would go, it would depend, but I went a number of times and saw these guys at the tough prison in Moscow in those days. It was a prison was called Bokitar and it had a bad reputation.

They would come into the room and they would sit opposite, of course, there was green hatted Soviet officers sitting around and I'm sure there was not only the prison officials, but KGB in the room and we would talk to them. Now, they couldn't say much. But we would talk to them, we'd bring them what letters we had, we'd bring them clothing and food and stuff that had been sent from the United States for them and we, too would go out on our own and we put a little fund together amongst them and then we would buy stuff for them and take it to them. Now, these boxes of stuff that we would give them was just absolutely golden. These young men were shaken up thoroughly by this time, they realized they were going to be in prison for three years. There was nothing to do for it except to keep on it. I got inside the Soviet prison. I got to see the KGB rub them like this and I found that sobering and I realized at that time. In fact, I wrote a letter to the editor of Life Magazine and they published it about the prison conditions in the Soviet Union and about how young people should not just go around thinking that because they hate the United States government that other governments are more benign, particularly when it comes to drugs. We did get these guys eventually out, we did. Eventually we were able to work out an arrangement. I went to the airport. They were delivered to the airport in a special room in Cheramechuya. I went there and I said goodbye to all three. I had been working with them. By that time I was consul. It was my second year, I was consul. I had said goodbye and on they went to the airport. After all that I received a letter from one of them. Which one do you think sent me the letter?

Q: The sharecropper?

FARRAND: The son of the sharecropper. I don't know why you thought that.

Q: Well, I was thinking that normally you wouldn't think it would be.

FARRAND: It was a very nice letter thanking us. It was good and bad. It was bitter and sweet. It was sweet and bitter. Thanking us for taking the time, knowing that it was our job, but we did it with a special humanity. He was appreciative of that. The other two, they just went off. He said, "I must also tell you, however, that my job situation here isn't very good, so I am going to have to begin trading drugs again." That was a depressant. Now, so that story taught me so much. It was a great benchmark to come in and have three young people in prison and have to deal with that and have to deal with all of the practical and theoretical legal considerations. That was a great learning. That has stuck with me the rest of my career.

The other time when I was consul in my second year, there was a professor from Cornell University who was also of the anti-war pro-dissident category. Now, I don't care about the anti-

war, but he was doing what he could to assist the dissidents in the Soviet Union in his writings back at Cornell. But, anyway, they permitted him to come with his family. His wife and two small children, girls as I recall. He was at one of the universities at Leningrad State University. He was bearded, more bearded than you, and he had a tendency to let his hair grow long. It was all of that. He was picked up by the KGB and was thrown into what they call the big house up there in Leningrad which, if anything, had as hard a KGB contingent as there existed because it was close to the city in the west, Leningrad. He was in prison. I was not yet the consul. Bob Barry was still the consul. He sent me up there to look after this man's family and they put her up in a hotel. She was a very practical woman and a very concerned one. She was very concerned about what was happening her husband. The husband I met, I went to the prison and met him and I said now what are the circumstances and he told me. He was doing what in this country would be certainly all right. Just going by and visiting some poets. The day I went to the prison though, the KGB headquarters to see him, I did see a man being pushed into a car rather roughly and I found out later that it was Joseph Bronsky. I was there, happened by chance to see Joseph Bronsky being picked up, the famous dissident poet. They let this fellow out into my custody, but he had to stay in a hotel. In talking to this young man I realized that there was a wide, wide gap in the understanding of the Soviet Union by intellectuals in the United States, or at least by this one intellectual who represented I presume a couple of others, at least and the practical realities of what happens when you come there and start pricking the bear.

One day the KGB called for him and they wanted him to come down to the big house. I said, "Well, he's not going without me." So, I walked down with him and we stood in this cold interior, this dark interior of this room waiting for somebody to come. We stood there and we waited, and we waited and we waited and we waited. Of course, they saw me coming because it was and they could see you. I remember that after about forty-five minutes and nobody came, I said to him, "Let's simply go now." So, we turned and we walked out and we walked away from that building. I remember in those days I had hair and the hair on the back on the back of my neck was rising as we were displaying our backs to that window to that big building because we knew that we were being observed and we knew that they could have taken us out if they wished. We did get the guy out finally. I don't think we ever received anything from him, but there was an idea and of course, these are the heroes of life, but on the other hand to bring your wife and your family into that. If you want to do it yourself, that's one thing.

Q: How did your wife and your kids were pretty young, but how did your wife find living there?

FARRAND: The period of 1968 to 1970 was a watershed in our marriage. She, in fact, left me. She did not like the Soviet Union. She did not like living there and she learned not to like me, so.

Q: I mean, this is of course, one of the untold stories about the Foreign Service, it puts strains on a marriage that are difficult to imagine. Particularly some posts are so much worse than other posts and that makes a strain even worse.

FARRAND: In those days this was 1968, this was before the 1972 agreement between Under Secretary for Management, oh I forget his name, but there was an agreement with the wives and spouses and the Department that no longer would wives be expected, you know. They couldn't become a part and the evaluation reports and all of that. But, up until then it was still wide open.

The difficulty is that I had three children at one point. I'm not going to go into this deeply. She took them, I said, "Fine, why don't you leave a little early." When the time came for me to depart and she left about a month early and I stayed on and wrapped up activities, writing evaluation reports and doing all the other things and turning it over to my successor, Peter Burke. I left, but she. When she took my children she just kept on going. So, it was a pretty traumatic time for me.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

FARRAND: I was fortunate. My first six months was Llewellyn Thompson, one of the great, greats of the Foreign Service. The last eighteen months was Jacob Beam, a wonderful, wonderful man. I don't suppose that Jake Beam ever reached the pinnacle of, I don't know, being well known as was Thompson, but he was a man of solidity and in those days Henry Kissinger was first Secretary of State, he was National Security Advisor.

Q: He was National Security Advisor, came in with Nixon in '69.

FARRAND: Exactly and that was the second year of my time there and about, well, I don't know the times when the president comes in, but certainly, probably in the spring of 1969 an embarrassment happened that we all in the embassy staff were aware of. In those days the embassy was so cramped, it still is in the same building; they put up all of this new construction. That is one of the great tragedies, the construction of the embassy in Moscow is one of the great, the level of the understanding of the Soviet Union and of management of resources that went into that building. I got my syntax screwed up here, is almost unforgivable. I was asked by Boris Klaussen, ever remember the name? God rest his sole. Boris was the deputy chief of mission, first was Koby Swank. Koby Swank was the Deputy Chief of Mission when I first arrived. A grand gentlemen and a supporter of junior officers in the proper way, not because he was told. Klaussen was the same. They couldn't have been two finer DCMs, of course, this goes back when I'm younger and more naive, I suppose. But, still, I knew a little bit about management from my navy years and they served first Llewellyn Thompson and Jake Beam. Jake Beam was a diffident man. Jake Beam was probably, you know in the Meyers Briggs, he was probably an introvert. Kissinger actually came to Moscow and was installed on Lenin Hills in one of the apartments by visiting dignitaries by the Brezhnev regime and then called Jake Beam up to Lenin Hills and Kissinger was sitting there. This was a rank insult of the very first order. To take a man like Beam who was a professional at the top of his career and to come to town because you see, the Nixon people didn't trust the Foreign Service or the State Department, they had this deep mistrust. As I have found, republicans often do. They just, it was just an absolute, you know, you just can't imagine and Jake Beam took it and he turned the other cheek and took it. You can debate on whether that was he right thing to do or not. I would like to think that I would not have. I would like to think that he should not have, but he did because he said the president runs foreign policy. There's nothing in the constitution that says there's a secretary of state or anything else that runs foreign policy. We remained, of course, loyal to him, but we were appalled that the embassy could not be trusted to be brought in on a visit of the national security advisor to Moscow. I think I saw that, I saw other things that Kissinger has done and you're either going to have a structure, you're either going to have professionals, you're either going to have it or you're not.

Q: How did you find life in Moscow or did you get to make any trips? Were you harassed, or were there problems or how did things go?

FARRAND: I had said on an earlier tape when I was in Kuala Lumpur I would try one more tour in the Foreign Service to test it to see if this is really what I wanted to do. I wanted to get away from the reach of Coca-Cola. Well, I was successful. I found myself in Moscow and there was no Coca-Cola, not on the local stamps, anywhere. Today, I guess I would have said McDonald's. But, today McDonald's biggest stores in the world are in Moscow. I found it absolutely fascinating. I lived on the outskirts, but far away from the embassy and I would often walk to the metro which is one of the world class undergrounds in the world. I would walk. They didn't have many stations so that was a problem, but I would walk just to see the people on the street in the morning. Then I would go down deep, deep down and I would make my way across town by metro and I would observe people, observe their faces. On August 21, 1968 I was there now about seven weeks, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia. I remember in my own little way saying, "I'm going to watch." After it sunk in on us that they really had I was in Moscow and the people were grim. The faces coming up and down these big long, and these were deep, deep, deep escalators far deeper. I mean, the one at Rosslyn here is very deep, but the one over there would be even once and a half again and you're going down a very steep incline. You could see these folks. There was a grimness that I reported to the political section, but you know, that's something that you can't. But, I had been doing it enough so that I noticed there was a certain grimness in the people and a certain concern because they were being served garbage by Pravda. I found the conditions of life there; the conditions of supply were deplorable. It was summertime, when I first arrived, July, August, September and that made it as nice as it could be. Dust and dirt, drab, drab storefronts, the system of supply were such that each store supplied only one item. For example, this is dairy and you have to go another two blocks and find one that sells meat, if they sell meat at all. Then you have to go another three or four blocks that might sell some vegetables and the women walking around, trudging around with their little string bags or no bags. Shoes, terrible shoes, very gray, very gray, but I was fascinated by it. I saw, this was where I wanted to be.

Q: Did you have any problems with the KGB just in going around?

FARRAND: Well, the place where we lived was watched. There was a policeman at the front door so as you went in and out there was always a policeman. Any hotel you ever went into, each floor in any hotel had a woman, her name was Dejernia. Her job was to apparently look after your needs, but in fact to look after you. She would always be a woman of uncertain age and she reported directly. You always got your tickets and you got your hotel reservations and train tickets wherever you were to go and we always traveled in twos, two by twos. You could never travel alone, two by two. You could travel with your wife and that would be two by two, but basically they wanted two officers. Your officers went through a central place, Opideka, and wherever you went was always checked with the KGB and they would pick you up. I can recall being in Kiev along the banks of the Inyepit River and walking along and seeing a man reading a newspaper, standing and reading a newspaper. I thought to myself people don't stand and read newspapers, you read it against a building. Oh, you might, but his age was such that I didn't think that was entirely appropriate. I saw that many times. You could pick them up much more

easily because they became fact in their own country. They weren't up against real and I wasn't a professional, so they weren't up against the real stuff. So, they got sloppy, you could pick them out. You didn't have to turn around to stare at them. You could pick them out. That sort of thing. Did they ever try to knock me off a train platform under the third rail, did they ever drive my car off the edge of the road or something of this nature. No, no, but you knew they were there.

Q: What was the sort of the feeling, I mean you would be talking to the other officers about this, were you seeing this as a system that really was running into, maybe not then, but eventually would run into a dead end because of the economics effect? It wasn't really delivering things or not or was it felt to be a presence that would be there forever and ever?

FARRAND: That question I hope you're asking of everybody that's been there. It's really on target. How is it that a group of young Foreign Service officers, mostly male in those years, but female as well later, could, with all their education with all their exposure to democratic principles and the so-called free market and all of this other stuff, how is it that, and I was part of them. That we could be there and we could watch all of this and we could not predict with some certainty that this is not going to go on. This is a train rocketing down very slowly. It's like that train out there in the Midwest the other day rumbling along, nobody could shift it or change it.

Q: It was a train that got started without the driver and nobody was on board, it just accidentally started going. I'm just putting this on the side.

FARRAND: Yes, and it went for sixty-five miles, sixty-three miles with nobody on board at speeds of forty and forty-five miles an hour through towns, I mean, incredible in Ohio. Now, the Soviet Union did have a driver when it started. Lenin and his ideas, he wrote them down and then, of course, he gave it over to Stalin and then other things happened along the way. By the time we were there, there wasn't anything that wasn't going to change the direction of that train. That train under non-thinkers, arterial sclerotic people like Brezhnev, there was no chance that anybody was going to be able to pull the train over to the siding and see whether all the valves are working right, there was nothing. It was headed, but no one that I know was coming forward with a report. This would include the friends up the river, the CIA. There was no one saying this train is headed for a wreck because even though on a daily basis we saw how wholly inadequate the system was to do anything for the people. I won't go into it. It's been written about too much. To produce those things that a normal, modern society needs so that the people could have a standard of living above that of just the essentials on Moslow's hierarchy of need. Except for the party types, they were of course, up on the top there of Moslow's pyramid.

The annual two times a year, I guess it was done in October and then again, I guess on the day of the great revolution and then on May 1st they would put these big parades through Red Square. They'd have this massive rumbling through of tanks and guns and these troops all coming through. That was what was broadcast to the world. It was a display of a lot of heavy stuff and then, of course, you knew about all these secret places that you couldn't go and missiles and bombs and airplanes and guns and tanks and all of this business. Somehow we all became mesmerized thinking that was the key measure and despite the fact that they couldn't produce enough meat for the people or good quality shoes or their clothes in the stores you couldn't sell at a thrift shop here in the United States.

That was true, we all knew that that was reflective of something else going on and the quality control, but the facts were they could still blow us off the face of the planet and we had to take them seriously. Nobody was prepared to say that this train wreck which was coming was going to happen, when it was going to happen or when it happened that the train wouldn't fall over in such a manner that it would destroy the entire train station and that train stations around the world. That was a very bad analogy. Nobody could predict that this thing was going to implode, they thought it would explode if it ever came to an end and nobody was ready, me included. Yet, there were times when I would say, I would say it to my friends, "What the hell are we afraid of?", We'd say, "Yes, why are we worried, we could run these people into the ground." But, they had the bomb and they had it deployed, you know. But even the great thinkers, they didn't pick it up. I think the CIA got it wrong and there's a professor at Harvard at Vassar, his name is Marshall Goldman. He came as close as anybody. He's still in the business and he's a very bright, fine man.

WILLIAM M. WOESSNER
Office of Soviet and East European Exchanges
Washington, DC (1967-1968)

William Woessner was born in 1931 in Queens, New York. He attended Queens College. He later received a Fulbright Scholarship which took him to Glasgow University. He then returned to the United States and attended Northwestern University. He served in the Korean War and then entered the Foreign Service in 1956. His career took him to Germany, Austria, and London. Mr. Woessner was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: What job were you expecting?

WOESSNER: I was assigned to the Office of Soviet and East European Exchanges. The head of the department was Boris Klossen. The deputy was Art Wortzel. Art had recruited me for this job. The problem was that at the point that I came home, U.S.-Soviet relations had gone into one of the bleakest phases of the Cold War. Everything was frozen, but especially the exchanges. In that sense, there was no job. I had the assignment; I moved into the office. But there was very little going on.

Q: How long were you doing this non-job?

WOESSNER: Altogether seven months. I need to explain that when I spent an abbreviated home leave with my parents in New York City and then reported to Washington, a lot of things came together. We left Berlin on a high. It had been an enormously satisfying and happy assignment. Our two youngest children were born there. I mentioned that the Soviets buzzed the city the day we picked up an honorary Berlin birth certificate for one of them. We had a wonderful home. The two youngest children were sent on ahead with a friend to stay with my parents. We came with the three other children. It was the last crossing of the USS Independence. It was taken out

of service after that. We got home and within three days, I had to take my father to the doctor for pains in his stomach. It turned out it was cancer and he in fact died within two months. That was totally unexpected and devastating. At the same time, my wife was diagnosed with a breast lump and had to go for a biopsy. Fortunately, it was benign, but that was the first shadow of that kind that came over us. In the midst of this family stress, we moved with the five children to Washington. For the first time in my life, I had the pleasure of buying a house. I had to go into debt to do it and I don't take kindly to debt. I hadn't learned how to be a good American yet. The combination of all these things - we moved into the new house just weeks before my father actually died - triggered health problems for me, which I understand in retrospect is not unusual. But most significantly, I was stricken with what was then diagnosed as ankylosing spondylitis, a form of spinal arthritis, which meant in effect I couldn't walk. My ankles, knees, and hips were all affected. I got around with great difficulty using two canes. There I was, in a non-job. It was a major turning point. You bounce back and keep on going. I had a very close friend who has been a friend to this day, Frank Meehan, who had been my immediate supervisor in Berlin. By this time, he was up in the Executive Secretariat. After checking with Art Wortzel and checking with my wife, he asked me if I'd like to go to the Operations Center and onto the watch. The reason he put it as a question was that in those days the Operations Center operated on a highly irregular cycle. You worked eight hours one shift beginning at 7a.m. for two days and eight hours another shift beginning at 3p.m. and then another beginning at 11p.m. Then you had two days off and started again. Days of the week had no meaning anymore. Neither did hours of the day or night. Nonetheless it certainly had the desired therapeutic effect. The job was very stimulating, very demanding. Even with my infirmities, I really enjoyed it and did well. One of the most exciting nights of my 30 years in the Foreign Service occurred in September 1968. I was in charge of the watch team when word came that the Warsaw Pact had invaded Czechoslovakia. That was a night to remember. We would have gone off duty at 11:00 p.m. The normal rule was, no matter what was going on, you just handed over to the next watch and they took it from there. But not that night. All hell broke loose and the Operations Center was filled with very important people and a lot of FLASH messages. That was the first time I ever received a CRITIC message.

Q: Here you had been a German hand. How did you see the East German reaction? Was this a surprise?

WOESSNER: The invasion itself? I can't pretend to any expertise on that. The experts in Washington in the intelligence community everywhere were split right down the middle between those who argued that the Soviets had such a stake in economic, commercial, and other relationships with the West that they wouldn't jeopardize that to put down the Prague Spring. On the other side of the equation were those, including my friend Frank Meehan, who argued that ideology and Party supremacy came first regardless and in a case like this dealing with heresy and a threat to orthodoxy, the Soviet leadership would not tolerate it and would put it down. Sadly, they were proven right. I can't say that I lined up on one side or the other. I just didn't know.

Q: Was there any thought of what we would do outside of making noises?

WOESSNER: Our thinking was overshadowed by lingering guilt that we had led the Hungarians to believe that if they rose up, we would go to their aid.

Q: We're talking about '56.

WOESSNER: Yes. So, this time around, I don't think that was seriously considered. The spheres of influence were clearly drawn. But it was a bitter disappointment to see the whole thing crushed that way.

You asked what I thought about the East Germans. The East Germans did participate in the armed forces that were posted around Czechoslovakia. It was fascinating too that we knew everything about troop movements, military placements. What we didn't know was what was going on in the inner circle of the Kremlin. The Prague Spring was suppressed. You asked what my take was on the East Germans. What was so wonderful about the two years in the Operations Center was that that narrow focus disappeared now into a sense of the full range of our diplomatic activities. I learned so much and it gave me a real sense of how the Department works, how the whole foreign policy structure in Washington works, relationships with the Pentagon, with the White House etc., and in that context East Germany, Eastern Europe really dwindled. For some people (Dean Rusk maybe notoriously), it didn't count for anything. But for me as part of my education as a Foreign Service Officer, that was a marvelous assignment.

G. NORMAN ANDERSON
Administrative Officer
Moscow (1967-1969)

Ambassador G. Norman Anderson was born in Delaware in 1932. He received a bachelor's degree from Columbia University. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1954-1958. He attended graduate school at the Russian Institute at Columbia. Ambassador Anderson has served in the Lebanon, Germany, the Soviet Union, Morocco, Bulgaria, Tunisia, Sudan, and Macedonia. He was interviewed by J.P. Moffat on June 18, 1996.

Q: When you returned to Russian training at Garmisch, it must have been a pleasant year.

ANDERSON: That was a very nice year. Our first activity was a week devoted to learning. We had a very good group of Russian former officers, who had mostly defected during World War II. Previously I had studied Russian in the Navy with various princes and counts who had defected or left in 1917. So this second group was an entirely different group, brought up under the Soviet system. So it was complementary to the earlier training.

In any case, after a year in Garmisch I went to Moscow as a rotating trainee, became the assistant administrative officer and later political officer. Actually, administrative work gave us more contact with Russians than political work. I was the liaison officer with the so-called UPDK, which was the organization that took care of all the servicing of embassies, including providing local personnel. So I had to spend much of my time at UPDK headquarters negotiating for drivers and maids and various services. And when the Ambassador's plane came to Moscow I

had to organize the unloading of the aircraft, which meant dealing with the KGB, whose officials were all over the cargoes and made life difficult for us. The KGB, for example, came up with new rules for cargo every time the plane came in. Without notice, for example, we were told to list everything on board, all the equipment and things of that kind. Some of the equipment was very sensitive and couldn't be listed, it was in sealed containers. In any case, we very often had a stand-off during which we had to wait at the airport for many hours, but finally the cargo was always released after the KGB had inflicted what pressures it could.

Q: Were you impressed or unimpressed by those elements of the KGB with which you came in contact with?

ANDERSON: I found them very heavy-handed and very blatant. We of course were followed and watched and our apartment and offices were bugged, but it was all extremely blatant. For example, in our apartment building the shifts from the listening room came down every eight hours in the elevator, so you always knew they were coming from the upper floor. That always reminded you, of course, that you were not alone in your apartment or office.

Q: Of course this was in the Brezhnev era, and perhaps the most exciting thing that must have happened in the period was the Czechoslovak affair. Were you at all touched by this?

ANDERSON: Yes, I was in the political section at the time and the ambassador, Llewellyn Thompson, had sent in a message to Washington regarding what the Soviet Union might do. As I recall, he estimated that the chances were 50-50 that the Soviet Union would take military action. Well, one day in August I woke up and listened to the BBC, which I did every morning, and I learned that the Soviet Union had invaded Czechoslovakia. So of course, I rushed to the embassy. There was no sign of activity in Moscow, however. We all met in the political section and mapped out our activities for the day. We were sent out into town to try and put our finger on the pulse of what was going on. The only unusual event was that Pravda did not come out that morning on time, and this had not happened since the death of Stalin in 1953. As we were out in town Pravda did come out and it was tacked up on various bulletin boards. Not too many people noticed that on page four there was an article saying that the Czechoslovak party had requested fraternal assistance from the Soviet brothers. But anyway, this was the announcement of the invasion, which was not exactly spelled out very clearly. The reactions in Moscow itself were practically invisible. There were no protests to speak of. One very small group of about three or four people protested in Red Square, but they were immediately carted off by the KGB. But aside from that there were practically no reactions whatsoever. This held true in the following days also.

Q: Do you think that this was because of repression or do you think that people didn't care? What passed for public opinion?

ANDERSON: I think some dissidents did express their opinions very quietly, but it was very dangerous at the time to speak to foreign diplomats. So I think most people just did not want to be arrested and carted off. Anybody who spoke to a foreigner was at considerable risk. At one point, for example, we got lost driving to our destination near Moscow and a truck driver stopped and asked whether he could help us. He probably didn't know we were diplomats. We noticed as

we were driving off that our KGB follow car stopped the truck, and obviously the driver was taken away for interrogation. So, it was not easy to speak to foreigners.

Q: Do you think Washington was adequately prepared for this move into Czechoslovakia?

ANDERSON: I think Washington was probably pretty well informed because I believe our embassy had signaled the serious possibility of military action. Of course, in retrospect it is hard to know what we could have done about it, probably not very much. Just as there wasn't much we could do in the case of the Soviet repression of Hungary, which had taken place earlier, in 1956.

Q: ...common knowledge that what few dealings there were during such a difficult period with the Russians often took place in Washington, leaving the embassy out in left field. Was this the situation during that period?

ANDERSON: It was hard for me to judge since I was rather a junior officer at the time. I know that very frequently it was hard to get appointments with high level officials in Moscow. They made appointments very difficult to obtain. I assume that a lot of business was done through Ambassador Dobrynin in the United States, who had access to the highest levels, it seems.

Q: The Soviet Union/Eastern European and the Arabic speaking world came somewhat together in your next four or five years when you went to the Soviet desk and then the Egyptian desk. Can you give us an overview of what you worked on during these periods?

ANDERSON: On the Soviet desk I was involved in Soviet foreign policy, mostly in the Middle East, but also U.N. activities. I did many, many briefing papers during that particular time. Actually, when I shifted to the Egyptian desk it was something of a carry-over because Egypt at the time was very much under Soviet influence. I think there were something like 15,000 or more Soviet troops or technicians in Egypt at the time. Bases and missile systems had been installed. During the first part of my tour on the Egyptian desk, the United States only had an interests section in Cairo with a handful of people, but then came the 1973 war and, following that, peace efforts. Finally we did renew diplomatic relations with Egypt during that time. So, it was a very active period.

Q: During the shift to the Nixon administration were you on the Soviet desk or the Egyptian desk?

ANDERSON: I was on the Egyptian desk during much of that period.

Q: Did it have any effect at your level? Did you notice any changes?

ANDERSON: Of course, Henry Kissinger became Secretary of State during the time I was on the Egyptian desk, and I think that he brought in a very noticeable difference. He was quite interested in Egypt, and he made a great number of trips there. Also, President Nixon went to Egypt during the later part of my time on the desk. There again we, of course, did many, many briefing books. For the first Kissinger trip to Cairo, I think he did depend on us a great deal, but

as time went on he neglected to report back what he was doing in Egypt. He probably found our input much less useful as time went on. But in any case, we did quite a lot of, one might say, legwork for Kissinger. I remember one case in which he decided that the United States would donate a large sum of money to a charity being run by Mrs. Sadat. I was given the task of implementing this decision, which was not too easy to do, since there were all sorts of laws that were involved. It involved donating some surplus currency in Egyptian pounds to this particular charity, and that required a presidential determination that this was in our national interest. The decision thus had to be authorized by President Nixon. We sort of had to pick up the pieces as Henry Kissinger went through his diplomatic activities.

Q: Did he rely on alternate sources of wisdom as time went on or did he appear to do it entirely on his own?

ANDERSON: I think that he liked to have various analysis, but when it came to his own contacts with the highest levels he was the person who knew most about them. There wasn't much we could tell him about what had gone on in these contacts since we were not privy to the exchanges.

Q: ...expertise must have come into play when the Soviet/Egyptian friendship treaty was signed. Were you involved from both sides or from one side or the other?

ANDERSON: Well, we were asked to analyze the significance of this treaty. I was on the Soviet desk and Walter Smith, another Soviet hand, was on the Egyptian desk. The two of us put together our analysis and we agreed completely that we should not overreact to this particular friendship treaty. We didn't think it would have much practical effect. We thought it was mostly a propaganda move. However, our analysis was edited as it went up the line. The outcome was an analysis by our superiors that this was a much more dramatic development. By the time it ended up this was a tremendously important treaty. Actually, I believe Walter Smith and I were right about it because the whole thing fizzled out as time went on and eventually the Egyptians threw out the Soviet technicians and military personnel there.

DAVID M. EVANS
Analyst, Soviet Economic Division, INR
Washington, DC (1967-1970)

Mr. Evans was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and was educated at Harvard University and the University of Belgrade Law School. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963. As an Economic Specialist, Mr. Evans served in Warsaw, Belgrade, Moscow and London. In addition to his economic assignments, he served in senior level positions dealing with International Security and Counter-Terrorism. He also served as Political Advisor to the Commander-in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe. Mr. Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

EVANS: I was in INR from the end of 1967, and I left in the summer of 1970, so it was for two and a half years. This time I was assigned to the Soviet Economic Division, and given an extraordinarily interesting job replacing a fellow you probably know, Art Smith. The job was monitoring Communist shipments of military items to Vietnam. This opened up an extraordinary contact with the whole intelligence community because I worked very closely with the CIA, and the DIA, and various parts of the State Department in monitoring the shipments which were both by ship and by air. It involved a lot of highly classified intelligence, special intelligence; a lot of back room stuff, examination of photographs, markings, and keeping record of ships and ports and sources of delivery. It was actually quite a fascinating job.

Q: What was your impression? Was this an all-out effort on the part of the Soviets or the Chinese, or the Bloc, or was the feeling that this was a moderated effort? Was any conclusion made, about that?

EVANS: Well, that is an interesting question. I don't know whether it was moderated, but it certainly was not, I think, an all-out thing. It was a little bit of fits and starts, some stuff was good, some stuff wasn't; some stuff was new, some stuff wasn't, particularly the Soviet aircraft that were sent out. Then there was a big question about the stuff that was coming from Eastern Europe. For political reasons, there was a great deal of pressure to show that the Eastern Europeans were not sending military things. So, I had the sometimes unhappy task of telling people that it was military. The State Department, for whatever reason, at that time, wanted to show that what was coming from Eastern Europe was mostly military support, and therefore, should not block our assistance, or whatever other programs we had going on with Eastern Europe. Therefore, if there were overcoats, they were not deemed military things. If they were trucks, they were not deemed military. They were support. At one point, the CIA brought me unmistakable evidence that the Romanians were sending anti-tank grenade launchers. These were very sophisticated, very good anti-tank grenade launchers that would pierce armor.

Q: We are talking about, what I guess were called RPGs?

EVANS: Exactly.

Q: Rocket propelled grenades.

EVANS: RPG-7s.

Q: I have one at home.

EVANS: Well, you know exactly what I mean then. I wrote up this report, and sent it forward and immediately was reprimanded for revealing this, because the Administration wanted to get Congressional authorization to supply Romania with a heavy water reactor for nuclear energy. My processing of this information did not help. That was a somewhat surprising thing.

As I got more involved in the whole Vietnam issue, not just the delivery of arms but the actual progress of the war I realized that we were losing the war, and by all projections, we would lose the war. There was no way we could kill enough Vietnamese to win the war. That wasn't the

way we were going to win the war anyway. I was reading all this data, writing it up and analyzing it. I thought I had documented it very thoroughly and come to a very sound conclusion. I handed it to the Deputy Director of INR. The next day, I asked him if he had agreed with the paper, and whether he had sent it on up. He pushed the paper back to me, and said, "I can't send that paper forward." I said, "What do you mean, this is very important, it shows that we are losing the war. The Secretary of State has to see this." He said, "We are under strict instructions not to send the Secretary of State any analysis that shows we are losing the war." I thought, "Good God, I do not believe this." That this was the policy: that the senior people were being purposely denied access to the truth or the facts. It was very disturbing. I referred to this many times in the past.

I was also in INR when the Tet Offensive began. We had a discussion about that and there were a number of people who thought this was a sure sign that we were going to win. My analysis was that this was a sign that we were going to lose. I saw the Tet Offensive as the major turnaround, the signal that the game was up.

So, INR was very interesting. It exposed me to a lot of intelligence sources and analysis, but, also pointed out a lot of political forces that were in play that did not always square with what intelligence and the facts would show.

Q: What was your impression of the intelligence apparatus from your perspective, of what you were getting, like the CIA, NSA, the DIA?

EVANS: It was amazing, but I was impressed with the breadth of it and, particularly CIA and DIA. I worked very closely with them. I used to come out to Arlington Hall and have a lot of meetings with DIA. I was impressed with the ability, the dedication, analytical skills, and the technical capability. I was amazed at what we were able to pick up through satellite photography and through human to human reporting. I was very impressed.

Q: Well then, you left in late 1969?

EVANS: Actually, it was 1970.

CHARLES WILLIAM MAYNES
Economic-Commercial Officer
Moscow (1968-1970)

Ambassador Maynes was born in South Dakota and raised there and in Utah. He was educated at Harvard University and Oxford. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, he was first assigned to the State Department in Washington, then to Vientiane as Economic Officer. Following Russian language studies, he was posted to Moscow as Economic-Commercial Officer. Resigning the Department in 1970, he served a two-year assignment in the office of Senator Morse, after which he joined the Carnegie Endowment and later served on President Carter's

Transition Team. From 1977 to 1989, he held the position of Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations with the rank of Ambassador. Ambassador Maynes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: You got to Russia, then, I suppose around August of '68?

MAYNES: That's right. That's when.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MAYNES: From August of '68 till August or July of 1970.

Q: Before we get to the reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, what was your impression of the Soviet Union when you got there, compared to what you'd been thinking about it?

MAYNES: I think it was pretty much what I expected, except that I didn't . . . I mean, I knew it was certainly a very highly authoritarian place with lots of repression and official anti-American ideology. What I wasn't prepared for was the warmth of the Russian people toward Americans, which was very genuine at the time. And that's probably changed, but it certainly was very strong then. I also wasn't prepared for our own isolation and self-imposed isolation, our fear of contact and our own paranoia, which was much greater than I would have expected.

Q: How did this translate itself, this paranoia?

MAYNES: Well, fear of contact with Russians. Part of this stems from our foolish reaction - in terms of policy response - to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Since we didn't want to do anything that was substantive, we were all ordered not to talk to Russians. So having spent 10 months learning Russian, I was ordered by the security officer at the embassy - not ordered but strongly encouraged - to avoid all contact with Russians. In fact, we were under an official prohibition from talking to them officially for several months, which of course simply cut us off from information and any modest influence that we could have.

What I also realized very quickly after I arrived - and I had not understood this - that Soviet studies was a radioactive field. I remember encountering a professor a couple of months after I was there, a distinguished professor here in the United States, and he told me he had been the first professor in the Cold War period to be permitted to spend a year at the Russian Institute, studying there. And I said, "Well, you must have written an interesting account of that." He said, "Oh, no, I couldn't possibly." And I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, if I said anything favorable, I would have been ostracized in the United States, and if I said anything unfavorable, I would have been denied a visa to return." So that was a big shock to me, and then I began to realize and noticed that - we quickly noticed - that the best analysis of Soviet reality was coming out of the CIA and not out of the State Department. And since I knew the people in the State Department and to my mind they were just as gifted and in some ways, I thought, maybe even more than their CIA colleagues - and I think certainly on the whole a more elite group - there had to be a reason for it. And the reason was that the CIA had anonymity, and we didn't, and people were

scared to death to say anything that deviated even slightly from the party line, whatever that might be at the moment. So it was not as radioactive, I suppose, as Chinese studies, for which people were actually thrown out of the Service and that sort of thing. But people learned their lesson, and there was an orthodoxy that you had to follow, and you were only permitted to deviate from it if you got to a very, very high level and were very much trusted by the people in power back in Washington.

Q: Well, your job is what at that embassy?

MAYNES: I was number two in the economic section.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MAYNES: For one year, Thompson, and he did have the reputation where he could talk truth to power. And then Jake Beam, who was a very distinguished ambassador but did not have that confidence back in Washington.

Q: I'd like to try to get the feeling of the atmosphere there. When you say that the reporting, particularly let's say on the political side, which you would have access to now, did you find that. . . . This is the early Brezhnev period, I guess, wasn't it?

MAYNES: In retrospect, I think you can see that the Soviet Union was fitfully trying to reform itself really from 1956 on, and the big chance came when Khrushchev finally had supreme power, and while we were there, he was thrown out, but they knew that they were in trouble, because basically the model for growth that they had was running out of power. The model was, take surplus labor with the status quo technology, marry them - in other words, take peasants off the *kolkhoz*, put them in a factory, and you get a one-time immediate shot-in-the-arm increase in GNP and growth. By the time I arrived, they were facing a labor shortage, and the technical journals were filled with articles about this, and it was clear that they knew that they had to do something about this. This, of course, ultimately brought them down. Actually, I personally wrote some airgrams at the time predicting that this couldn't last. What I didn't understand was how long they could hold on, but it wasn't that I was so prescient; it was that they were saying it themselves. You just had to read the journals. And they were floundering around trying to figure out how they could solve this dilemma. And they talked about putting the handicapped to work. Of course, that wouldn't solve the problem. Or making students go three years to university instead of four. All these were one-shot, small solutions to the problem. There are only two solutions, and both were dangerous for them. One was reform, to increase entrepreneurial activity, and also the implementation of new scientific discoveries into the economy. And they tried that. They created a scientific - I've forgotten - state committee for science and technology. They tried to develop technology to take the existing labor force and make it more productive. And the trouble was that they needed to open up the system, really, to do that. And then they tried entrepreneurial reform, and they had something called the Shchokino Experiment while I was there, and they were going on and on about this. And it did give them big gains where they allowed the director more authority. But they were afraid of replicating it, so it was just like a little hothouse plant out there in the middle of Russia. And then they tried importing foreign technology, and that's, of course, when we were slapping sanctions on them trying to stop them

from doing it. But they were getting a lot of technology from Western Europe and Japan, but there again, they'd buy these plants, they would be state-of-the-art plants, turnkey projects, and they were so afraid of infection from the outside that they would dismiss the foreign specialists as soon as the plant was completed, and then they never could bring it up to full capacity. So you'd walk into these modern plants, and they'd be working at 50 per cent capacity. So they were trying everything they could to change the system and not lose control. And then came the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and that really closed the reforms down. The reforms sort of stumbled on for a while, but it's clear now that the invasion of Czechoslovakia basically closed a chapter that had begun with Khrushchev's speech before the 20th Congress. Then it greatly intensified when he became head of the Politburo, then began to lose momentum but still was continuing in the early days of Brezhnev and Kosygin and got virtually shut down with the invasion.

Q: How did the invasion of Czechoslovakia. . . . You're the new boy on the block, and often your antennae are more alert to things. How did you find our embassy reacted to this, particularly the political section?

MAYNES: Well, the embassy had predicted the invasion, but in a bureaucratic manner that didn't help very much. In other words, they said the chances were 51-49 that the invasion would take place. Thompson was gone, and we had no access to Soviet leadership, so we basically had a reasonably professional response to it, but I don't think we showed any great insight because we were really denied anything. . . . We were ordered by Washington not to talk to Russian officials; Thompson was gone; we couldn't fight that prohibition; and we were followed everywhere we went. From the minute that the invasion took place, the KGB put agents on us wherever we went. So we were reduced to reading the newspapers, you know - and actually, we were very skilled at that. People in Moscow developed, particularly after they'd been there about six months or a year, a very fine sense of what words meant, and so we did a good job of that, but I don't think we brought any great. . . . we didn't perform the normal task of diplomacy, which is to somehow get into the mind of the leadership of the other country and be able to inform your own country of what's really motivating them and what some of the pressures are. It wasn't until Thompson came back that we began to articulate a reasonable version of what might have taken place inside the Russian leadership, because he had that finger-feel for it. He also had contacts like no one else in the embassy.

Q: Well, you're pointing to one of the things, too - the bureaucratic response. When we have a crisis with a country, we often withdraw our ambassador, we tell people "Don't have contact," which always has struck me as being just the wrong thing.

MAYNES: It is the wrong thing.

Q: You don't go into a pet or a pout. I mean, what the hell. This is when you want a full-court press.

MAYNES: I agree. When you have one of these crises, for a US Government or for the Administration in power, the domestic public relations are more important than the diplomatic considerations. So it's more important for them to have a headline in the post saying we ain't

talking to these nasty Russians because of what they've done, rather than sitting down and trying to figure out whether there's any opportunity really to influence this decision.

Q: In your observation, is this an American way of responding to these things, or is it a diplomatic-

MAYNES: Yes, primarily, and it basically comes down to the fact that Congress has such a role in foreign policy. In other words, you can have a democratic system and have a very important parliament and a traditional form of diplomacy, but you can't have it with the American system, because the Congress has an independent power base totally separate from the Administration, and Congress may not only have different views, which it often does, but it has different political interests often and will manipulate the crisis - as will the Administration - for domestic political gain in a way that I don't think takes place to the same degree in any other democratic country.

Q: In the economic side, did you find yourself, again, reduced pretty much to reading journals and all?

MAYNES: Yes.

Q: As opposed to getting out and looking around?

MAYNES: Well, I traveled quite a bit, and we would visit Russian factories. But of course none of us were technically expert, so it was more of a political mission than a diplomatic mission. At the end of my tour, there was a burst of commercial activity, which was held in check by Kissinger, who was trying to follow his "linkage" theory and get the Russians to help us in Vietnam.

Q: We're talking about Kissinger at the time was the national security advisor.

MAYNES: That's right, and founded this theory of linkage. The Russians were building a major truck plant, and Henry Ford came over and a number of very prominent American business came through the embassy interested in trade with Russia.

Q: How about when Henry Ford came through? This would be Henry Ford II, I guess.

MAYNES: That's right.

Q: Did you get any impression from him of what his impression was of the factories?

MAYNES: Well, it was interesting. First of all, he had Christina with him, who stunned the Russians by showing up at an embassy reception in a see-through topless blouse, which also mesmerized the embassy officers; also they'd never seen anything like that, and she was gorgeous - at least that's my memory. It was very sheer - let's put it this way. I'd never seen anything like it before. Ford said something that I had never realized before. First of all, he said, "You know, the Russians are interested in having me participate in this, and I can't quite understand why, because I assemble trucks and automobiles, I don't manufacture them." And he

said, "Only the Italians manufacture automobiles." In other words, they start with the ingot at one end and an automobile at the other. It's a totally integrated production. Fiat, for that reason, has won many of the contracts in Eastern Europe - in Poland and other places - because you had no automobile industry, no suppliers, and you'd walk in to an empty wheat field and build a plant that goes from the ingot to the-

Q: When I was in Yugoslavia around this time, a little earlier, they produced what became the Yugo, which was a Fiat, called the Zastava.

MAYNES: Okay, so he said, you know, he couldn't understand why they wanted him and that if he got the contract he would have to strip his empire of all of its most talented people and send them to Russia to put this damn thing together. So that was an interesting kind of insight, but then we saw why the Russians were interested. It turned out that the minister of the automobile industry had been a young worker in Dearborn in 1932 or something like that, when we had these exchanges.

Q: Actually there was a Ford plant put up in the Soviet Union at one time.

MAYNES: That's right.

Q: In the 20's or '30's.

MAYNES: That's right, and that was when Walter Reuther also came over and worked there. So this guy had made his career, you could realize - I mean, I'd seen this phenomenon: someone's educated in a particular country, and of course it's the reason we all want them to be educated in our countries, they learn our specifications, they learn our way of doing things, and they make their career by saying the American or the French or the German way is the best - "It's the best," you know. So he was very anxious to have Ford bid for it.

But those were my two dominant impressions of that period. I also remember Bill Miller, who later became secretary of the Treasury, showing up in my office and telling me how smart he was. That was when we were in merger mania, you know, and the sign of a great businessman was to assemble as many diverse factories, regardless of what they produced, as possible in one gigantic trust, and he had outdone everybody else. So he, of course, showed our ignorance. I knew the name and the name of the company, but I wasn't as familiar as he thought I should be, so he spent an hour telling me how he was the smartest businessman in America and at that time, I guess, was. Shortly after he left, the company collapsed.

But we had several people like that come through at that time, scouting out the landscape, but basically restricted by US policy.

Q: What about agriculture? Was the agricultural attaché part of your section?

MAYNES: Yes.

Q: Because agriculture and the Soviet Union have always been two really key ingredients.

MAYNES: We had a very active agricultural attaché, who, of course was reporting regularly to Washington on what the harvest was going to be because that would influence how much grain the United States might be able to sell. And then we had a science attaché who maintained contact - he probably had the most interesting job in the embassy, because it's just the reverse of here. Here scientists tend to be conservative, and English and history professors tend to be liberal; and in Russia it was just the opposite. The language and history professors were ideologues, and the chemists and the physicists - as we can see now, many of them have become leading reformers - and that was because those were the fields where you could express yourself with fewest restraints. So the more liberally minded tended to go in those professions.

Q: Do you remember the science attaché's name.

MAYNES: Yes, Chris Spire was his name. He's dead.

Q: It turned out - obviously it was a combination of political and economic factors, but the economic factor seems to be the major cause of the Soviet Union.

MAYNES: I think it was. I think the Soviet Union basically began to disappear the day that Stalin died, because the day Stalin died, they stopped shooting people. Before that, if you were a dissenter in the Soviet Union, the threat to you would not only be that you'd lose your freedom but you'd lose your life, and not only your life but your wife's and your friends' and your children's lives would be threatened maybe with extinction. After Stalin died, they stopped shooting. They still were harshly repressive, but decreasingly so and erratically so. And so more and more people - and you have them in every culture - who don't conform, won't conform, want to raise questions began to raise questions, and the Soviets didn't know quite how to handle them. You know, they tried intimidating them, and of course they succeeded in most cases, but then there were some people, like Sakharov, who wouldn't be intimidated, just would not be intimidated. And while I was there, you had the first protests in Red Square, and I think, in retrospect, it was a clear process that was going on. And then you had a change in *pokalenniya*, a generation change. The Soviet Union after the great purges was basically run by a group of people who were almost all the same age. You've got to remember that Gromyko became ambassador to the United States in the midst of World War II, I think, when he was 32 or 33.

Q: And he'd been DCM before that.

MAYNES: And Kosygin - he was jumped up to a major position in '39. In other words, it would be as if all of us are starting out in our careers and suddenly some great catastrophe eliminates all the people who are 40, 50, and 60. And so suddenly these jobs are open. So it isn't that everybody who got the job was talented, but they were all sort of the same generation, and they were all ready to leave the scene. So that's one of the reasons that I think when Gorbachev came in, the change was even greater than might otherwise have been the case if you'd had, as most societies do, sort of mixed generations in power. You have somebody 60 working next to somebody 40, and they both have jobs of equal . . . because of the accident of promotions and that sort of thing. But in Russia, everybody was about the same age, all getting old together, all holding on as long as possible, and suddenly, at some point, you had to make a break with the

past. So they tried two old guys after Brezhnev died - Andropov and Chernenko. They were the same age.

Q: And they died.

MAYNES: They died right like that. So finally at some point, you have to make a break. You have to say, "We have to reach out to a new generation." Well, this new generation was the generation that had grown up at the time of the 20th Party Congress and had a totally different point of view. And not only that - all the jobs suddenly began to open up because all these people were dying. So I think it was the combination of the fact that they stopped shooting people. Well, it was three things: they stopped shooting people; the system, which did work in the 30's of taking standing state technology and moving people off the farm, ran out of steam and they couldn't find anything else to replace it; and then you have this generation change. You put those three together, and it was explosive.

Q: While you were there - again we're talking about the '68-70 period - did you have any feel - I realize you were cut off, but I was wondering whether you were able to have the kitchen table conversations with any of the intelligentsia or others - about how the ideology was going, because in many of the countries, the Marxist ideology was taught in the schools and seemed to be sterile as hell and didn't have any real-

MAYNES: When I was there, of course, Kosygin and Brezhnev were still in the full use of their powers. I guess my view is that the system, there was great cynicism about the system, but less about the ideology - that people did believe in it, because they didn't know anything else - but who knows; there were no public opinion polls, that sort of thing - but I had the impression that what they wanted was socialism with a human face. That's why the Czech experiment had a big impact on the intelligentsia. That's what they wanted. They didn't want our system, but they wanted their system with a human face. They did not want Stalinism. They wanted more freedom. They wanted more experimentation. There is a collectivist ethos in Russian history, not just in Bolshevik history. There is in Russian history. They are suspicious of dog-eat-dog capitalism. They still are. They're going to be even more so after this last currency crisis there. So you didn't run into many people - maybe they were afraid to say so - who were sort of Milton Friedman libertarians - of the sort you run into now. You run into quite a few of those people now, who are pro-capitalism *à l'outrance* (to extremes). But then, I think the more adventurous spirits - I mean really adventurous - would say we'd like to be like Sweden. The sort of more normal adventurous spirit would say we like what the Czechs were doing and we made a mistake. That is the way we want to go. And I think that's basically where Gorbachev thought he was taking it, and it wouldn't work. I mean the system couldn't stand that kind of reform, I don't think, because in the end, the truth is, and that was the unpleasant truth, the system really did depend upon repression. In other words, it wasn't an aberration of the leadership. The system would collapse without the repression.

Q: Well, in my interviews and from other readings, I came away with the impression that you're moving into the Nixon-Kissinger period, but particularly with Kissinger, who seemed to of the opinion, which is really sort of a European one, that maybe the Soviets were going to come out ahead in power, politics or whatever it is, and the best thing was to try to cut a deal and work

with these people because of what was happening in Vietnam and we were beginning to lose our will.

MAYNES: I think that's true.

Q: And I was wondering - this would be very early on - but I was wondering whether there was any of that feeling among your colleagues.

MAYNES: Well, I told you that we wrote a couple of messages to Washington suggesting that Russia could not sustain the arms race, that it was, for all the reasons that I've mentioned - labor shortages, inability to use new technology, or develop it on its own, etc. - that it was on a course where it could not compete. That was not an accepted view, and I think there was a fear that the Soviet Union would exist for 200 years and we were losing our will. But I've got to remember also that this was the period when we landed somebody on the moon, and so that was, I remember being at the embassy, and the head of the Internal Section for Political Affairs came by and he said, "We're just too good, aren't we? We're just too good." I'm not sure everybody had Kissinger's pessimism about America.

Q: And also, this was early on. I mean, a little later we were talking about things going bad in Vietnam and protests were going on.

MAYNES: I think Kissinger clearly saw his mission was managing a soft landing for America's decline and trying to consolidate some kind of structure of stability before we no longer had the influence that we had at the time. And I think he did see the Soviet Union as stronger than in fact it was. But I'm just saying that you could see at the time, and it was reported at the time, and this isn't because we were so far-seeing. It was in the God damned literature, and all you had to do was read the literature, and they were saying it themselves.

Q: Did you get any feel - it's always very difficult for somebody there because of the limited contact - I sometimes have the feeling that our people in the Political and Economic Sections knew far more of what was going on in the Soviet Union than even a well-informed Soviet did, because you had the time and leisure to read all the literature, where the normal engineer or others didn't

MAYNES: That's true, but of course that's the privilege of being a diplomat. When I subsequently became an editor, at one point I found myself appearing quite often on television on morning news programs when crisis would break, and it wasn't that I was the most informed person in the United States on any particular issue, but because I was paid to read, basically. They suddenly discovered that I knew a lot about everything going on in foreign affairs. Well, a diplomat sitting in Moscow is in the same position. I mean you're paid to observe and read and study, and after a while, yes, you do get to be better informed than almost anybody, except maybe some academic specialist. Unfortunately diplomats still have a lot of unnecessary bureaucratic make-work.

Q: What about other diplomats? Did you find that we were using them, they were using us?

MAYNES: Well, there were only a couple of what I would call serious embassies in Moscow, as is probably true here in Washington also. Now by serious I mean who are engaged in more than visa facilitation and trade promotion, people who are studying the high politics and economic strategy of the country. And those countries were preeminently Britain, which has sort of imperial inertia driving its foreign service, and they invested heavily in the training and recruitment of this kind of person. So if you went to the British embassy, you ran into people like yourself who had been given language training and who saw as their job to try to do more than just facilitate the businessman or congressional visitor but to understand the country and to try to interpret it for their government. The French did that. The Germans less so, but they had a couple of people, one of whom ended up as the German ambassador here. And the Japanese also invested heavily. And then the Yugoslavs, for obvious reasons. The other East Europeans tended to run that kind of almost intelligence activity, which is really what. . . . I mean, diplomats are involved in legal intelligence, and the East European countries would run that activity through the part of the Party relationship rather than through their embassies, so their embassies were not as well informed. But the Yugoslav embassy was very well informed. The Italians had at least one person who was of this sort, and that was about it. And then everybody else was in trade promotion and visa facilitation.

Q: And did you find them sort of leeching off us when they had to do a report?

MAYNES: Yes, they descended upon the Americans to find out. But you see, we leeching off them too, because the Soviet system was closed, but it wasn't completely closed - couldn't be - it had some outside contact. By the way, I forgot to include the Finns in that group. The Finns had an outstanding embassy, outstanding, probably the best in the country, better than ours in terms of quality of people - of course for obvious reasons. This was very important to them. But all these other countries would have contact with the leadership, which we didn't have very often. It's a two-way exchange, because many of them had more contacts. Now the Finns were especially valuable because they not only had the analytical capability; they also had the contact. And so that's why they were so valuable. And their current ambassador, Otto Maassela, was a third secretary when I was there, and he was already seeing his prime minister on a regular basis to report on Russian affairs. And he would accompany the prime minister to see Kosygin.

Q: What about our CIA reporting? Were you privy to much of it?

MAYNES: I wasn't privy to the reporting from the field. That went through a separate channel. Of course, I got all the reports coming back, and I must say I had a much higher regard for their analytical capability than their spy recruitment and all that stuff. The kinds of people they have in Washington and Moscow, I didn't think they were the top people, but their analytical staff back here was terrific.

Q: Did you see Thompson in operation much?

MAYNES: Yes, I did, and he was like a swan among the ugly ducklings. I mean, to the degree the Foreign Service has deteriorated, I think one of the reasons it's deteriorated is that the system no longer invests in people the way it used to. If you look at that sort of great generation of Kennan and Bohlen and Thompson and Henderson, they received the equivalent of a Ph.D. in

Russian studies. Kennan was sent for three years to study at the University of Berlin; Bohlen, three years at the University of Paris. I don't know where Thompson was sent. And then they were given almost nothing but Russian studies and Russian assignments, Russian-related assignments from then on, and the result was that they got a deep grounding. My generation got eight months in FSI, and it showed. Maybe they were much better than we were - I'm perfectly willing to concede that. They weren't that much better, though. And yet they did better, and I think that we do not invest in our people the way we used to, and Thompson was one of the last who had come up through the system and had developed a deep historical appreciation of Soviet behavior, was able to put things in context in a way that the rest of us weren't. I mean, when airgrams would be sent up to him, he could point out that this had happened a few times earlier, and this kind of thing. And so he just had a depth, and he also had a character that made him different.

Q: One can say that in October of '62 Thompson was probably the key figure who might have prevented World War III, by being the Soviet expert sitting with the Kennedy Administration dealing with the Cuban Missile Crisis. He was the one who gave the guidance that seemed to steer us clear of a complete confrontation.

MAYNES: He was a very wise man, very good ambassador, very wise man.

Q: How about Jake Beam, who was also ambassador to Poland and had been around for a while?

MAYNES: He didn't have the depth in Russian studies that was necessary. He couldn't speak Russian. He was a very fine ambassador, but there is a difference between the kind of knowledge that I'm talking about and simply diplomatic experience, which he had in spades. He was a very distinguished diplomat and a lovely man to work for. He was more dependent on us than Thompson was.

Q: Did you have any feeling at that time about the beginning of the Kissinger-Dobrynin sort of channel?

MAYNES: No, except that we were getting complaints from our Desk back in State Department that they didn't know what was going on, being cut out. But we didn't know the extent of it, and I had left when Kissinger committed the unforgivable mistake of showing up in Moscow and not even telling the ambassador until he'd left that he'd been in town. One thing I did notice, by the way, during my career in Moscow is that paradoxically, Soviet diplomats knew more about these exchanges than American diplomats. Quite low-ranking Soviet diplomats would know about exchanges in Washington that we were not informed of.

Q: It's one of the aberrations, and actually, I think, many would say it was a real weakness of the whole Kissinger time, that brilliant as he may have been you almost had the feeling he was playing games with the American bureaucracy-

MAYNES: He made some big mistakes.

Q: -and he enjoyed this. I mean, you know, it wasn't just tactics - there was a certain amount of pleasure.

MAYNES: That's right, he did. And he made big mistakes as a result. I mean Jerry (Gerard) Smith's book, Doubletalk, documents in a devastating way mistakes that Kissinger made in SALT I because he did not consult his own staff, and they were the kinds of mistakes that led to problems in the Senate ratification and the subsequent attacks on what he had done. Many of those could have been avoided if he'd just had the common sense or humility to talk to some of his own people.

WARREN ZIMMERMAN
INR, Soviet Policy
Washington, DC (1968-1970)

Political Officer
Moscow (1973-1975)

Policy Planning
Washington, DC (1975-1977)

Warren Zimmerman was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale in 1956 and attended Kings College, Cambridge as a Fulbright Scholar. He served briefly in the U.S. Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1961. Ambassador Zimmerman's career included positions in Caracas, Belgrade, Moscow, Paris, Madrid, Geneva, and Vienna. He was the ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1989-1992. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 10, 1996.

Q: Today is March 18, 1997. Warren, you were in INR. I would like to get the dates at the beginning. You were there from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I was there from the late summer of 1968. In fact my arrival in INR coincided with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. I stayed until long about March of 1970.

Q: Okay. What was where were you in INR?

ZIMMERMANN: I was in the part that was then called RSB. I don't remember what it stands for anymore, but it was the Soviet foreign policy. I was responsible for Soviet policy in Africa and Latin America, and later on in my tour there Soviet policy in Eastern Europe.

Q: You mentioned you arrived, what was it, August of 1968 is when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia with the willing support of their allies. I am putting quotes around willing. Although it wasn't on your desk, what was the general presumption you were getting from people; why was this happening, and also were they talking about the Brezhnev doctrine at that

time?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, there were various formulations of the Brezhnev doctrine. Of course, the Soviets never referred to it as that. There was a Pravda editorial as I recall that talked about the need for every member of the socialist commonwealth as they called it to meet certain standards, and if they didn't meet those standards, that was not just their affair alone, that was the affair of the entire commonwealth. Of course the leading nation in the commonwealth was the Soviet Union. We had been getting mixed signals from Yugoslavia as to whether the Soviets would invade to choke off the Prague spring. I personally thought they wouldn't invade. I was surprised by what they did as a lot of people were I think.

Q: Well, was there any feeling that by doing this, they may have sent out a strong lesson, but at the same time the Soviets sent out two lessons. One, they wouldn't tolerate this, and two that their relations with their other block countries while they might fear the Soviets they weren't going to embrace them. Were they a feeling they were developing antipathy?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I think in a way looking back, the Soviets were in a lose-lose situation. If they didn't invade Czechoslovakia it was pretty clear that things were going to get out of hand, that Dubcek was going to allow a totally free press that was heading in that direction anyway, that the Czechoslovak adherence to the Warsaw Pact would come into question as had happened in Hungary twelve years before, and that there could be an unraveling, a sort of a domino effect in the rest of the bloc. That was undoubtedly what was in the minds of Brezhnev and company when they went in. So they felt they had to stop that, but in stopping it, they won for themselves yet again the undying enmity of not only the people of Czechoslovakia but the people of Poland, the people of Hungary and everybody else, all of whom were going to look for the next opportunity to challenge the Soviets. It didn't happen for 12 years. It happened in Poland in 1980 and there it was extremely serious because these were workers. This was not an intellectual movement or a student movement. These were trade union people.

Q: And they were also sitting right on the Soviet supply lines for their main line forces.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. This is a much more important country for them, the Soviets than Czechoslovakia was. Everything comes around of course, and now we are looking at the possibility of NATO expansion. And the Russians are fixated not on the Czech Republic or Hungary, they are fixated on Poland becoming a member of NATO and thereby putting a hostile alliance right on their border again, or for the first time. I should not say again, this is for the first time.

Q: Again trying to capture the spirit of the times, when you got to RSB, what was the thinking about the leadership, Brezhnev, and the Politburo? Was this a vigorous active group?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I think the general view was this was a very old fashioned group led by ideologues like Suslov who was mired in Marxist Leninist terminology that Brezhnev was not the sort of person you could expect to move into any kind of a major embrace of the west. There were actually some erroneous conclusions drawn from that because it was only a question of four years later that you have the Nixon trip to Moscow and made some actual progress in the U.S.-

Soviet relationship. But I think it undermined everybody that the Soviets were not going to let anybody mess around in Eastern Europe, neither the west nor the local leaders themselves. There would be a very narrow span or scope for independent activity in Eastern Europe and in the aftermath some leaders were able to manage things better than others. Probably the best in terms of winning some independence was Ceausescu in Romania and Kadar in Hungary. Two very different people of course. They managed to push the envelope about as far as you could push it in terms of independence from or relative independence from the Soviet embrace. Czechoslovakia became a tragic case. There was a debate in INR over whether Husak who the Slovak who took over after Dubcek, he was put in by the Soviets, was a liberal or a conservative. The fact of the matter is it didn't make any difference at all. He was a Soviet puppet, and no matter how many years he spent in prison under the old regime which he had, he was going to do what the Soviets said, and he remained in power right up until the real Czech revolution in the late 1980s, and was a rather pathetic figure having no independence at all.

Q: Looking sort of at the other side, what was the feeling of your fellow officers and all as the Nixon administration came in? I mean was there any feeling about where this guy was going or anything about Nixon?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, as I recall, the first thing that happened was a flurry of requests from the NSC headed by Kissinger to the State Department to do all kinds of studies up and down and back and forth on all parts of the world. There were some cynics in INR who knew Kissinger, who said this is just an effort to tie us up because the real policy is going to be made elsewhere. We are going to have to do all these things and nobody will read them in the end, and Kissinger is going to go his own way. That turned out to be, of course, exactly accurate. That was one of Kissinger's techniques for insuring that the State Department did not play a major role in foreign policy making was to tie them up in paper. INR got the brunt of that.

Q: Who was sort of the hierarchy in INR as far as people you worked with?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, Hal Sonnenfeldt was the head of it when I started, but of course he was moved quickly over to the White House and became Kissinger's main person for Europe. Then Ken Kurst took over who was an amiable and competent, but not very flamboyant figure. The main problem in INR bureaucratically was there was a layering of the clearance system, so that the junior analysts of which I was one would write a paper. Then it would go to the immediate superior who would change it, and then if the superior of that immediate superiors didn't like what the immediate superior had done would change it in a different way, so by the time it actually became a product which would get to some policy maker, so much time had gone by that it was probably out of date and it had been eviscerated of any points it might have made at any stage during the process that it was useless. So, INR played an absolutely nugatory role I would say, in the State Department because of this very antique and antiquated clearance process. It improved a great deal when Mort Abramowitz took it over and he made it much more relevant to what the needs of the policy makers were. As I recall it, the INR that I worked in was an organization in which you generated your own ideas, your own papers. There was somebody we had who was interested only in Finland, and he would write paper after paper on Finland, a country with absolutely no interest to American policy makers. None at all. These interminable papers would come up on Finland. These were ones that passed the clearance process very easily

because nobody knew anything or cared. It became a kind of a metaphor for what INR was doing. It was pathetic, I thought.

Q: Was there any connect between what you were doing and the desk?

ZIMMERMANN: Very little in those days. I think, again that has been a more modern occurrence.

Q: What you are saying now applies to the time I was in INR back in the early '60s where there was almost no connect. I was there when they added another layer of sort of sub continent directors on top of, under the continent directors of INR, just that clearance problem.

ZIMMERMANN: It was terrible, and it insured that INR would play no role at all.

Q: Well, but again, at least you were looking at the Soviets in Africa.

ZIMMERMANN: In the third world in general.

Q: Well let's talk about Africa first and then elsewhere. What were some of the developments during the '68- '70 period?

ZIMMERMANN: I must say I only dimly remember a lot that was going on there. The Biafran war was probably the biggest thing. There were certainly competitions between the Soviets and the United States for different pieces of Africa, the horn, West Africa and so forth, but the defining event, I guess was the Biafran war.

Q: Were the Soviets involved in the Biafran war?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't remember really whether they were very deeply involved. To the extent they were, I think they were on the side of the federal government against the breakaway Biafrans. But I have to say I was not particularly informed. I can't remember seeing very much of the intelligence that was generated on that even from the CIA. Because again, in those days there was not a very close relationship between INR and CIA.

Q: Well then, what other areas were of interest to you?

ZIMMERMANN: Well during the INR period, I volunteered to work on eastern Europe. Ultimately I was able to do that. That of course, was an area that I knew a bit more about and was closer to my own fields of interest. But again, I don't remember writing a single paper that had an effect on any U.S. policy because of these clearance and bureaucratic problems that we've discussed. It was a very frustrating period. The minute I had an opportunity to get out of it, I did.

Q: Well did you find a realization on the part of the people who were one rung above you, not just because of you but because of others realizing that they were a non-functioning system, or was there sort of a general tolerance, well this is just an assignment and get it over with, or sort

of delight in doing this.

ZIMMERMANN: A lot of the people who had senior positions in INR in those days were not foreign service officers. They were civil servants. They had academic or quasi academic backgrounds, and they had very little interest in policy. They had very little interest in getting to the policy makers. They were much more interested in being right and making sure that if you said something wrong even if it was perhaps not even important, that it got corrected. So, I didn't feel that the organization was at all responsive to the kinds of things that a policy maker would want. To some degree that was attributable to the fact that foreign service officers were at the bottom rather than in the middle or at the top of the organization.

Q: Did you find the officers at your level were pretty restive?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, everybody was restive. There was a general feeling of frustration. Morale was terrible. It was the worst two years I spent in 33 years in the foreign service.

Q: Well, in 1970 you were released on good behavior.

Q: I think this is true. Well then you went, your next assignment was Moscow. You went there when in '73?

ZIMMERMANN: I went there it must have been September. No, I guess it was July of '73 because I was there during the summer. I had always been interested in Soviet stuff, and I was already pretty old to have my first assignment to Moscow. I was 39, and I went as the deputy head of the political section.

Q: You were there from July '73 until when?

ZIMMERMANN: Until the summer of '75. I don't remember exactly.

Q: Was it hard to break in to the Soviet clique is not the right word, but the Soviet circle at that point or had your Belgrade and INR credentials enough to get you in?

ZIMMERMANN: Certainly the Belgrade and INR credentials were not. I did have strong support from Spike Dubs who had been my boss in Belgrade. He was an old Soviet hand. He was political counselor in Belgrade, and he was constantly trying to get me into the Soviet field. He was the director of the office of Soviet affairs in the State Department, so he basically greased the assignment for me, so I had a sort of a following wind from an important person in the Soviet field. Yes, but I had some trepidation because I hadn't been a member of the club. But it quickly vanished. When you get there you realize that nobody knows all that much. We have all been trained in Russian by then, so the language was not a serious problem. There were people of various degrees of experience in the political section that I came to. Mark Garrison, head of the political section, a brilliant officer, had not had much more Soviet experience than I had. Kurt Kaman whom I supervised had enormous Soviet experience. Actually his Russian was so good

that he had been an interpreter. But it was a very collegial atmosphere. I am a strong believer that hardship posts bring out the best in people. People learn to live together and learn to be tolerant.

Q: Who was the ambassador at this time?

ZIMMERMANN: Dubs was the chargé for quite a while, nearly a year for the time I was there, and then Walter Stoessel became the ambassador. He was a very nice man and very easy to work with.

Q: What were relations during '73 to '75 with the Soviets?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, there had been the Nixon visit in '72. There had been the Brezhnev visit in May of '73, early in the spring, sometime in the spring of '73. So you already had had two summits. We were looking for a kind of a breaking out of very close relations and of course, that didn't happen. I found when I got there in 1973 an extremely rigid society, awfully hostile to the U.S. Your contacts were extremely limited to largely to the USA desk of the Soviet foreign ministry which was run by people who were not at all friendly. I would say that on the policy level while things were looking pretty good and there were plenty of high level meetings. Gromyko and Kissinger would meet quite frequently. One didn't get the feeling that this an amazingly important rapprochement. In the middle of this period you had the enormous mistake in my view of the Jackson-Vanik amendment which was intended to put pressure on the Soviets to release large numbers of Soviet Jews. The price turned out to be higher than the Soviets we were willing to pay. The trade-off would be they would release 60,000 Soviet Jews in return for which we would give them a trade agreement and most favored nation. They ultimately decided that wasn't the price they were prepared to pay so that was a rush of cold water on the economic relationship, and it also reduced the outflow of Soviet Jews for a couple of years.

Q: As that Jackson Vanik amendment developed, was there any input from the embassy or State Department that you were aware of?

ZIMMERMANN: It is one occasion where I wished I had pushed harder for a different U.S. position. The State Department including Kissinger of course, was opposed to the Jackson-Vanik amendment. There was a question of how much you were going to concede to the Congress. I felt in my bones that this was something the Soviets maybe wouldn't take. They wouldn't live with it. People higher up than me and people who knew more about the Soviet Union than me like Stoessel and Jack Matlock who by then was the DCM felt it would be okay, that we would still get the Jews out and the MFN and the trade agreement to go forward. I tended to let their greater expertise influence my own judgment. I didn't push as hard as I now think I should have for the alternative view which was they would do what they ultimately did which was say this is no deal. Our pride is not going to be dragged in the mud like this.

Q: Was anybody putting forward the fact Senator Jackson, Scoop Jackson from Washington was a very hard line basic very anti Soviet. Everybody is anti Soviet but you know, as anti Soviets go he was more anti than most. That this was an effort on his part either one to get a bunch of favorable constituents out of the Soviet Union or two, to screw up the growing rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, he certainly didn't like the rapprochement, and he was heavily influenced, of course, by Richard Perle who was one of his chief advisors. I think his primary objective was to get the Jews out. Of course, that is something that everybody shared. It wasn't a question of was the objective right; it was a question of what was the best way to get there.

Q: Well, it worked.

ZIMMERMANN: It didn't work because the Jewish emigration went down and stayed down for the rest of the 1970s until the end of the decade when SALT II was being negotiated.

Q: You had served in Yugoslavia. We were both there. Yugoslavia with all its problems was sort of a country that worked, not wonderfully, but it was kind of fun and all that. What was your impression when you finally got to the Soviet Union, the big apple of the Slavic world and all that?

ZIMMERMANN: Absolutely worlds apart from what I had seen in communist Yugoslavia. Just no comparisons at all. In Yugoslavia you had a very broad range of people you could talk to and who would talk to you relatively freely. In the Soviet Union it was very limited to targeted officials, KGB people who were thrown across your path, and a very small number of dissidents, many of whom were probably working for the KGB also. So, it was a genuine dictatorship. It was totalitarian in the precise and literal sense of the word. Yugoslavia was not like that. Even the other communist countries were not like that. Yugoslavia was as far away from it as any communist country could have been, I think.

Q: What about your observations of the Soviet economy, the Soviet system?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, everybody saw that the economy didn't work as it pertained to the needs of people and consumers and to health care and that kind of thing. Our son Matt had his appendix out in a Soviet hospital. While the operation worked fine, there was tremendous apprehension that something horrible would happen because something horrible quite often did happen in Soviet hospitals. So, health care didn't work although it was universal. Consumer goods were not available. The consumers simply didn't get priority. The education system, by the way, was extremely good. We had all three of our children in the Soviet school, a normal Soviet school, not a special one for foreigners. The quality of the math was two or three grades ahead of American education. But it was very much rote learning. Your mind was not asked to expand. You weren't asked for initiatives. You weren't asked for creative thought or anything like that. Still it was a good education system. What we believed, and what I think was then true, was that what we were not seeing did work very well, and that was the whole military industrial complex. That was where the resources went. That was where the priorities were, and the Soviets could put people on the moon before we could, or they could launch enormous missiles. Their military was definitely one to be feared and one to be dealt with. That was true. So it is simple to say a country that can't even fix a toilet couldn't possibly be a great power because it is certainly possible that you can't or don't want to fix a toilet and still be a great power. I think Russia was.

Q: Was there a feeling that the Soviet Union was still poised maybe to do something nasty in

Europe or something?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't think so. There was a great debate about whether Soviet policy was offensive or defensive. I think the answer was it was a combination of both, but it certainly saw the cordon of Eastern European countries as something that was necessary for its security. You have to look at it from the point of view of the Russians who were invaded five times from Europe in the 19th. and 20th. centuries. You could understand why they would have security concerns with regard to countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia and Hungary and so forth, East Germany. But what of course, was totally unacceptable was that those countries simply because they bordered on the Soviet Union, had to have the identical system and had to be totally under the control of Moscow. That was what was unacceptable. I don't think there was really any fear on the part of anybody I knew in the U.S. government that the Soviets were going to break through that cordon of Eastern European countries and invade Western Europe. I think there was no fear of that kind. There was a general tendency, an accurate tendency, to feel that Eastern Europe was really quite unstable because of the nature of the political relationship between the Soviet Union and those countries, and that you could have problems there. Of course you had them in Hungary and Czechoslovakia and Poland and so forth.

Q: What about Soviets and the Cubans dealing in Africa? Were they doing that at the time?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. It was the one area where the detente, which is a word we used actually until about 1975, didn't apply. We did have an improvement in the bilateral relationship with the Soviets. We did have significant arms control agreements, SALT I, the ABM agreement, and the Vladivostok agreement in 1975 and so forth. There was the famous statement of principles that Nixon and Brezhnev had signed in 1972 which was a kind of code of behavior about how two great powers would act in the rest of the world. The Soviets totally trashed it. They paid no attention to it, and they kept running around in Africa and Latin America. There was a general expectation, this is an interesting fact, there was a general expectation when Saigon fell in 1975, that the Soviets would take over Vietnam lock, stock, and barrel. They would have bases. They would use it as a power projection point for the rest of East Asia, and they would be therefore the great power in East Asia. It didn't happen. They tried no doubt.

Q: Cam Ranh Bay was supposed to be a Soviet port.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. And Indonesia would be threatened and the Philippines would be threatened. You remember all that. None of those things happened. So, maybe that was some reason to think even back then, that the Soviets did not make very good power projectors or imperialists. They were pretty deficient because they had a system which was not attractive to anybody.

Q: What was the calculation of what were the Soviets up to? I mean we are now faced with pictures of huge fleets rusty in Vladivostok and Sevastopol and elsewhere. They had a tremendous navy which is power projection way beyond the needs of just sort of defense of the motherland. What was the calculation during this '73 to '75 period? What was this all about?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the head of the Soviet Navy was a very aggressive and powerful

admiral named Gorshkov. I think part of the growth of the Soviet navy can be explained bureaucratically that he would constantly make the comparisons with our navy and saying you know, we are really not a great power unless we can project our power through naval vessels. But I think partly it was beyond that it was the general feeling of the politburo that Russian power and prestige is measured in terms of military might. They had to fill all the boxes of military capabilities.

Q: Well from what you said before it is true. I mean without the military might, the ideology, the system had no buyers.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right, no buyers. The Soviets won the allegiance and their links with countries of the third world through their military assistance program. It wasn't through ideology. It was because they were prepared to help countries like Somalia and Ethiopia and Guinea and Mali and so forth arming themselves. That was essentially how they did it.

Q: What was your particular function as deputy head of the political section?

ZIMMERMANN: I was in charge of reporting on foreign policy, dealing with foreign policy issues. We had two. We had Mark Garrison who was head of the section, and then we had myself in charge of foreign policy issues, and Marty Wenick who was in charge of, and later Mel Levitsky, who were in charge of internal affairs.

Q: I would imagine that foreign affairs in a way, could almost be dealt with rather easily. You had lousy connections with the foreign ministry. They certainly weren't going to sit down and tell you the scoop. There was nowhere to go. I mean the newspapers would only contain sort of the canned things. How did you work that?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, Kremlinology is a limited art but it is an art. You can get a sense of how a country is operating and what its approaches are and what it is likely to be able to accept and what it is prepared to reject by reading the press, by talking to the limited contacts you have in the foreign office or in the USA institute which had in it some people who were relatively free from total KGB control.

Q: Arbatov?

ZIMMERMANN: Arbatov's Institute. Although it was very heavily propagandist and had a very heavy dose of the Soviet line whenever you went over there. So, you got maybe 10% more out of being there and talking to them than you would get sitting back in Washington reading the Soviet press, but 10% more could be critical.

Q: One of the things that is often overlooked particularly in these days of tight budgets and talking about do we need embassies and all, there is a tendency to think that our diplomats do nothing but report like reporters and say you can see it on TV. I mean there is the other side of conveying information, talking which maybe in the Soviet Union isn't as important. Could you talk a bit about that side.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. I mean we had a series of great ambassadors in the Soviet Union during the Cold war period. I think by far the best and this may come as a surprise to you was Tommy Thompson. I never worked with him, but this was a man who was twice ambassador to the Soviet Union. He spent many years there, and managed to adhere really through the pores a really fine sense of how the Russians would behave at any given situation. He was able to use that knowledge probably to save the possibility of a major conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cuban missile crisis.

Q: And he happened to be there and available.

ZIMMERMANN: He was actually in Washington in 1962. Kennedy brought him into the Excon, this small group of people that were working. Everything Thompson said turned out to be right. Thompson said, "If you put a blockade outside Cuba, the Russian ships will turn back because they are so secretive that they don't want to be searched." We did, and they did. He was right on that. He said, "Khrushchev will not agree to take the missiles out unless you make some sort of agreement on taking our missiles out of Turkey." And he was right on that. Thompson would not have had that seat of the pants knowledge had he not spent all those years in the Soviet Union. I think it is a perfect example of how on the job work and training in a man who is intuitively brilliant as Tommy Thompson was, could produce enormous dividends for our national security.

Q: Absolutely. I think it is one of the great moments of the foreign service at that time because the stakes were immense.

ZIMMERMANN: You know, curiously enough, I 'd conducted, both times I was in Moscow I would conduct a kind of an informal poll of Soviets who were in the foreign policy field. I would ask them who was the best American ambassador we have had. Thompson would get their vote about 70% of the time. It is interesting. I mean here is a man who understood them very well, and who was able to defeat them in the Cuban missile crisis, and at the same time earned their respect.

Q: Well also too in a way, a professional like that saved the professionals on both sides from their political masters who do stupid things.

ZIMMERMANN: That's true and it is even more true, or it is at least as true in countries where an ambassador has more opportunities to move around and get to know people because there is no substitute for having somebody who is there every day who is getting the feel of the place and who is therefore able to give you a kind of a continuous and reflected view of what is going on and what is likely to happen. You can't do that by jetting back and forth at a high level.

Q: Or by the telephone.

ZIMMERMANN: By the telephone or by sitting in Washington and reading the cables and intelligence reports. You have to have somebody there. It is an important country. You'd be crazy not to be represented by a smart, professional ambassador who can give you these kinds of insights in a unique way that are not available any other way.

Q: Well when you arrived there, you arrived in July, '73, and we had a bad little war in the October war in '73. How did that play in Moscow?

ZIMMERMANN: It was, well, you saw at our level, I mean the embassy level, we saw very little of what was going on because Kissinger came over almost immediately. I guess, the war had ended, so then it was a question of what would happen next. Kissinger came over and had high level meetings with Brezhnev and company. I don't recall that anyone in the embassy was even in those meetings. It is conceivable that Spike Dubs, who was still charge, was, I am not sure whether he was in or not, but I tend to think not. So, we were not really in the loop. I mean this was above the level at which Kissinger who as you know was very secretive with high level stuff, was prepared to engage us. There was one trip. You probably know this story. This is before I got there in 1972. I think it was '72 when Kissinger made one of his trips to prepare the Nixon summit in Moscow. He didn't even tell the American ambassador that he was there. The American ambassador found out only later that Kissinger had been in town.

Q: I heard that, yes. Incredible.

ZIMMERMANN: That is a wonderful way to undercut any usefulness that an ambassador can have for you.

Q: Well, looking at the foreign affairs side, what was your reading on the relationship during this '73 to '75 time between the Soviets and Castro?

ZIMMERMANN: It was something we rarely saw. I mean it was intended to be quite a quiet period in our relations with Cuba and the Soviet relations with Cuba. I don't recall that it was a big issue at all. In fact, I don't recall a single incident that came up. Of course, we knew that they were a major supplier of the Cubans, that it was a major drain on their own resources. It was the only thing that was keeping the Cubans afloat. We knew all that. I don't remember there was any particular incident or any particular crisis that got anybody's attention.

Q: One of the main rationales of our opening to China during this period was this is the so called China card. That by having relations with China, it meant that the Soviets could no longer rely on the United States and the Chinese being at dagger points, but by having a friendship there, it put extra pressure on the Soviets. Were we seeing that as a, how did we see that?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh I think that's right. I think that is an accurate description of what happened. In Moscow, there was an enormous Chinese embassy in Moscow, enormous, bigger than ours, or nearly as big. The Chinese were all over town spreading the nastiest rumors about the Soviets, usually not true, but they were tremendous sources of very negative disinformation about the Soviets. A very hostile relationship.

Q: Was this a continuing basis?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, constantly. They were very wary of us, and it was only, I think I only once got invited to the Chinese embassy for a meal. They were suspicious of us. The real stuff that was going on between China and the United States was going on between Beijing and

Washington. It wasn't going to be going on in Moscow in any case. Stoessel himself had actually played a role in the rapprochement with China. When he was ambassador to Poland, he was involved in some early negotiations with the Chinese, so you would have thought he might have been a person that the Chinese would cultivate in Moscow, but they didn't. So we didn't see it, but I thought that it was a brilliant coup for Nixon and Kissinger to do. I think it really did create some tension with the Soviets, make more incentives for the Soviets to keep a closer relationship with us. I think it very definitely helped out, had that effect.

Q: Did you find any of your Soviet contacts interested in what were we doing with the Chinese?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, yes. There were a lot of questions about that particularly from the USA institute which had a kind of a license to ask you what was going on.

Q: Were you well informed about relations between the United States...

ZIMMERMANN: No, not particularly. Certainly we were not involved in any of the high level exchanges.

Q: What was life like for you and Teeny and the children in the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: It wasn't particularly pleasant. We lived in an enormous apartment block. I think there were 5,000 people, maybe a couple of hundred of whom were diplomats and journalists. The rest were Russians. Our kids the first year went to a Russian school which was very stressful and difficult for them, but there were some very good experiences. The Russian children were quite nice to them. The school itself bent over backwards to make sure they were happy because it obviously was a prestige item for the school to have some foreign children. There were only two or three other foreign children in the whole school. But you can't say there was very much hospitality there. You were in an atmosphere of mistrust. You couldn't be sure that even the friendly people were not being sent across your path as police spies and so forth. So, even a weekend away from Moscow or a vacation in the Soviet Union was not a vacation in any real sense of the word. The contacts, as I said, were very limited and quite stilted. There was still a great excitement that came from being in the center of our foreign policy problem. There we were; we were ground zero, and that was fascinating. Very hard for wives, I think. Most of them were not able to work in the embassy. Later on that changed. In my second tour, any wife who wanted to work, could.

Q: Well did you find this causing breakups of marriages and things of this nature?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't think more than usual in the foreign service. I could be wrong about that. I have never seen statistics. I don't know what happened after Moscow assignment. I suppose a breakup would usually occur after. But I mean there certainly were some, and it was no doubt at all a major test of a marriage. If a marriage was fragile to begin with, the Moscow experience would probably blow it apart. But if it was strong or was potentially strong, the Moscow experience could actually strengthen it even further I think.

Q: Were you aware of the infrared or whatever the intelligence test. Could you talk about that?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh yes. That happened while we were there, I mean one of the times. It was very scary because you didn't know what it was, what they were doing it for, if they were doing it on purpose and what the effects would be. I am still not at all sure that the study that was done after that, I think by Johns Hopkins, was an accurate representation. The Moscow rumor mill among people who served there in the days of the radiation has it that a disproportion of people died with cancer and other diseases that could have been caused by the radiation in Moscow and particularly in the buildings that were radiated than other foreign service posts. The Johns Hopkins study said that isn't true, there is no disproportion. You will not find very many people who served in those days that believed the study.

Q: I have heard many bitter comments about it and also how the State Department responded initially by not informing.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Walter Stoessel died of some sort of Leukemic disease. I have heard various stories about what it was. There was one story that there was radiation that leaked from our own communications office which was just above, on the floor above his office. That may have caused radiation that weakened his health. Other stories are the Soviets were targeting. It doesn't seem credible to me that the Soviets would have purposely tried to incapacitate or kill American diplomats by radiation. It is perfectly logical for me to believe that there were mistakes or that there was just a shoddy discipline of some sort that allowed these waves to penetrate. They may have been surveillance devices that went, that had these side effects. I can't understand the feeling that it would be in the Soviet interest to kill American diplomats by this way.

Q: It doesn't make sense. I mean you know the one place where looking at the Soviet conduct, they knew who our CIA people were, not only in the Soviet Union but also abroad in other posts. We didn't kill each other's chiefs of station. I mean if they were going to do that. But were you aware of the radiation when you arrived there?

ZIMMERMANN: I am trying to remember the time sequence. I am afraid I don't remember it. I simply remember we were told at some point there was radiation, and it hit the building. I lived in the embassy building which was where the radiation occurred. And we were told not to worry, that this was a very low level of power and way below whatever the acceptable limits were. I remember that we made protests to the foreign ministry, and of course they denied everything. They said there is nothing to it. I think there was more of it after I left, and that came back again in the early '80s when I was there. The whole thing came back again.

Q: Did you make any trips throughout the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: Not a lot because I didn't have a job related reason for doing it since I was doing foreign policy, but I did go to a couple of places. I went to Georgia with Senator Kennedy where we met an up and coming young communist party leader named Shevardnadze. This was 1974. I went to Leningrad, of course, a couple of times. I went to a number of towns around the Moscow area where there were pretty cathedrals or other sort of touristic things to see. I traveled actually more in the '80s when I was DCM and had reason to travel.

Q: Were we looking at the various republics as somehow being a source of weaknesses of the Soviet system at that time?

ZIMMERMANN: I recall believing, and I think I might have even written it in a cable at some point in the '70s that the Soviet Union is very stable, but it has the stability of a catamaran, a bi-hulled boat rather than of a mono hull. A mono hull can sway from side to side; it isn't going to tip over. A catamaran doesn't sway but once it goes, up to a certain point, then it could go all the way over. The Soviet Union was like a catamaran, and the two elements, the two hulls that were unstable were the economy and the nationality issue. And that if you got both of them working together, that is economic crisis and nationality problems, then it could go over. But I saw that as a relatively theoretical concept and Amalrik had already written his book, Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984. My answer to that was of course. Well, he only missed it by five years, seven years.

Q: Yes. Well I think this is true of all of us. I have just finished interviewing somebody who was in charge of keeping the Soviets from getting technology transfers. We are talking about 1988, and the Soviet Union was about to fall apart. Yet he had no feeling of the people that they were sort of sticking it to the Soviets just one more thing. This was just a policy. Well, did you develop, I am trying to capture the mood of the Sovietologists, our people there. You got people who won't or can't talk to you. You have a bureaucracy that is stiffing you. You can't travel and all. Was there anything about Russia, the Soviets and all that got people coming, I am talking about our people wanting to go back there and deal with it other than the fact that this happened to be our major problem?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I think you got a straggling of Soviet experts in the United States who were not only interested in the politics and the foreign policy aspects, who were interested in the entire culture and history and so forth. I guess I would put myself somewhat tentatively in that group. I mean ever since I was in college, I studied Russian history and read Russian literature and. Of course, being in the Soviet Union, there are these wonderful art galleries that you can go to. There is wonderful music which was very easy to go to. I mean you just had to go and get a ticket from the KGB people who ran the ticket office in the embassy. I did quite a lot of that. Teeny was much less interested in that. Of course, there were people in the embassy like Jack Matlock who really were serious experts in Russian culture. Jack had taught Russian literature at Dartmouth for example. He spent a lot of time at the theater. But that was a kind of an interesting sidelight. There was avant garde theater that you could go to. Some of it was a bit radical by regime standards. That was even more true in the '80s than in the '70s. So there was a kind of a feeling that we in Moscow the elect. We were in the most important place in the world for the United States foreign policy. We were being subjected to all kinds of hardship, radiation etc. That in a way made up in terms of psychic satisfaction with a lot of the problems. I emphasize that was not the case with our spouses because they didn't have that kind of psychic satisfaction. They couldn't have it, so it was very difficult.

Q: Some of the people I have talked to served in the Soviet Union talk about going out. These were the ones who were really very good in Russian, to I don't know if I use the right term, to People's lectures.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the knowledge society, the Znaniye Society, had these lectures. For some reason, I think it was a mistake, they were open to anybody, so diplomats could go. What these were were propaganda lectures. I went to a number of them. They were quite fascinating, not so much because of the lecture, because the lecture was a propaganda lecture, To tell Russians what they were supposed to think. What was interesting were the questions. Somebody would say if we are so powerful, why can't I get bread? Things like that. That was very interesting, and they made very interesting cables, reports of those lectures because it really was one of the few opportunities you had to learn what was on people's minds really.

MICHAEL G. WYGANT
Political Officer
Moscow (1968-1970)

Michael G. Wygant was born in Newburgh, New York in 1936 and was raised in Montclair, New Jersey. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth college, where he passed the Foreign Service exam during his junior year. He served briefly in the U.S. Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1959. Mr. Wygant's career included positions in Zimbabwe, Togo, Vietnam, and Gambia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 14, 1990.

Q: Then you were assigned first to Russian language training and then to Moscow. You served in Moscow from '68 to '70. Who was the ambassador there?

WYGANT: When we arrived, it was Llewellyn Thompson, who was on his second tour as U.S. Ambassador to the USSR. He left in the middle of our tour and was replaced by Jake Beam. So I worked for two very distinguished Soviet specialists in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Q: Being a non-Soviet specialist, how would you characterize the people in our embassy at that time? I mean, you were sort of an outsider looking at this breed.

WYGANT: To some extent, although I had taken the full year of Russian language training. This had not been the case with my predecessor, who, I believe, had a few months of Russian.

We had of course our ambassador and DCM. We had political and economic counselors. And then within the political section we had a chief of the internal branch and a chief of the external branch. They of course were more senior officers with considerable background in Soviet affairs.

But there was a cadre of about eight or ten of us, as I remember, who were junior to middle ranking political, consular, and economic officers, all of whom had gone through the training at about the same time. As you've suggested, most were firmly committed to Soviet specialization, or at least Eastern European specialization, and so therefore only a few of the political officers were actually specialists in non-Soviet fields. There was another officer who was following Latin America for the first year I was in Moscow, who was basically more of a Latin

American specialist than Soviet. We then had two China specialists serving in Moscow, both of whom spoke Chinese and Russian -- you might say they had a foot in both camps. We also had an Arabist who had spent more of his career in the Arab world than in Soviet affairs.

So there were some who had had experience outside of the USSR and Eastern Europe, but basically the cadre of officers who were there, particularly the more senior ones, were Soviet specialists and, I would say without any reservation, some of the finest people I have worked with in the Foreign Service. They were very well motivated, highly trained, and good language officers. At least that generation of Soviet specialists, I think, were some of the best that I've worked with anywhere.

Q: How did they look upon the Soviet Union?

WYGANT: They looked at it, I suppose you could say, in academic terms, trying to understand it, trying to understand what was going on, digging very deeply into the language and the culture.

Some of them were having difficulties with the Soviet administration, because they were getting into areas that the Soviets considered sensitive, particularly the unofficial artists and unofficial entertainers. To some extent they had opportunities to view the *samizdat* publications, which were considered subversive by Soviet authorities.

Q: This is the unofficial mimeographed publication.

WYGANT: Yes, they were occasionally mimeographed, but in most cases just typed over and over again. This was all of great interest to the U.S. government, but very sensitive as far as the Brezhnev regime was concerned.

Q: This was early Brezhnev.

WYGANT: Yes, quite early Brezhnev. He took over in 1964, so he had been in power for about four years. He was really pretty much at the height of his power at that time, I would say. Brezhnev orchestrated the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. And then the Soviets had some very serious confrontations with the Chinese in the spring of 1969. There were some islands in the Ussuri River that the Russians and Chinese fought over, with the loss of many lives.

Q: Ussuri River or something like that.

WYGANT: Yes, let's see, Domansky was the Russian name for the island group. The Chinese also have a name for them, which I've forgotten.

There were a number of troops killed on both sides in that battle. In the late spring of 1969 another embassy officer and I were the first American diplomats allowed to visit Khabarovsk since the Ussuri incident. The Soviets were sensitive about this area and didn't really want Westerners to come in, but they did finally give permission for us to have a look. We didn't see much. The fighting had died down, and Khabarovsk was then a sort of garrison town of Russians in a little corner next to China. But the people we met didn't seem to be too concerned that the

Chinese were about to come over the borders.

This was a very turbulent time in China, as you may recall. The Cultural Revolution was going on; Mao was trying to shake the party up and get things moving again to his satisfaction. There were large demonstrations, both in Beijing and in Moscow, against the other side's embassy. In fact one of the things I remember particularly in that spring of 1969 was a major demonstration in front of the Chinese Embassy in Moscow, which we were able to see from the sidelines. It was very highly orchestrated and organized: the slogans were all pre-printed and the workers were bussed in from outer factories.

Q: When I was in Yugoslavia we used to call them "Rent-a-Mob."

WYGANT: Yes, we called them "Rent-a-Crowd." They were told, several blocks away, what they could shout at the Chinese and what they couldn't shout, and they were told what to do. Demonstrators were given bottles of colored ink, and when they got in front of the Chinese Embassy, selected members of the mob threw bottles of colored ink against the walls, which of course made splashes of red, purple, yellow, orange and green, and broke quite a few windows.

It was interesting that the building attacked was a largely unoccupied apartment compound that was on the main street. The actual embassy chancery, where the Chinese diplomats worked was half a block back from the street. The Chinese left this apartment building as is for a good long time, and it became kind of an eyesore. The Soviets were a little embarrassed that this building in the middle of town was looking so crummy. The Chinese said, "Well, if the Russians are this barbaric in the way they deal with foreign diplomats, we'll just leave this as a symbol of our disdain for their behavior."

Q: What was the atmosphere and the impression at the embassy? You had just arrived during the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

WYGANT: We were very concerned, obviously, but I guess the feeling was that, while we would protest and we would denounce the whole concept, we certainly had no intention of intervening directly. I mean, we were opposed to the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine, which said that the fruits of Socialism would have to be protected whenever and wherever, but I think it was pretty clear from the beginning that the United States was not going to oppose actively what the Soviets would do in Czechoslovakia (as we had not actively opposed the invasion of Hungary twelve years earlier). I think the feeling was that, while we could protest what the Soviets were doing and make them uncomfortable, we would not be in a position to use counterforce to try and stop them.

Q: You didn't feel that relations were on the verge of being broken or anything like that?

WYGANT: No, no. I think it was a very tense, difficult period, but it wasn't a comfortable period in general in terms of U.S.-Soviet relations. Later on that same year, Richard Nixon was elected president. He was somebody that the Soviets didn't much care for. They felt that he was a hard-line anti-Communist, and they had been highly critical of him at earlier phases of his U.S. political career.

It was interesting that, after he was elected, while they continued to be highly critical of many U.S. government leaders, including people that he'd appointed, they never attacked Nixon personally. Of course later on, particularly after he began to develop relations with China, the Soviets had quite a different view of Nixon and felt that they had an opportunity to begin some useful negotiations and discussions, and the detente of the early Seventies was born. But that came along after I had left.

Q: Did Llewellyn Thompson and Jake Beam have different styles?

WYGANT: Llewellyn Thompson was one of our most senior Soviet specialists; this was the second time he was ambassador to Moscow. Frankly he would tell us that he was rather disappointed. He felt that he had had an opportunity to come out and try to really get some things going with the Soviets in terms of negotiations over Berlin, in terms of arms negotiations and several other issues that we had on our plates at the time, but he felt that he really didn't have much access and didn't have the opportunity to do the things he'd hoped to do.

Thompson once noted to us toward the end of his two year tour in Moscow that Gus Hall, the leader of the U.S. Communist Party, could come to Moscow and get in to see Brezhnev any time he felt like it, but he, Thompson, had only shaken hands with Brezhnev at a huge New Year's reception which was about the only time he'd had a chance to talk to the Soviet leader.

Q: How about when Beam came, did things...?

WYGANT: Well, Beam also had served previously in Moscow. In fact, interestingly, he was the chargé d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy in 1953 when Stalin died. He had also had a very distinguished career in Eastern European affairs. He had previously been ambassador to Czechoslovakia, and I know he served in Yugoslavia. But I don't think his access particularly improved either. It wasn't really until the China card was played that the Brezhnev government decided that it needed to take another look at relations with the United States, and particularly with President Nixon.

Q: Could you tell me a little about life for a political officer in Moscow and in the Soviet Union?

WYGANT: I think that depended a lot on what you were doing. The officers who were dealing with internal things, particularly those who had some contacts with the unofficial artists and if not the dissident community, at least those who were on the outs with the regime, had a very difficult time because they were constantly being watched. Of course all phones were bugged, but people who were dealing with issues that were sensitive to the Soviets had a much more difficult time.

I was lucky, I suppose, in that the Soviets were not too terribly concerned about the African equation. I was seeing African students, which probably annoyed them. I was seeing some of their academicians and their journalists and commentators, but these were all people who were acceptable to the regime. So, except perhaps for African students, I didn't have contacts with the kinds of people that would get the Soviet system excited about what I was doing.

But, as with everybody else in the embassy, we were very closely watched. We had a policeman outside the door who knew when we were coming and when we were going. We knew that our phones were bugged, our apartments were bugged. It was just a fact of life; you expected that you were going to be watched and under surveillance all the time.

Q: While you were there, what was the Soviet interest in Africa, from your perspective?

WYGANT: I think they saw it as a growth area. Khrushchev had started out talking about countries that followed the non- capitalist path of development, and this was expanded upon by Brezhnev.

There were a half a dozen countries, in the late Sixties, that the Soviets felt had bypassed capitalism. They had basically gone from being colonial to something that was approaching Marxism-Leninism. Guinea was a leader in that category, as was Congo, Brazzaville. I believe Somalia was, at that time, as well as Sudan. Mali fitted the category to some extent. Of course they had enjoyed particularly close relations with Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, and certainly felt he was moving things in the "correct" direction. But Nkrumah had been overthrown by his conservative military in 1966, and by 1968 the Soviets were definitely on the outs with the Ghanaians.

I think the Soviets saw opportunities for checking Western influence and activity in Africa through the development of regimes which would be favorable to the Soviet Union, favorable to a collectivist approach, and favorable to the kinds of economic and political development you find in the Soviet Union, Cuba, Eastern Europe, and Vietnam.

SOL POLANSKY
Political Officer
Moscow (1968-1971)

Ambassador Polansky was born in New Jersey and raised in New Jersey and California. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Russian Institute, New York City. After service in the U.S. Navy, he joined the Department of State in 1952 and was commissioned Foreign Service Officer in 1957. A Russian specialist, he served in Poznan, East and West Berlin, Moscow, Vienna and Sofia, Bulgaria, where he served as United States Ambassador from 1987 to 1990. In his tours at the State Department in Washington, D.C. he dealt primarily with East Europe Affairs. Ambassador Polansky was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: You served in the Soviet Union again from 1968 until 1971. What were you doing there?

POLANSKY: Then I was in charge of the foreign policy or external relations branch of the Political Section.

Q: You must have walked in when all hell was breaking loose with this Czech thing; every country had something to say about it. How was this playing back in the Soviet Union?

POLANSKY: It was a tense and cold period in terms of our relations with the Soviet Union. There was a certain amount of official contact in terms of making representations. There was not any great sense of personal concern. There was concern for what the invasion meant for the lack of development of relations. I don't think anybody was concerned for one's physical being or somehow this meant a heightened possibility of a Soviet move west.

Q: As the officer in charge of Soviet external relations--observing them--what did you do? What were your interests and how did you go about getting information?

POLANSKY: It was essentially the same process of trying to use the Soviet media and press to get some idea of how they were looking at issues plus a lot more contact with Western European embassies, particularly the German, British, and French embassies to try and share ideas and experiences and exchange information. It wasn't until a year after that, that we developed some contact among Soviets themselves that added an additional element to reading the media and listening to the radio and watching television. It was not quite the same thing as an INR analysis of the Soviet media, but there was a lot of that still.

Q: What was the evaluation of Brezhnev at that time?

POLANSKY: We thought he was very much in control and a tough character.

Q: I was wondering if there was the feeling that while Brezhnev was a "tough cookie", Khrushchev was a "loose cannon" and maybe we are better off with a little stability.

POLANSKY: I don't think that was quite the case. We were under the very strong impact of the invasion and what it meant. We didn't think it was going to result in any offensive against Western Europe, but we didn't look on Brezhnev as a stable person in the sense of being able to know that things were under control and that was better than under the Khrushchev era.

Q: This is a little before we opened up to China. How was this observed from your point of view?

POLANSKY: I arrived in Moscow right after the invasion of Czechoslovakia and left the day that Nixon was going to China and must admit, had essentially, no idea that that was going to happen. I did recall at the time, and do recall now, really heard first from a source in the Romanian Embassy that there was a certain amount of travel going on by Kissinger in that part of the world. People at my level queried the Department on it and basically got nothing back.

Q: What were the differences between living in the Moscow in the Fifties and then again in the late Sixties?

POLANSKY: It was different in the sense that we had somewhat better accommodations that we were able to get, not easily, from the Russians. It was all in diplomatic compounds. For us the

improvement toward the middle and end of our stay was the opportunity to meet some Russians in what were obviously very controlled, approved situations. It was better than when I was there from 1952 until 1955. That part was an improvement. In terms of traveling, the situation was a little bit better, but again, it was always hard to get away from the office, but there was a fairly travel active program to get and visit different parts of the Soviet Union. The food supply was a little bit better. There were more things to do culturally. It was probably more enjoyable and varied than the first time.

Q: Did you feel the heavy hand of the KGB as far as provocations?

POLANSKY: I don't think so. Again, having had gone through one tour, it was maybe easier to go through it the second time. I really didn't feel it was worse or more intrusive in any sense?

Q: Jake Beam was your Ambassador. You were closer to him. How did he operate?

POLANSKY: He operated pretty much through his DCM, who was Boris Klaussen. I went with Ambassador Beam frequently to the Foreign Ministry when he had protests or other representations to make to the Foreign Ministry and Gromyko. There wasn't an awful lot of preparation between the two of us as to what he was going to do. I went along as note-taker and helped with the translations. He did what he wanted to do. He was a shy, retiring type. It was uncomfortable for him to be on an informal basis with other people. That burden was taken on by Boris Klaussen, who was the main point of contact. He was a different kind of personality. He was easy to work with. Everyone respected Beam, liked his wife very much. She was a very outgoing, no nonsense kind of person.

Q: What was the feeling about Kissinger, the National Security Council, and the Soviets? Did you have a feel that they were playing a different game than what you were?

POLANSKY: I don't think a different game. I mentioned the business about the Romanian contact and Kissinger's travels to China. I don't recall that there was any great feeling that somehow things were being done in the NSC that were a level apart from or in conflict with what we were doing.

Q: You left in 1971 and you went to the Cultural Exchange program for a year.

ANNA ROMANSKI
Guide for "Education USA", USIA Exhibit
USSR (1969)

Born in England, Ms. Romanski was raised in England and in New Jersey. She was educated at Stanford and Yale Universities, as well as Middlebury College, where she studies the Russian language. Joining the State Department in 1974, her assignments both in Washington and abroad were primarily with USIA, serving in Public and cultural Affairs capacities. A speaker of Polish, German

and Chinese, she served in Germany, Poland and China. Ms. Romanski was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: You were at Yale for what, two years?

ROMANSKI: Two years, but I dropped out in the middle because I became a guide on one of the USIA -- United States Information Agency -- exhibits to the Soviet Union. The topic for our exhibit was Education USA, in Russian it was called national education (narodnye obrazovanie). The program started in December of '69, so I had to drop out of my Master's program at Yale to go to the USSR. I thought it would be worth it and I was right. It was one of the most formative periods of my life.

Q: How did you find it?

ROMANSKI: Oh, it was totally fascinating. The experience probably created as incorrect an image of the Foreign Service as my aunt's description of travel and lots of great parties had, but it was still fascinating. This was the Cold War period. The USIA exhibits traveled around the USSR for the period of a year or two. The itinerary would be divided into a civilized half which would go to Leningrad, Moscow, or other major cities in Russia and then a more ethnic half which would travel to the former republics of the Soviet Union. These republics have now become countries on their own. My half of the exhibit went to Baku, capital of Azerbaijan; Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan; and Novosibirsk in Russian Siberia. Those struck me as quite exotic locations at the time, and still do. It was very interesting, although tiring, work.

We would travel from city to city. Since it would take some time to ship the exhibit by rail, we would travel within the Soviet Union between exhibit sites by air. That was fascinating as well.

Q: What were your impressions of this, of the Soviet Union and the Soviet people?

ROMANSKI: I really liked the Russians and, for that matter, most of the people we met. We also met some of the other nationalities: Uzbeks and Azerbaijanis, but most of the people that we had contact with were ethnic Russians -- most of whom were friendly. They were very curious about America, because all they had heard was anti-American propaganda and they wanted to know the truth -- or at least another version of it. The exhibits were very popular. We would often be mobbed. We would give out brochures on the exhibit topic. I know what it feels like to be a celebrity since we became near celebrities ourselves. Visitors would get the exhibit brochures and ask the guides to sign them. After a while, one had to refuse to sign because one's hand would get so tired. It was also very monotonous and one could never have a good conversation.

The most interesting part of being a guide would be having discussions on serious topics with a small group of visitors. We were supposed to discuss education, which was the topic of the exhibit, but one couldn't very well refuse to answer non-education-related questions. We talked about anything that they really wanted to know, and they wanted to know a lot. A lot of the questions were personal. My most frequent questions were whether I was married and how I had learned Russian. We would get serious questions about the Vietnam War and what we thought of it. We couldn't really go into politics in great detail -- because the Russians knew so little about

what was going on in the United States, so they couldn't ask very specific questions.

Since we were so popular, we would often receive private invitations to go into Soviet homes, which we were allowed to do as long as we were accompanied by another American -- we could never go alone for fear of being compromised. It was very interesting to see how Soviet people lived: most Soviet apartments would be a little bigger than a small office except that they might be divided into two or three rooms. They would always put on a very lavish spread, as much as they could get. Russians are very hospitable. There would always be vodka, of course, and sometimes they would invite friends over. It would never be a huge gathering, because one could only invite people one trusted (not to mention that apartments were small), so it would just be either the immediate family or a few friends. The hosts tended to be people close to my age without kids, but still it was a fascinating glimpse of life behind the Iron Curtain.

Q: Did you feel any intrusion of the KGB or the government at all?

ROMANSKI: Yes. I think we were always being watched. I remember one time I was not feeling well so I was crying in the bathroom of my hotel room. We lived in hotel rooms -- not very comfortable ones. If you ever traveled to the Soviet Union, they had a system of spies right on the floor -- they were called *dezhurnye* - like door keepers. They were elderly ladies sitting at a desk who held onto the room keys. One wasn't allowed to carry around one's key. Perhaps the excuse might have been so that they could clean your room, but of course it meant that anyone could enter any room at any time. I don't remember that anything was ever taken, but papers were often re-arranged and I'm sure letters were read so one could never write anything very critical. Interesting correspondence might be photocopied -- I doubt mine ever made the grade. In any case, the *dezhurnia* burst into the room to ask what was wrong. This convinced me that nothing was ever totally private. We had been warned not to talk about anything sensitive in our briefings. It was easy for me to comply as I didn't know any secrets, but we were also not to talk about sensitive or personal matters in the room or on the phone. If we were having some kind of anti-Soviet conversation to perhaps let off steam because the living conditions were not easy, we would always have to hold it while walking outside unless we wanted to risk being PNG'd or becoming a government incident. People were careful. It was only for six months after all and time went by quickly.

I remember one time a KGB agent locked my suitcase, no doubt after having gone through it. The problem was that I had no key for the suitcase so I had to pick the lock. It was really quite inconvenient, but I managed to pick up a new talent, not that I've made a practice of using it.

ROBIE M.H. "MARK" PALMER
Consular Officer
Moscow (1969-1971)

Ambassador Palmer was born into a Navy family in Michigan. He was raised both in the US and abroad. He was educated at Yale and Kiev University. He became a civil rights activist and entered the Foreign Service in 1964. He served

in New Delhi, Moscow, and Belgrade and held an ambassadorship in Hungary. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: This, of course, was still the Johnson Administration. The Nixon Administration got nastier. Well, in '68 whither?

PALMER: I had been fighting and lobbying to get into Soviet affairs. I was selected to go to Garmisch to the Army training program there. As you probably know, for many years two to four Foreign Service officers were selected to go there.

You had to have already advanced Russian language skills and you normally had to have had some other experience with the Soviets. You went there for one year and then you went to Moscow. It was guaranteed that you went first to Garmisch and then to the embassy.

You were trained along with Army officers who were going either as attaches or as intelligence or whatever. There were people there from NSA also being trained. And it was wonderful! It was the greatest program!

Q: Of course, this program was run completely in Russian, wasn't it?

PALMER: Right.

Q: Was it lectures mainly?

PALMER: Lectures by people who were all Russians or Ukrainians or whatever. They were émigrés and had come out, many of them, after the Second World War. Some of them were quite recently defectors. And they taught everything. They taught Soviet economics, Soviet politics, Soviet military stuff.

We were allowed to do a lot of reading, too, on our own in Russian. We were allowed to speak only Russian while we were in the institute. You could speak with your wife otherwise, but in the institute you could only speak Russian. Also as part of the program, we had a long trip to the Soviet Union as a group which was very, very useful.

Q: Was there a Soviet counterpart to this?

PALMER: Not to my knowledge. They trained people as interns in their embassy in Washington, but I don't think there was. Well, there may have been and I just wasn't aware of it. There was at that time already Georgy Arbatov's institute for U.S.-Canadian things and some of their people did train here but it was a little different. That had a more academic flavor, I would say, than what we did. We were really being trained functionally.

Q: What about the military officers who were going there? Was there a difference between the attitude of Foreign Service officers and military officers that was noticeable, or not?

PALMER: Well, I think we had debates; but on the whole, no. A lot of people established strong

relations there, inter-service and strongly continuing relations. This kind of joint training together is a really useful thing. It breaks down a lot of barriers. We used to ski together. We traveled together for two and a half months. We lived together in the same compound. I think it was a very good experience in that sense.

Q: Did you find that you were getting a pretty heavy dose of émigré thought?

PALMER: Yes, and we used to have a lot of fights. There was one guy, Yuri Marin, who was there who had come out more recently. He'd jumped off a ship off San Francisco and swum over to another ship. He played the role of the Commie in the institute. The older émigrés used to fight and argue with him, etc. Many of us used to argue with the older émigrés, too.

The older émigrés were always bad-mouthing this guy and saying, "No, no! He really is a commie!"

And all of us were saying, "No, that's preposterous! He defected. He's just been asked by the Army to play this role of the commie so that you have some richness here. After all, we're going to be dealing with communists there." Well, lo and behold, this guy re-defects! (Laughter)

So, he may have been planted. I don't think anyone really knows to this day if he was planted and this whole thing was their penetration of Garmisch. Was this really a very successful KGB operation to spot all of us, to get all of our bios?

We spent hours with him alone one on one. A lot of the work in Garmisch was very individual. It was wonderful to be able to do that, to spend hours talking in Russian about different aspects of Russia. So I spent a lot of time with Yuri, as did many others. He must have known everything about us for what it was worth.

Q: What sort of picture were you getting? We had the Soviet crushing of Prague's movement towards some liberation. This is early Bergen. What sort of feeling did you have about the Soviet Union?

PALMER: Well, I guess that in my own mind, and I guess in the minds of the other Foreign Service officers, in all of our minds it intensified our dislike of communism. We were in Lithuania the morning that Soviet forces invaded the Czech Republic. They had been moving over a period of a day or so through Lithuania into Czechoslovakia.

We were spending time with Lithuanians, talking with them in cafes and restaurants. They were acutely aware of what was going on. A lot of them thought that world war three was breaking out. They thought that the West might react. Also some of them bought the line that was then being distributed. This was that the Germans had actually invaded Czechoslovakia and the Soviet army was moving to meet the Germans. (laughter) This, of course, was complete crap but it was surprising how many people bought that line.

So I think it made many of us really hate the Soviets, hate the government and the system. It certainly did with me. You know, they were going against what was really the great hope of the

region.

Q: Is there a difficult problem in going to a place in which you love the people and hate the government? I'm talking about before you went there. How did you feel about this?

PALMER: Right. I was desperate to go there. I had thoroughly enjoyed my student times. The thing I most wanted to do in my life was to spend time there so, no, it didn't change my desire to go at all. If anything, it intensified my desire. I wanted again to be in this environment of dissidence and of people who were fighting against the system. I wanted to try to figure out ways to help them.

Q: You went there in '69...

PALMER: Right. To '71.

Q: What was your immediate job?

PALMER: I first worked in the consular section and that was really, really interesting. Among other things, it allowed me to visit prisons, Americans who were in prison. Traditionally, people coming out of Garmisch had gone into either consular or admin initially.

It was thought of as a year where you continued your language polishing, but also had the time to get out. I, for example, spent a lot of time going to court, to trials just as a way to try to understand the society. I went to a lot of civil trials, and criminal, but not political. Political trials were closed.

Q: Were the civil trials just civil trial or were Americans involved?

PALMER: No, they were just Soviet. There weren't Americans.

Q: What was your impression?

PALMER: Well, it was immensely interesting in that you see a society in a different way through a courtroom. For example, I remember thinking that Russians really weren't so scared of the police or of the judges.

I thought that one of the great stereotypes about the Russians, which is that they 're sheep, was totally wrong. Stalin was right about one thing. He had to kill a huge number of people to control them. These are people who are inherently rebellious and not sheep.

I don't want to go on about that at length, but for me that was a fundamental kind of fact. From that proceeded a whole lot of things that I want to talk more about with you later. These things include what I did when I got more senior in the service, what I'm still doing, and where I think American foreign policy should be going. Still, today, it isn't quite yet there.

Q: Here you'd had "Yale In Jail." What was your impression of the Soviet prison system?

PALMER: I visited a prison. When I was doing the student Garmisch trip, I actually went and I asked our arrangements guide to take me to a prison. We visited about 12 cities, I guess, on our tour. She kept saying, "Next city. Next city." And, of course, she didn't want to show me a jail.

So finally I saw a jail, actually, from the bus when we were touring around. I told her I was sick that afternoon. I went and I got in this prison by fooling the guard at the gate. I went up to what was the administrative block where the head of the prison worked and the guards changed clothes.

I spent almost the whole day talking to the guards going on and off duty before they realized that something was funny. I said I was Czech, that I was a Czech expert on prisons and that I had been authorized by Moscow to be there.

Anyway, my impression from that and from other research on the prison system there is that, in some ways, the Soviet prison system then and up until today, is better than ours. They do a lot of job training or work while you're there. I think that both as punishment and as preparation for getting on, it's psychologically healthier, in some ways, what they do.

Now, there are other aspects of the Soviet prison system which are just truly terrible. These would include the level of food and that kind of stuff, the level of hygiene. And for political prisoners, of course, they shouldn't be there at all. There are some things, though, that are worth studying and registering for American legal practice.

Q: The American prison system is really not very good. It's getting worse.

PALMER: It's terrible. Really terrible. And the recidivism rate is just terrible. Of course, Russian recidivism exists, too; but not as much. It's not as high as it is in the U.S.

Q: In the consular section, what were Americans getting arrested for?

PALMER: Drugs. We had people coming through from Afghanistan through Tashkent and then they'd get caught at Tashkent Airport. There were other miscellaneous things, but drugs was the main one.

Q: How were they treated?

PALMER: Not well. Not well. They had a lot of problems, particularly health problems. But we tried to be helpful to them.

Q: Was there much we could do?

PALMER: We met with them every month. They were brought up to Moscow. We were allowed to carry one box of supplies for them. As a result, we developed the ability to carry extraordinarily heavy boxes. They were absolutely jammed with things that they could trade, like chocolate for eggs, coffee.

So actually, I think that we maybe saved some of their lives because this gave them physical possessions that they could trade to get proper medical care. Stuff like that. But they had tuberculosis, they had very bad skin diseases. One of them had a nervous breakdown. It was, you know, not easy for these guys.

Q: How about protection and welfare of U.S. citizens? Did you get involved?

PALMER: Yes, I mean I did all the standard stuff. I did lot of hospital visits, people dying. I had 12 Americans die. At the time, I was responsible for that. And I had a very interesting disinterment case. I had to dig up a body that was buried against the will of the American relatives, buried there in Russia. I had to dig it out, get it shipped back. It was something!

But the most interesting part of my time there was the second year when I worked on internal political affairs and I was allowed to do...and there had been a person who had done this in the embassy in Moscow traditionally and well over half of them had been PNGed and been thrown out...focusing on the dissidents, on the writers, theater directors, painters, the musicians, the Samizdat, the writers for the drawer and all that kind of stuff. The Solzhenitsyn's, etc. And so my second year in Moscow, I did just that. I just focused on that group in the society. My first year, I knew I was going to do that job so I was already beginning to do it even during the first year. I was moving into that, making the connections, taking over the connections my predecessor had that he was passing on to me. So the second year I was really able to function and do good reporting.

Q: One wonders about that looking back on it. I mean we spent a major effort... I mean both the press and the embassy and all... on dealing with the dissidents. Was this, in a way, worth it? Were they really representative of anything?

You know, one could do the same thing, say, in the United States or somewhere; and you could end up with really a very peculiar view of the world, because this is not overly representative.

PALMER: Right. I thought they were the representatives of Russia and that the government was not. It was not legitimate; it wasn't elected. It didn't represent anything. It represented a narrow group of people who had a completely wrong view of history and of the interests of the people. So I thought these were the only people who would speak the truth about what was going on.

I thought that we spent entirely too much time taking seriously what Communist Party officials were saying to us. And this is still true today. I mean I had lunch with George Shultz yesterday. Still people tend to think of what Gorbachev did as opposed to what ordinary Russians did.

So, anyway, not to jump ahead, but yes, I think it's profoundly valuable in societies where dictatorships exist, including in Saudi Arabia today, or China today, or Nigeria today that it is in many ways the most interesting and useful things that an embassy can do. Its an outpost to the people of another country, not to the dictators.

And this is something unique the Foreign Service can do that really no other part of the U.S. can do this in the same way. This is because in most dictatorships, other things are not allowed to

function. They're not allowed in very often. Also, our embassies are protected places where you're not worried that you're going to get thrown in jail. The worst that happens is that you get thrown out of the country. You get PNGed for your relationships with these people.

So I would say that this is one of the very most important functions of our embassies in the 40 percent of the world that still remains in dictatorships. Even in transition situations, in unstable transition places like Ukraine or Russia today, it still remains terribly important for the embassy to relate to the opposition and to the dissident voices, to the voices of change, not just to whoever is in power at the moment.

Q: You say most of your predecessors had been persona non grata-ed, PNGed. Here you've spent a hell of a lot of time studying Russian and all of that. And all of a sudden to have the Soviet Union denied you. And once you're PNGed, that's it, you know. You can work around the periphery, but that's it.

I would think that, not only for you, but for anybody else in that job, this would be something that...you're putting your all on the line and it's up to some apparatchik to decide whether you can continue or not. How did this play with you?

PALMER: I think I was so caught up in it that I didn't even think about that. You're absolutely right. Logically, you should and there would be a temptation to trim your sails as a result.

The only thing I can remember trimming my sails about was that a friend of a dissident artist type offered me 10 Kandinsky watercolors, which would today probably be worth about 10 million dollars or something. I don't know, a lot of money. They were beautiful. I love Kandinsky and they were beautiful. But I was not sure whether he was doing this really illegally, in which case I had no problem with it. That is, I would have bought them. Or if it was a set-up to trap me, in which case I would have been kicked out. So I didn't do it.

Others in the embassy actually were doing a lot of this. And journalists, American journalists were doing it. Dusko Doder, who was *The Washington Post* correspondent, had an immense collection and he got them this way. But I didn't because of that, but I was tempted.

In terms of my work, I don't remember really thinking about this. I just knew it might happen and of course it could happen with no relationship to what you were doing. Very often PNGs took place because we'd kicked some Russian out of here. So then it was just...

Q: ...your turn. (Laughter)

PALMER: And of course, I never served again in Moscow anyway, although I've been back dozens of times already. So in that sense it's future danger.

Q: Can you talk about some of the dissidents that you dealt with and your impression of their role?

PALMER: Well, the hardest core dissidents one couldn't get to because they were in prison. But

there were people who were sort of in the middle layer of dissidents, for example theater directors, actors, writers. Their role was to try to work the edges of the system; that is, to sneak into plays at the Taganka and Sovremennik theaters, messages that were not welcomed by the system and could get them into trouble.

So there was this game that was always going on. So they were always pushing the margin and it was interesting to be with them and to be sitting in the audience. I went to 50 plays in a single year. One of the main ways to communicate was through the theater, including classics. Use the classics to do it. So it was fun to be even just a witness and partly to encourage them by your presence.

I don't think one should exaggerate our role then or later in bringing about changes. Yet I do think it is of some assistance to dissidents in these kinds of societies that Americans will come and stand next to them; be in their apartments; bring literature for them; connect them with the outside world; sympathize with them; hug them, you know.

They're very lonely, very threatened, and it's important for them to know that the world appreciates them. They should know that we think they're on the right side of history. Clinton, yesterday, said about Ziang Zemin, "You're on the wrong side of history." I love that phrase. It's one of the few things that I think Clinton has done in this field that I think is a powerful thing.

Q: You know, one thinks of the Soviet Union these days as being a very intense police state yet activities are going on, including your being able to go see people and all this.

PALMER: Well, it was tricky because you never knew. Some of the people you went to see, of course, were reporting and may be full time KGB people. So it was complicated. Then, sometimes you'd go and then the people wouldn't open the door. They had been told, you know, "No more with him." People would call you and say, "We're sorry. We'd love to come tonight for dinner, but we can't." So it was kind of not easy.

I think a lot of us developed techniques that perhaps in the normal world would not have been thought of as sensible. But, for example, one of the best things to do was simply to go to public lectures and listen to the questions that were being asked by ordinary Russians of the lecturer. There was a very elaborate system called the Znaniye Society of public lectures on all sorts of topics, foreign affairs, everything. People would ask really interesting questions and we did a lot of reporting based on what was on the minds of Russian people who went to these lectures.

Ed Hurwitz, who was my boss, and I used to go to railway stations buffets and just sit next to workers. These were really grubby railway stations and ask them, you know, what were they thinking about? They weren't dissidents necessarily, but it was a way of trying to feel what really was going on in the society.

So, I think again, this side of what the Foreign Service can do in these kind of dictatorships is really, really special. It's one reason I would change the way our embassies are organized. I would have two types of embassies: an embassy in a normal place like England or France and an embassy in a dictatorship. I think they should be organized differently, have different resource

bases, different objectives.

Q: Was there the problem of being concerned about compromise, provocation, and all of that? Were you ever troubled by the KGB?

PALMER: Well, they did a lot of harassment of one type or another. They broke my windshield. They unplugged the refrigerators in the apartment. They threatened my wife, threatened to murder my wife. They roughed me up. I was on the front page of *The New York Times* in '70 or '71 because they roughed me up.

Q: What happened?

PALMER: I was coming out of the Taganka Theater which was the big dissident theater. It was a wintry day and three goons came up and started shoving me around. I've had that done to me before in this country, too, by security forces, so I wasn't surprised, particularly.

Q: What about your wife? How did that work?

PALMER: She fought, argued back. She wasn't intimidated. But some awful things happened. For example, Ed Hurwitz's wife was in the car when they broke the windshield and glass went all over and into her scalp. So it wasn't always done nicely. They made a major effort to intimidate us, but I think none of us were shaken off course. The dissidents went through much worse than we did. We knew they weren't going to kill us or it wasn't likely that they were going to kill us.

Q: With the dissidents, for the most part you were not performing the normal information gathering business of finding out what they knew and all of that. It was really more to say, "We're with you." and "Keep up the work." Was it that?

PALMER: Yes, it was certainly that, but it was also very much what was happening in the society. They were great sources of perception about what was happening in the country, honest sources. That was hard to come by. So, I think, because I was in the internal side of the political section and because in Washington there was a lot of interest.

There still is today in what happens inside Russia. That was a valuable part of our reporting and we reported all the time. I reported on these plays. I wrote 50 play reviews. I didn't just go to the play. I wrote the plays up.

And you'd think nobody in Washington would be interested, but we got commendations for all this stuff; conversations with dissidents and all of that stuff. And I think that's true today. You know, in Saudi Arabia (or in China or Nigeria) if you talk to modernizing elements and report that to Washington, it is a valuable source of intelligence or whatever you want to call it, information about what's happening.

Q: I would think that going to a play, despite how good you are in the language... the subtleties of trying to slip something over... obviously these people were trying to slip something over on

the goons who were monitoring it... and you coming from outside won't have the context. Were you able to go up to someone and say, "What's this all about?" or something like that?

PALMER: Sometimes, if I didn't understand, I'd ask some old lady who was sitting next to me but usually I knew enough. I knew actors. I knew the directors. I knew what they were trying to do. So, it usually wasn't difficult to understand.

And the audience would react. You know, the audience would laugh or cheer. The audience knew what was going on, too. So you could get indications from the audience. Sometimes people would even see that you were a foreigner and tell you. You know, "Did you understand?" (Laughter) And I often went with friends, with Russian friends and they would help.

Q: How important were the intellectuals there? One knows that in France the intellectuals do have an importance far outweighing, you might say, what the intellectuals would have in the United States or maybe Britain or Germany. What about in the Soviet Union?

PALMER: Well, I'd maybe put it slightly differently. I think that ideology or intellectual context, that the assumptions that people have in their heads, ordinary people have as well as the intellectuals have, determines history. In that sense, in Russia the role of the intellectuals in shaping the assumptions in peoples' heads was very important in determining what was legitimate. This role resulted over time in the revolution that we have seen and the change that took place.

It was this intellectual context changing and coming to fruition. It wasn't Gorbachev standing up and saying, "I want to be a democrat." It was the efforts of hundreds of thousands of people around dinner tables and in newspaper articles; and all the ways that these things happen that change the assumptions in the society about where they're going and where they want to go. And I think in that sense, the intellectuals, theater directors, etc. have been absolutely critical to how we've seen history move in that country.

Q: Were you aware of a disillusionment? You know, we're talking about the railroad workers and others. Did you feel that the communist ideas, the lectures, all this had really taken root? We're talking again about the '69 to '71 period. Did you feel communism had really taken root?

PALMER: No. And this again is something that used to drive me crazy as a student in listening to professors. And it used to drive me crazy about the Foreign Service also. Because it was absolutely clear, if you spent any time with villagers or with workers in railway buffets, they always talked about "we/they."

Who were the "they?" The "they" were the government. The "they" were the party. The "they" were the czars. The "they" were, throughout Russian history, the elites. And they never identified with the elites. Never. There's never been a time in Russian history when they've really felt that those people in the Kremlin were "us."

That is a fundamental truth about the nature of that society and I think of all societies. It was absolutely clear, then, that they were alienated from the system. You'd watch their attitude to

cops on the beat, for example.

So, as you'll hear about, not very long after that I started to agitate for quite a radically different approach to seeing the future of that country. It goes back to this rooting, my time as a student, and my time in the embassy where I really thought that to believe that these were sheep or these were people who've always wanted it to be that way or these were people who liked communism. All that was rubbish. It is not true.

Q: Well, I interviewed Ed Hurwitz and he was talking about going to these Znaniye lectures. Could you tell your experiences and what you were gathering, because he said this was really one of the greatest ways of getting the pulse of things? Could you explain more or less the context that they were put in and then what you were getting from them?

PALMER: Absolutely. Well, I'm interested that Ed said that. My memory of what was valuable stands out. What was really valuable was that, of course, you could hear what the party line was on subjects that weren't necessarily always in the press. There was a layer of sensitivity with which they were dealing which was not closed, exactly, but anyway these sessions were a link that you didn't see in the press. So you could learn a little bit more even of the official position on things.

But what was much intensely more interesting was what was on the minds of people as they reacted to this kind of stuff. The example I'm about to give you wasn't the Znaniye Society but it was sort of similar. Ed and I were always looking for notices for these lectures and trying to find some that weren't listed in the papers because they might be more interesting.

There was an apartment building right near the embassy, one of these tall Stalin designed "seven sister" kind of buildings. I saw this notice for a talk and I thought it was Znaniye Society. So I showed up that night, and went in, and they closed the door. It was a small room, and that seemed a little bit unusual to me. Then they started calling the roll and I thought, "Wait a minute!" because at the Znaniye Society lectures they never call the roll. It was just people off the street, usually large. It turned out this was a communist cell group of people who lived in that building, mostly older people.

The reason I'd gone was that the lecturer was a central committee staffer who was lecturing on the power of Western media on the Soviet Union. He lectured for about two hours on the subject. Then there was another two hours worth of questions. Early on in the thing, he asked people what their source of information was, their main sources of information about certain events.

For example, he cited Svetlana Alliluyeva's defection, you know, Stalin's daughter. You know, "How did you learn about this?" He said that the central committee had done surveys of sources of information. He wanted to compare people in that group and how they learned about things, with the survey results.

Well, what was immensely interesting is that the number one source of information for all the people practically in the room and in their surveys was what Russians call *spletnya*, which is gossip. So then the second question was, "So, where did the gossip come from? What was the

source of the gossip?" Well, the main source of the gossip was foreign radio broadcast: Radio Liberty, Voice of America, BBC, and Deutsche Welle.

So we were having an immense impact on that society. They were getting most of their credible information about things, including things going on in their own society, including Party members who were getting most of their credible information from word of mouth that was based on foreign radio broadcast. I wrote a long piece about this.

Q: Fascinating.

PALMER: I tried to memorize the whole four hours and wrote a big thing. Frank Shakespeare who was then head of USIA wrote me a commendation for this long thing I'd done because, of course, it was wonderful for them in reinforcing the importance of their programs.

Q: Well, one almost has the feeling that during those times that Pravda and Izvestia, the two large official newspapers, were read more diligently by foreign embassies and by people trying to pick apart than by a normal Soviet citizen, who would probably turn to the back and look for the sports section or something. Did we give undo attention to the press?

PALMER: Yes, I think so. Much too much. In hindsight, we spent too much time reading it and I did, too. I used to read it also but I think it was... I wouldn't say that we shouldn't have read it. We should have. People in Washington were reading it, too. The embassy's function should have been more distinctly understood as different than that.

You know, we should have glanced at the press, but...Ed was wonderful about this actually. Ed was a really good role model. Ed believed that the important thing was to be in the street and that was right. We should have done even more of that than we did. Embassies in general should do more of it than we do.

Q: Who was the ambassador or ambassadors during the '69 to '71 period?

PALMER: Jacob Beam was the only one.

Q: What was his attitude? How did he operate from your perspective?

PALMER: I hardly ever saw him, I have to say. I was layered and I hardly ever saw him. I really have no idea what his attitude was about this stuff. He was a man of few words; a wonderful man, charming and all that, bright, but hardly ever said anything. I never saw any reporting that he did. I'm sure he did do cables, but I never had access to them. So I had no idea what his views were even, nor did I really care. I don't want to say that but I loved doing what I was doing and I had no interest particularly in anything else.

Q: I always treated the ambassador as like the normal Russian peasant: the Czar of Far Away (and may he stay there!) (Laughter)

Were there any sort of splits within the embassy as far as interpretation of events, whither the

Soviet Union and all of that during the '69 to '71 period?

PALMER: I don't remember any big debates. Boris Klosson was the DCM. He was very encouraging of doing internal political reporting. He did some himself, I remember. He did a wonderful long piece about churches. I don't remember any particular debate or any real big difference. I don't think with Ed Hurwitz, for example. I don't recall any big ideological debates.

Q: Well, now we're speaking in 1999 when the whole thing has sort of come apart. Two of the things that one would hear people talking about, but almost on the margins then, but now have become all-important. One was the Soviet economy and the other is the nationalities issue. Did these play much of a part?

PALMER: Yes. We tried to do reporting on the nationalities issues. This issue was the specialty of Fred Barghoon, who was my advisor at Yale. I think many people were aware of the differences there. So we tried but I don't think we did a really good job on that, frankly. I don't think that was a side of the embassy's strength. It was difficult to do. The KGB was particularly sensitive about that and, as I recall, I don't think we did terrific stuff on that. I think we did some but I wouldn't say this was our crowning glory.

Q: Could you get out much into Central Asia and the Caucasus?

PALMER: It was hard. They'd let you go to certain cities. There were certain cities they'd always give travel permission for. And you had to have travel permission. You couldn't leave the city without travel permission. But I got fed up with that, with only being able to go to cities I'd always been going to. I'd been going to them for years, Leningrad, etc.

So I just dug in at one point toward the end of my consular section tour. I dug in and I decided that I was only going to apply for cities they'd never give permission for anybody to go to. So I applied and I think I got 18 turn downs in a row.

As they got up to around 12 or so, I got the embassy to push on the department to start turning down Soviet embassy travel requests and to say it was because I was not being allowed to travel. Finally, they got fed up, the foreign ministry got fed up and said, "Okay, you can go to Tambov," (laughs) which was one of the ones I'd been trying to go to.

Q: Where is Tambov?

PALMER: It's southeast of Moscow. It's part of Russian literature. Chekhov wrote about it. It's a kind of sleepy sort of place. It had been off limits. I went and, of course, the authorities turned out a huge array of people to follow and to spend time with me. I was there for three days and didn't achieve very much, but at least I broke through. (Laughter)

Q: What about the economy? I served five years in Yugoslavia a little earlier and the thing I came back with was a sign saying "Lift ne radi," "The elevator's not working." This was the real Achilles' heel of the whole Soviet system. Were we able to evaluate it properly, do you think?

PALMER: Nationalism.

Q: I was thinking of the economy.

PALMER: Oh, the economy. Sorry, my head was back in this other stuff. No, I think we didn't evaluate it properly. If you look at the CIA analysis year after year, on the whole I think they were much too accepting of the... perhaps because of the lack of any other way of dealing with it ...you know the Soviets always had X percentage of growth a year and they had much too high GNP per capita figures.

The CIA used to do a sort of discount factor on the official statistics. But basically they took them and that was the U.S. government's view. It wasn't just the agency's. It was the inter-agency, intelligence community view. I think many of us thought it was crap.

If you just went around and looked, if you got into places like Tambov, and you looked at what was in the stores; and you looked at what people's per capita income was in terms of their apartments, how they lived, it wasn't anything like what we were being told. This was not a formidable economic engine. So, I think this was another area where we didn't do enough "in the street" comparison with the official reality and come up with our own views.

Q: You had dealt with the Soviet threat from the NATO perspective before you started this Russian training. What was your feeling and maybe within the embassy about the Soviet threat? You'd had the Czech invasion by the Soviet forces. Brezhnev was a fairly formidable character at that point. What was the feeling?

PALMER: I can't really remember what my own personal assumptions were exactly at that time. Because I didn't tend to think about those issues. That wasn't what I was working on in the embassy. It wasn't even my real interest in life. I know it sounds funny, but I can't remember what I thought about them as a threat, a military threat, etc. I'd hate to speculate because I'm not clear in my head what I thought at that time.

Q: Well, it could have been one of those things that was just there. You know, you had other things to think about, and the Soviets are a problem and... How did your wife find living in the Soviet Union as an Indian?

PALMER: She loved it. She loved it. It was a really good experience for her. She managed to attend classes in the medical school there, Second Moscovski Medical Institute. She had a corral in the Lenin Library, the big library downtown. She had colleagues in her field of nutrition and public health, biochemistry. It was helpful that she was seen to be Indian, partly.

She almost got into Lumumba University. She almost got admitted to Lumumba University ...she said that she was married to an embassy officer. They thought it was an Indian Embassy officer. Then, of course, unfortunately, we couldn't carry that all the way. So when they discovered it was an American Embassy officer, they wouldn't let her in at all.

But she was able to do a lot. She liked my work and participated. She enjoyed going to the theater. She had good Russian, too. She has a remarkable gift for languages. It was a wonderful time. We had a lot of great friends in the embassy and in other embassies. I think for many of us looking back in our whole Foreign Service careers, an early Moscow experience is very special.

JOHN P. HARROD
USIS, Moscow Exhibit
Washington, DC (1969)

USIS, Moscow Exhibit
Moscow (1969-1970)

USIA, Assistant Cultural Attaché/ Press Attaché
Moscow (1975-1978)

John Harrod was born in Illinois in 1945, and received his BA from Colgate University. Having entered the Foreign Service in 1969, his positions included Moscow, Kabul, Poznan, Warsaw and Brussels. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 1, 1999.

Q: You were dealing with a Moscow exhibit both in Washington and in Moscow. This was from when to when?

HARROD: Well, the exhibit was from June of '69 until maybe July of '70, and it was not Moscow. Moscow was one of them, but these were the large traveling exhibitions that USIA ran for many, many years, and we were in six different cities of the former Soviet Union, so having spent from roughly September of '68 to June of '69 working at the Washington end getting ready for this thing - the exhibit was "Education in the USA," and my job back in Washington had been to sort of get together some educational technology and other things that we would use as display items in the exhibit. And then in June of '69, off I went with the advance party to Leningrad, which was the first of our six cities, and then the exhibit opened, I think, in July of '69, and I spent a year... We were in, if I remember, Leningrad, Moscow, Baku, Tashkent, Novosibirsk, and Kiev, I guess were the six cities, not in that order.

Q: When you were going there with education, one, how were we treating the education problem in the South? Although technically schools were no longer segregated, it was still an uphill battle there. How were we dealing with that?

HARROD: Well, actually, the simple answer is the exhibit itself, in terms of displays, didn't deal very much with it. I think there were some visual displays about integration, but the exhibit was heavy on technology. Essentially we were trying to show the Soviets new ways of learning, including - this is now thirty years ago - things like computer - assisted learning, where students would push buttons for the correct answers and language learning by tape - all these kinds of things. But the real reason for all of those exhibits, no matter what they were called, whether they

were education or hand tools, we've had a bunch of them, was simply to give Russians a chance to talk with the young American guides.

Anyway, the Russians would ask guides, well, where do you live in the United States and what's your family like? So it became much more of a give and take about life in the United States than it was the technology. The technology was the introduction, and each of the guides would work on a particular stand in the exhibit and give a little presentation about what it was all about, but usually things shifted gears pretty quickly. I was not a guide. I was given the grandiose title of assistant general services officer, and my job was essentially getting the exhibit put up and taken down and maintained and being interface with the Soviet labor crew and the customs people and stuff like that. Essentially, what USIA had done was ship me off to the Soviet Union for a year to see the country, practice my Russian language and be a sort of resource for the exhibit, and whenever I'd get bored I'd walk out on the floor of the exhibit and pretty quickly people would come over and start asking me questions, and I could do the same guide thing. I must say also I had blinders on in those days, since I had been a summer intern with USIA and had worked in the Office of Soviet and East European Affairs, my assignment was pretty well cooked when I joined the Foreign Service. The people who had encouraged me to take the test knew that I had passed it, and when I was sworn in at USIA, I was already 100 percent sure that I was going to be going to the Soviet Union. We had a panel interview with personnel officers from USIA where they got us in in threes, I think, and sort of said where would you like to go and what would you like to do? And one of them asked me the question "Is there any part of the world you wouldn't want to go to?" the answer, of course, being, "Oh, no, I'll go anywhere." But I said, well, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And they sort of looked shocked, and the European personnel officer sort of shuffled his papers and said, "Well, Mr. Harrod's been taken care of." So I already knew that I was going to the Soviet Union, and that was kind of, as I say, an investment in my future, by shipping me out there. The Exhibits Program also, to put in a plug for it since we don't have it any more, an awful lot of those young graduate school guides who went out for six-month stints on exhibits later took the Foreign Service Exam and ended up in quite senior positions in the Foreign Service. It was a great training program for future Foreign Service people.

Q: Were there any security problems that came up while you were on this?

HARROD: On the exhibit? Yes. I worked on two exhibits. I worked on another one later and I was familiar with several others, and on virtually every exhibit there were security problems, generally in the sense of the Soviets attempting to compromise some of our young guides, and generally they did. We had to ship a couple of people home from every exhibit that I can remember for having done something they shouldn't have done, usually of a sexual nature. I finally came to the conclusion that we really should have a ringer in each group of guides, somebody that would come out and we'd ship them home a week later to make an example to everybody else, but we actually didn't have to do that; the Soviets kind of did it for us. So yes, we had security problems.

Q: When there were sexual problems, I mean, what was it, because with these guides, even if they took pictures I can't see that it... They're not government employees - well, in a way they were.

HARROD: In a way they were, yes.

Q: But it wouldn't compromise their career; they'd just ask for extra copies.

HARROD: That's what Sukarno, I guess, did at one point. But no, the idea was they would compromise them and then attempt to get them to report what was going on and, you know, feed any information that they could to the Soviets, and it was all the stuff that the security officers tell you can happen, photography through pinholes - it was all very nasty stuff, I must say, and it helped bring me around to the conclusion that at least some people in the Soviet Union were extremely nasty. And an interesting thing is as the exhibit would go from city to city, some of the cities had obviously a much tougher KGB contingent than others. There were certain cities where we would have almost no security problems at all and some where it was a daily struggle to try to keep the goons out. We had other kinds of security problems, in the sense of people who visited our exhibit and asked particularly provocative questions, who were obvious plants, or some innocent people who asked the wrong kinds of questions who literally would get beat up in the parking lot outside the exhibit. We saw lots of fairly nasty things, which helped shape my view of the former Soviet Union.

Q: What was your impression of the impression that these young guides got.

HARROD: Most of them, as young graduate student types, would tend, I think, to fall into the sort of liberal to leftist group, and by the time they would finish their six months in the Soviet Union, we tended to put them into two groups - the radical group, which wanted to nuke the place, and the moderates, who simply wanted to build a large wall around it and leave it alone for a hundred years and then look over the top and see what was going on. Yes, it had a big impact on most of them, and as I say, some of them who probably hadn't ever thought about working for the government then took the Foreign Service Exam and ended up being very good Foreign Service officers with the Department or the USIA. So it did have a big impact on them.

It also, I think, had another impact on them, and certainly on me. All my education had been Russian area studies - Russian, Russian, Russian. Being on an exhibit that goes to places like Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan - even the Ukraine - I think really gave me the sense that this is not Russia - this is a country that is made up of lots of different groups, and I think it planted the seed in me way back there in 1970 that the Soviet Union's nationality problems would eventually be its undoing. I thought it would take 50 or 100 years, but I became much more interested in the nationality and ethnic issues in the Soviet Union by virtue of having spent time on that exhibit, where a lot of my Foreign Service colleagues who spent all their time in Moscow were still Russian-centric. They still looked at it through the Russian prism. I began not to. I began to look at it in other ways.

Q: Our educational system - I mean, you'd gone through it, I mean the university at Grinnell and Colgate and Georgetown was very Russian-centered.

HARROD: Very much.

Q: I mean, there just really wasn't any way of doing the Caucasus or Central Asia or something

like that.

HARROD: No.

Q: Or the Ukraine, which is as big as France.

HARROD: No, that was something that I think was a big failing of our system. We tended to be just interested in the Russian part of it. Later when I came back to Washington, I found there was a network of academics back here, many of them affiliated with the Woodrow Wilson Center, who did specialize in ethnic issues, and I began to go to some of their sessions. But I think way back in '70 was when I first got this perception that this country is a lot more varied.

I remember going to Estonia. After our first exhibit city we had a week off. Usually between cities we had a week or so off while the stuff was being shipped to the next place. Some of us went to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, and this is July or August of '69, and I remember seeing something scrawled on a wall in downtown Tallinn in Estonia, and by some discreet inquiries with Estonians I could figure out what the words meant, and it meant "The Russians have stolen our country." And then I went back a year later to Tallinn, and the same thing was still in faded chalk on the wall because, clearly, the Russians didn't understand what it meant because they never bothered to learn the local language, but there was this anti-Russian sentiment, which I had never appreciated as a graduate student or even as an undergraduate because everything I was getting was the Russian version.

Q: What about as the assistant general services officer, what about dealing with the Soviets on, you know, a working basis, getting things done and all? How did you find that?

HARROD: Depends on who they were. We were escorted everywhere we went, all around the Soviet Union, by a crew of people from the so-called All-Union Chamber of Commerce, which was the outfit that USIA had signed contracts with. They were supposed to be our counterparts and our interface with local authorities wherever we went, and they would pick up some locals from whatever city we were in, but the same crew went with us, and they were all basically goons from Moscow. They could be reasonable if you're working with them. Sometimes the customs people could be extremely difficult. I spent a lot of time working with Soviet laborers because we would hire them to help put up the exhibit, which did a couple of things. I began to see what ordinary Soviets were like, and I learned to swear in Russian, which is a talent that became useful later in life. But it was an interesting experience, I must say.

Q: Did you find the system works, I mean as far as getting laborers to do things, or get things from hither to yon and all that?

HARROD: Well, it's a command system. If we wanted 12 laborers, they would give us 12 laborers. Now whether the laborers could do anything was another question. I remember one case where we were trying to open a large shipping container and there were 12 laborers and 11 of them were standing around watching and one guy was hitting a recalcitrant bolt with a hammer. And one of the Russian laborers said to me, "This is the way we do things here - 11 people watch and one guy beats on it with a hammer." And you know, that's the way the system

was. It was a command system. It didn't work. Some of the people were okay, and some of them were nothing but police agents. But it was an eye-opener.

Q: Did you find any interest in the theme itself, education?

HARROD: Among professionals certainly. I mean, what ever city we were in we would get visits from groups of teachers and educators, and we had a library with the exhibit that contained books in English on education, and a lot of people who could speak English would come in and utilize it. Yes, there was some professional interest. With every exhibit there was some of that, and what we always tried to do was have a sort of semi-professional component and then have a sort of mass appeal side of things, no matter what the exhibit was. The other one that I worked on for more than a year later on was about housing, "Technology and the American Home." Then again, a lot of it was mass appeal. Electronic garage doors. Whoopee. If you're a Russian, you've never seen one, but in every city we went to we'd also try to organize a seminar and bring in an American expert or two or three on a subject like historic preservation or building in seismic areas and get together with Soviet professionals in that area and have a real serious discussion.

Q: How about any of the areas you went to, were there any problems, stories, or anything else that you think of?

HARROD: The first time around, in that '69-70 period on the exhibit, Novosibirsk, out in Siberia, we had some particular security problems that I probably don't want to go into, but I mean it was during Vietnam, and it was a difficult time, and people were out to get us. Same in Tashkent. I remember being in Baku and having a different feel about Baku, and that was partly because there was a new Communist Party boss who had just taken over in Azerbaijan and he was trying to thumb his nose at Moscow, so they were being nicer to us there than they were somewhere else, and I went back to Baku on another exhibit in '75, and it was even more the case then. I mean, it was a very sharp contrast, and that's when you begin to see that this isn't one country; this is a lot of little satrapies connected to Moscow. But there were plenty of security problems. 1970 was, again, the height of the Vietnam situation, and it was a little bit difficult at times, but a fantastic experience. I mean, one thing that the Foreign Service didn't do in those days was get you out of Moscow or Leningrad. There were travel restrictions. If you were assigned to the embassy or the consulate you were pretty much stuck, whereas the program I was on, I got to see a lot of the real Soviet Union.

Q: Were there people who were trying to come to the exhibit to sort of vent their dislike of the system and all that, you know, Soviets who were fed up with things?

HARROD: A few, a few. Some of them, as I said, got beat up in the parking lot outside the exhibit, and some would come and try to make a contact with an American and try to talk to them afterwards, particularly, I remember, in Leningrad, which was sort of an intellectual center of the Soviet Union, there were a number of quasi-dissidents who kind of sidled up to us as the Americans in town and would try to see us after hours and make contacts. There was a bit of that, less so if you were in a place like Tashkent or Baku, where there was less of an intellectual opposition network. There was some of that in Novosibirsk, and I alluded to security problems

we had in Novosibirsk, and some of it was connected with the fact that there were possibly dissident-possibly provocateur types out there who were trying to make contact with us.

Q: The exhibit would shut down in the evening, I supposed, at a certain time. Did you have problems? I mean, was it sort of your responsibility or part of your responsibility to make sure that the guides didn't stray too far off the ranch?

HARROD: It wasn't specifically my responsibility. We tried. Some of the guides would make contacts and go out in the evening and go drinking and have social lives with Soviets if they could. A lot of times people were just too pooped. I mean, the exhibit would start at 10 o'clock in the morning and go to seven o'clock at night, and by the time you ate dinner there wasn't a whole lot of that. We had one day off a week, and a lot of times the Soviets would try to organize activities for us on the day off - you know, go visit a collective farm or whatever, largely to keep track of us, I suspect, and keep us busy. But you know, some of the security problems we might have had had to do with people making the wrong kind of contacts after hours, but there wasn't a whole lot of that. I remember one person who had a little too much to drink and fell down in the gutter and broke her arm. That was a medical problem then.

Q: Did you have much to do with the embassy?

HARROD: Some, with the USIA Press and Cultural Section in Moscow. We'd make weekly courier runs up to Moscow to pick up the mail and get a few things from the commissary and then fly back to wherever we were. And for the opening of the exhibit in each city that we were in, somebody from the embassy, whether it's the ambassador or the press and cultural counselor or somebody, would come out and cut the ribbon. So we had sort of contact, but not a lot of it. And when the exhibit was in Moscow, which it was for one of those periods, then we were living at a hotel not too far from the embassy and would go over there and use the snack bar, and I remember having Thanksgiving dinner at somebody's apartment.

Q: What, during this essentially '69-70 period you were with this exhibit, what as you saw it was the state of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States?

HARROD: Not very good at that particular time. '69-70 was a rather tough period because of Vietnam largely. Relations were not good. Being an exhibit we were a little bit exempt from that. People would ask us, you know, difficult questions about relations, but because we were not official representatives of the embassy, *per se*, they probably cut us a little more slack. But it was not a particularly good period, particularly when we would do things like bomb Haiphong Harbor and a Russian ship might sustain a little bit of damage, then people would get on our case. So it was a little bit tense. When I was back on the other exhibit that I worked on in '75, that was a period of the Apollo-Soyuz link-up, and relations were a lot better then.

Q: You came back from this with, I assume, even greater fluency in Russian by this time, didn't you?

HARROD: Well, that depends on whom you ask. I thought I did, but then I came back and took a test at the Foreign Service Institute, and the old émigré instructor who was testing me didn't

seem to like the fact that I'd learned a lot of Soviet slang, and the contemporary terms for some things that she was still using the old pre-Revolutionary terms for, so I didn't test out a whole lot better in Russian when I got back, but that was because of who did the testing. I was a lot more fluent than I had been when I left.

Q: Yes, well, then towards the end of '76 you moved to another job?

HARROD: End of April in '76 I came back. The exhibit ended. I came back to Moscow, and for the next year and three or four months, until the summer of '77, I was officially assistant information officer, which was a double-headed job. I sort of backed up the information officer on some of the press work, and I also was in charge of the exhibits program, if you will, from the Moscow end. I helped negotiate two agreements with the Soviets on subsequent exhibits, including a bicentennial one that we had, and that was essentially what I did until the summer of '77.

Q: Who was the information officer there?

HARROD: It was Gil Callaway, who is still a good friend. I just talked to him on the phone the other day.

Q: Where is he now?

HARROD: He's up in Chevy Chase, somebody you might want to talk to: Gilbert Callaway.

Q: How did you find, at the heart of it, our information program ran, looking at it from the embassy point of view?

HARROD: Well, looking at it from the embassy point of view, at that stage, our information program was *Amerika Magazine*, the Voice of America, and press releases and the daily news bulletin. Because of the nature of the beast at the time, there wasn't a whole lot you could do outside of Moscow, which was one of the things I'd been trying to do on this exhibit, take our presence to places where we hadn't been. What I discovered in practice, both as AIO and later when I succeeded Gil as the press attaché/information officer, was that so much of the information work in Moscow was taken up essentially with press reaction to the Western press on crisis situations, of which there was a steady stream. So you really got tied up in working what Jamie Rubin's doing over here at the State Department these days, responding to whatever the issue of the day was. It was great training for somebody to be a press officer, quite frankly, but in terms of a coordinated information program, that was really the people back in Washington doing the *Amerika Illustrated* and Voice of America and stuff like that. We didn't have much chance to do a lot of that in Moscow.

Q: Were you able to have contact with sort of the cultural world or the media world? You know, you do in other places.

HARROD: Some. There was some contact with the Soviet media, quote-unquote, because that was part of the job. I got to know, meet - I wouldn't say *know* but I got to meet - the editors of

most of the major newspapers, and I had some contact with cultural people, depending on the issue we were working. But at the time security was pretty tight in Moscow, and you kind of reached the conclusion that the people who were free to deal with you were not necessarily the people that you wanted to deal with. And a couple of times I had to curtail developing relationships with people that I actually liked because I was afraid I'd get them into trouble. We lived, as everybody else did, in guarded compounds, where there were police all around the compound, and in fact, unless I miss my guess, Anatoly Sharansky was arrested leaving the apartment of one of the embassy officers who lived in the same building that I was in. So it was kind of difficult to have any normal relationship with people. I had some contact with them, particularly later on when I was information officer and we put on an exhibit of Ansel Adams' photographs from Moscow, which was the first time Ansel Adams' work had ever been exhibited in Moscow. And we were essentially trying to make the point that photography is something more than photojournalism, which is what the Russians tended to view it as, and working with a Soviet TV personality who was also an author and a naturalist. He was sort of their version of Marlon Perkins (if you remember Marlon Perkins, the zoo guy from the old television show). He cosponsored the exhibit with us, and we put it on, and we couldn't get Ansel Adams to come out because his health wouldn't do it, but he taped a message for us. It was a good experience, and I met a lot of artists (quote) through that exhibit, but again, under carefully controlled circumstances. You didn't necessarily invite them over to your house or go out drinking with them because it might get them into trouble.

Q: How would you describe the mood of the embassy and how it looked at the Soviet Union in this, what, '76-77 period?

HARROD: Well, it was an interesting period. We had one administration, the Ford administration, going out. We had a new administration coming in at the beginning of '77. Stoessel, who was a very good ambassador whom I greatly respected, left. He was replaced by Mac Toon, who was also a very good ambassador whom I also respected and had a lot of fun with. It was a time of human rights. The Carter administration brought in the human rights issue, which upset the Soviets greatly. There were a number of these sort of crises, whether they were local Moscow crises or had broader implications, that came up consistently throughout this period. So we were always reacting to something. In fact, at the time we had a policy that the embassy spokesman, which was me, would not be identified by name, because they were afraid if somebody's name was associated with all these critical remarks about the Soviet Union, that person might find his windshield smashed or his tires slashed, so at one point when Hodding Carter and Cy Vance were out there, we delivered an official protest to the Soviet Foreign Ministry about interfering with Western news transmissions, and I did a briefing with Hodding. And the traveling press wanted to use my name, and I said, "I'm sorry, but our practice out here is we don't do this." I think it was Dick Valeriani from NBC who said, "So we can't use your name in the interests of press freedom here, right?" But that was our policy.

But as I was sort of thinking to myself about what went on during that time, it was kind of a steady stream of these little crises. When Toon came out, at the end of '76, on a recess appointment from the Ford administration, nobody was really sure how long he would stay as ambassador - new President gets elected, what? But we had a visit by Secretary Vance in '77. The new administration had hardly got its feet wet and Vance and Hodding Carter came out, and

I guess Toon kind of predicted to them how the Soviets would react to the Carter administration's new proposals to radically reduce nuclear weapons, and I guess Toon was right, and they kept him on. Toon was a marvelous ambassador to work for as press attaché, because his first reaction was to comment. Stoessel, being a good career diplomat, his first reaction was to not comment, whereas Toon led with his mouth.

I hope I'm not telling tales out of school here, but when Toon arrived as ambassador, I don't even think he'd been officially accredited yet, and he did the first of the traditional weekly background briefings. The American ambassador every week would meet with the Western press on Friday on no attribution, "senior Western official" or something, and I think Toon's first briefing one of the correspondents, David Willis from *The Christian Science Monitor*, asked him what he thought his role was as the new American ambassador, and I believe, if I'm not misquoting Ambassador Toon, he said something like, well, he thought his role was to teach the Russians how to act like a great power, and not like some two-bit banana republic, which got people to sit up and take notice. And Mac tended to react that way, and he was a pleasure to be the press spokesman for, I must say.

Q: How did the embassy - I assume you're talking to your colleagues - view the Carter administration? In a way, you were watching what they were saying on the campaign trail, and this is all a new, unknown thing, and campaign promises and statements come out, and these things sort of dissipate after the election, when they have responsibility, but can you give a feel for how you all kind of felt about it?

HARROD: Well, I remember how I felt, and I think I'm not stretching it to say that at least some of my colleagues felt the same way. There were two things that struck us immediately with the new administration. One was the emphasis on human rights, which I think we - while we felt deep in our hearts that this was the right thing to do - also felt that it was going to piss off the Soviets no end and would lead to all sorts of tensions in the relationship. The other, interestingly enough, was the amazing contrast between Cy Vance and Hodding Carter, with whom I worked quite closely, and their predecessors, namely Henry Kissinger. Kissinger was known for being imperious - brilliant, but imperious. When Vance came out on his very first visit to Moscow in that beginning of '77 - I believe he arrived on a Sunday, and we, of course, were all at work in the embassy on Sunday getting ready for the Secretary, and the Secretary of State actually came around through the embassy in his cardigan sweater saying hello to everybody, patting them on the back, and thanking them and apologizing for the fact that they had to be in working on Sunday. And we all sort of looked at ourselves and said, my God, he's a nice guy! And we all wanted to work hard for a nice guy. I think we all had a feeling that we were willing to go the extra mile for this guy because he was treating us like human beings rather than bossing us around. I remember one of the visits that Vance made to Moscow - I don't think it was the first one; it might have been a later one - where I was waiting with Hodding Carter at the ambassador's residence to go back to the hotel where there was to be a press briefing. We were waiting for Vance to get back from a meeting he was having with Gromyko or somebody, and then we were going to go to the hotel and brief. And Vance came back and went in with the ambassador and Hodding to another room to have a drink and talk about what they were going to say, and I'm waiting out in the hall, and the ambassador came out and said, "Why don't you come on in and join us." And I said, "Oh, no, no, no. I'm just waiting. When Hodding comes out,

we're off to the hotel." The ambassador went back in and said something, and the Secretary of State got out of his chair, came out in the hall and said, "Jack, come on in and sit down with us." And you say "Yes, Sir," and you do. That was another reaction that we had, that these were decent folks. That doesn't always make a good administration, but at least they were nice people.

Q: Well, I'm not sure if this first visit was the one, but as I recall, Vance came out very early on with a-

HARROD: It was a radical new proposal.

Q: -radical new proposal where there really hadn't been much homework or preparation for, and frankly came back with a pie in his face.

HARROD: And that's, as I said earlier, I think Ambassador Toon, who was the Ford administration recess appointee, I think - I'm fairly sure that what Ambassador Toon did was look at the proposals they brought out with them and said the Russians are going to laugh you right out of the room, which, in fact, is exactly what the Russians did, and sent them scurrying back to Washington with a sort of "Are you guys crazy? You know, we've spent how many years working on one track, and all of a sudden you come out and switch signals on us." So that was an educational experience, I think, for Vance and his people.

Q: One does have the feeling that the Carter administration had, you know, good ideas but not necessarily well thought-out ideas, and there was a very long learning curve, you might say, in this.

HARROD: Possibly, although my experience, perhaps like yours, is that each new administration that comes in tends to follow - even if it's the same party - but each new administration comes in with the basic bureaucratic premise that first prove your predecessors were idiots. So they come in, they don't want to listen to anything anybody has to say, and they learn, slowly but surely, that you can do some things, you can't do others. The Carter people may have had a more radical change with the preceding administration in some ways. I don't think their learning curve was any longer than anybody else's, frankly.

Q: Did you have any concern about, I think, Carter - and I'm not trying to pick on Carter, I'm just trying to get your reaction - that Carter came in with a basic, almost Christian, idea that if you're good to your neighbor and all that they'll be good to you, and let's not be confrontational and let's try to work this out.

HARROD: For a guy who didn't want to be confrontational, his human rights policy was a thumb right in the Soviets' eye.

Q: I was over in Korea at the time, and this human rights policy did not sit very well with Park Chung Hee.

HARROD: Oh, I can imagine. It didn't sit very well with the Soviets, either, quite frankly. And one instance I remember is each ambassador in the Soviet Union, or at least the major ones,

usually got about three minutes on Soviet television on the national holiday of that particular country to deliver a little homily to the Soviet people. And July 4 of '77 it was Toon's turn, and I was one of two people in the embassy who wrote his speech. One of the political officers and I co-authored his remarks, and we felt compelled to mention human rights. And so we wrote the speech, and we went to the TV station, and they were going to put it on the teleprompter, so they took the text and copied it onto the teleprompter, and then they decided that they wouldn't let him say these things on Soviet television, and so Mr. Toon didn't deliver his Fourth of July address in '77. And of course, we went back to the Fourth of July reception at the American residence after the quote taping unquote that never really took place, and everybody was asking him about his speech that night, and his only answer was, turn on your TVs at nine o'clock. And that's what I told the press, and about three minutes after nine I remember one of the wire services calling me up and said, well you told us to watch but there wasn't anything there. I said, "Well, there's your message." They wouldn't let him mention human rights on Soviet TV. But to give the Carter administration some credit, those of us on the USIA side of things, who are supposed to reflect American values and society and not just the politics of the moment, should give Mr. Carter some credit - and I don't think he was a particularly good president, personally, but you have to give him some credit - for at least getting back to basics. I mean, you know, the United States is supposed to stand for certain values, and he reminded us that yes, we are, and just getting along with the Park Chung Hees and the Leonid Brezhnevs of this world is not the only consideration.

Q: Well, if I sound like I'm down on it, I'm not.

HARROD: No.

Q: Actually, I think there was an earth change in our policy because of - maybe rather inept at the beginning and all, but the human rights thing has changed the way the world looks at things, things that no longer would be tolerated. I sometimes felt that the Henry Kissingers and also particularly the Europeans, you know, tended to get so bloody sophisticated that they couldn't move.

HARROD: You know, another advantage that we had in the Soviet Union in those days was the Soviets were, of course, their own worst enemies and would often do things that fed precisely into this line. I mentioned that we had delivered a protest about their interference with American or Western transmissions. I had the wonderful experience of being sent to the Soviet Foreign Ministry to deliver a protest where they didn't know why I was coming, I just requested a meeting. And I sat down, and I said to my interlocutor, I said, "the first thing I want to do," I said, "personally, is thank you very, very much," and I said, "because I'm a fairly mid-level official in the embassy and I normally don't deal with the Secretary of State directly," I said, "but because of your total screw-up here with the Western correspondents, the Secretary of State himself, personally, told me to come here and..." and then I read my protest. And you know, they played right into this. While I was there, while I was press attaché, we had several outrageous violations of the human rights of people, including American citizens. We had the Pentecostals, who came into the embassy and set up housekeeping. We had the shoot-down of the *first* Korean airliner, not the one where-

Q: This is the one that didn't get shot completely down.

HARROD: Well, it went down. Only a couple of people got killed. It landed in Karelia. It was a precursor of things to come. A good friend of mine who was an International Harvester representative in Moscow was dragged out of his car at a stoplight and thrown into the Lefortovo Prison as a bargaining chip for two people we'd picked up in the States for espionage. There were a lot of not particularly pleasant things which, quite frankly, taught me how to be a press attaché. I learned all sorts of tricks which I later would tell new generations of USIA officers, about how to circumvent such things as the Privacy Act.

Q: Well, how would you?

HARROD: Well, the International Harvester chap who was dragged out. He and his wife - not wife at the time - his girlfriend at the time (we were later at their wedding here in the States) were on their way to our house, actually, for dessert after they'd been somewhere else for dinner, and he stopped at a red light, a car pulls up behind him, they force open the doors, drag him out of the car while his girlfriend is screaming, and they throw him in prison - allegedly for currency speculation, in fact, as a bargaining chip. So once the word was out that this guy had been thrown in prison, all the correspondents in Moscow wanted to know, What did he do? What is he guilty of? Well, first off, we weren't sure he was guilty of anything, and so the American consul, head of the consular section, went over to visit him at the prison at the first opportunity, came back and said, "The guy says he didn't do anything. He's totally innocent." And I said, "Good, I'm going to go tell the press." And the officer said, "No, you can't do that - Privacy Act. He didn't sign a release. You can't tell anybody anything." And so I called the bureau chief of *The New York Times*, who had been the first one to enquire about this, and I said, "Dave, I'm real sorry. The Privacy Act won't let me tell you anything. If it wasn't for the Privacy Act, I could give you a very firm declaration of his innocence, but I can't do that." He said, "I understand." And after that, we got his girlfriend to sign the release for him and then we could officially put out the word. But the hypothetical "I'm not allowed to do this, if I were, I could tell you" is something I learned. And later on in another case involving an American citizen who had been "detained" in the Soviet Union, I called the UPI bureau chief at the time, and I said, "You know, you have wide distribution, wire service all over the U.S.," I said, "How does a human interest story about an American citizen who's being forcibly detained in the Soviet Union and can't get out sound to you?" He said, "Sounds real good to me." And I just was quiet. And about 30 seconds go by, and the light bulb goes on, and he says, "Jack, do you know anything about an American citizen who is being forcibly detained here in the Soviet Union?" I said, "Joe, I'm glad you asked me that question." And we got the story out.

That's one of the things about Ambassador Toon. He was not reluctant to use the media. There were a couple of occasions where in the embassy we would have debates about how we should handle a particular issue, with most of my State colleagues, and even some of my USIA colleagues, tending towards, you know, "Let's not do anything." And on a couple of these occasions, after the group dispersed, Ambassador Toon would pull me back in and say, "You know, " he would say, "I really don't mind if the story gets out." And so a couple of times we got the story out before the Soviet version could be put out, and it helped. We actually got this one particular detained fellow out of the Soviet Union because it became a press issue in the States.

Q: I think this points out one of the things that the normal sort of Foreign Service establishment has been so chary. It's been burned so many times by the press. There are some who are so terribly sensitive to it that they don't understand how to use it when you want it. I mean, why don't you use it for attack instead of always being defensive?

HARROD: Well, in one of these cases the director of USIA was out visiting at the time, along with my boss, the area director from Washington, and one of these stories blew up in the press, and the area director said to Ambassador Toon, she said, "Someone told me that Jack had leaked this story," and Toon looked at her and looked at me and said, "Oh, Jack would never do anything like that," and then he winked at me because, in fact, we had deliberately put this story out.

Toon's first reaction was always to react. When he would leave, the embassy under other leadership would revert back to its no-comment mode, and one thing I think that State Department officers, if I may enter this into the record, don't understand, is that "no comment" is a red flag to the journalists. That means "I know something, but I'm not going to tell you." I told one of the bureau chiefs when I first took over as press attaché that if I ever told him I didn't know, that meant I didn't know. If I ever had to tell him "no comment," that meant I knew but I couldn't tell him. And he said, "As long as we play by those rules, we'll be fine." I have some lasting relationships with the media from those days in Moscow. I trust them; they would trust me. And I don't think... I was on a panel discussion in London, at something the University of London sponsored back in '96, with Maggie Thatcher's former press spokesman and a couple of journalists. And I was the only one on that panel who was taking the position that government officials and the media could work together. Everybody else had this adversarial view, whether from the government or the media, that the other guy's lying and you can't trust him. My experience, I think partly because I was in difficult outposts like Moscow, or later when I was handling media for the Iran Hostage Task Force, these were difficult situations and the media people understood, and you could have a good relationship with them and trust them. They fed me some material that was useful to me, and I fed them some things. So I don't have that view at all, as long as you know who they are. There are some media people who've burned me that I didn't know.

Q: I think this can be quite... It depends. In Moscow, you're ending up with the cream. I mean the people have had to learn the language. In a way, they're all living in difficult conditions, and-

HARROD: Not all of them.

Q: Okay.

HARROD: We had a few who were not quite so...

Q: I've been in places - I was in Saigon at one point, and you had some pretty scruffy characters there too. There were some responsible, and there were some who were just absolutely unreliable.

HARROD: If I got to know the person and trust him, or her, you have to base this on some track record. Where I got burned were people that I didn't know well enough to trust. There was a new bureau chief who came in once whom Ambassador Toon almost declared war on. I mean, he had just arrived, and Toon had one of these Friday press backgrounders that I mentioned. And the issue was always whether Brezhnev was dying or not. And the Chief Justice, Warren Burger, had been in Moscow on a visit, and Toon had gone with him to pay a courtesy call on Brezhnev. So the question at the backgrounder on Friday was how did Brezhnev look? And Toon said, "Well," he said, "I don't want this to get back to me in any way, but he looked..." I don't know whether he was better or worse that week, but this bureau chief then did a story that said "According to a senior Western official who was present at a meeting between the U.S. Chief Justice and Brezhnev..." And Toon went right through the roof because the attribution was perfectly clear. We gave that guy one more chance, and he basically shaped up. But if you know your people, you can trust them. If you don't know them, you can't trust them.

Q: Well, now, just on a case like this, how would one handle it? Would you call in that person and tell them what they'd done?

HARROD: Yes. That was my job as press attaché, basically was to tell him, "You screwed up. The rules of the background briefing are there is no attribution that comes back to the briefer, and that's so obvious, there's only one other person in the room, he's it. You can't do that." We had another case where Toon gave an interview to a Western periodical, and we sent the transcript of the interview to Washington, and somebody in Washington didn't like something that Mr. Toon said, and my job was to contact the media outlet in question and get them to take back something the ambassador actually had said that we had on a tape recorder. And they didn't really like doing that, but they figured, I guess, that it was in their long-term interest to keep Mr. Toon as a happy camper. And he said it. I mean, he admitted he said it, and he believed what he said, but somebody in Washington didn't like him saying it, so we had to get them to kind of edit that out of their final version - which they did. They could have very easily said, no, we're not going to do it, and they would have been well within their rights. I said I learned a lot about being a press attaché, which I think stood me in some stead later on in my life, but it was a tough time in Moscow because each one of these things would kind of pop up.

We also, in the middle of this, in the summer of '77, had a fire. The embassy burned up. I had just moved into my new office. Gil Callaway had left, and I had cleaned out his office and put up my posters and decorations on the walls, and the embassy burned up. That was probably, in a way, the biggest story of the whole time I was there.

Q: I'm in the middle of a set of interviews with Bill Brown, and-

HARROD: Yes, Bill was there.

Q: -and I'm talking about the fire, and he said one of the things he really learned about this was that the ambassador was there sort of trying to direct and do things, and he should be at one remove because things were happening too fast, and it would have been much better if he had moved back a little.

HARROD: Well, the ambassador, I remember also, was in his tuxedo because he had been at the Romanian embassy or at a farewell for the Romanian ambassador or something, and then there he was in his tux directing the firemen.

Q: And he was saying that the firemen were pouring into the place with brand-new firemen's uniforms on.

HARROD: Well, not the first crew. The first crew were real firemen, and then when the fire was sort of under control, a whole new shift of firemen suddenly appeared. But for me it was an interesting experience because we had a houseguest who had just arrived, one of our old exhibit guides from the '75 exhibit had come, and he was staying with us in our little apartment. He'd just come that afternoon, and we'd just had dinner, and we're sitting around reminiscing, and the phone rang, and I picked it up, and it was the sort of junior guy I think from the AP bureau who had the night shift, and he called and he said, "What can you tell me about the fire at your embassy?" And I said, "Huh [What]?" and I said, "Let me get back to you." I put the phone down and called the embassy and got no answer, and you never got no answer, so I immediately put my shoes on, said farewell to my wife and my houseguest, and sped down the road. And you could see the glow in the sky. And I got there, spent all night out on the street with the media folks as we watched the place burn up.

Q: Well, you say you had three jobs there. What was the third?

HARROD: The third was press attaché. I segued from assistant information officer in the summer of '77 directly in to the information officer/press attaché job because Gil Callaway left after two years. I think everyone assumed he would stay for a third year, and I guess Gil decided he would - I think he ended up going to Rome, which was far better than Moscow. And so suddenly, the fellow who'd been in the pipeline to replace Gil was at Garmisch for year of Russian, and so I got boosted up into the press attaché job, which was for me wonderful because I had direct access to the ambassador. I think it was the first job I'd ever had in the Foreign Service, except my trainee time in Afghanistan, where I actually had a direct relationship with the ambassador. I was one of about a half a dozen people in the embassy who could see him just about whenever we needed to.

Q: With this direct access, how did Toon view - I mean this is the dying time of Brezhnev - how did he view the Soviet leadership and whither the Soviet Union, from what you can gather?

HARROD: Well, I don't want to put words in his mouth, but I think the question here is how do you spell "whither." I mean, I think Mac had a very realistic and jaundiced view of the whole aged, crumbling leadership of the Soviet Union, trying to teach them, as he said, how to act not like a banana republic. So I think he had a very realistic view of them, and I think one of the critiques of him back in Washington in the Carter administration was that he was too much of a quote hard-liner unquote. His version of that was, he said, "If by that you mean that I am a realist and look at these people the way they really are, then I guess I am a hard-liner." I guess I tended to be a hard-liner that way, too. But I think he was a good counterpoint to the Carter administration tendencies. In fact, I think he once said that there was nothing that couldn't be

cured by having him and Marshall Shulman change jobs for a couple of months, so Shulman could actually-

Q: Marshall Shulman being the-

HARROD: Head of the - he had a higher loftier title, but he was essentially in charge of Soviet policy back here, whether he was at the NSC or the Department. But the idea was, you know, if Mac went back to Washington he'd see what you had to put up with in Washington, and if Shulman could come out to Moscow for a few months he'd see what the place really was like.

Q: During this time, was the USIA or the embassy looking at the Soviet Union... I mean, this was still the Cold War; things had settled down so the Cold War was luke-cold. To try to say, why don't we start messing around with the republics? I mean, you've got all these nationalities, and why don't we sort of encourage them to show separatist tendencies, because if this weakens the Soviet Union, this is a plus for us.

HARROD: Well, there may have been something like that going on, but I was utterly unaware of it, and in fact, everything that I noticed in Moscow was the complete reverse. I had spent 15 months of my life traveling around the boondocks essentially to develop some appreciation of what was going on out there, and when I got back to Moscow I found out everybody in the embassy seemed to think that the Soviet Union began and ended in Moscow. No, I did not see anything like that. Once in a while, some issue would perk up onto the radar screen that involved one of the other republics, but it was always seen as sort of a slight variant of the basic. The Politburo was in Moscow. Mac Toon once said there are only 15 guys in this country who know what's going on and none of them are talking. And essentially all of them were based in Moscow. A few commuted in from the provinces, from the republics. But no, I did not detect that. I would have been one who would have been strongly in favor not of trying to foment any nationalist attitudes but certainly paying a lot more attention. My view at the time was that nationalism would some day be the undoing of the Soviet Union; it's just that I thought it would be 50 or 100 years down the road. I never thought it would happen this fast. But no, I did not see anybody deliberately playing that card. Maybe there were people in Grandma's House across the river who were thinking about it, but I never saw it.

HARRY JOSEPH GILMORE
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Moscow (1969-1971)

Ambassador Gilmore was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Indiana University and the University of Pittsburgh. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962 and served at the State Department in Washington, DC and at the following posts abroad: Ankara, Budapest, Moscow, Munich, Belgrade and Berlin. He also served as Deputy Commander at the Army War College. In 1993 he was named United States Ambassador to Armenia, where he served until 1995. At the State Department in Washington he dealt primarily with Central European Affairs. The Ambassador

was interviewed in 2003 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: So, in 1969 you went to Moscow for two years, assigned to the press and cultural section, which was very unusual for an FSO in those days.

GILMORE: Yes. And it did not help my career, initially.

Q: I would have thought it would have been really career enhancing.

GILMORE: In the long run, I think it was. I thought it was very useful. But the first efficiency report I got for being the Assistant Cultural Exchanges Officer in Moscow, the first official reaction I got to my fitness report was a letter which said, "You've been ranked in the lower 15% of your class." Before that I had been always ranked near the top of the class. Nothing had happened. I was doing a good job, working in Russian, by the way. If you were the exchanges officer, by God you were working with Russian, and with ministries, and the academy of sciences in person and on the phone. But the State performance panel may have had difficulty evaluating a USIA efficiency report.

They didn't seem to understand how difficult it was to be the educational and scientific exchanges officer in Moscow. And I made a mistake too. I indicated, where you had the opportunity to write your own little paragraph commenting on the report, that in many ways the work I was doing, if this were an embassy in Western Europe, would have been done by FSNs (locally hired Foreign Service Nationals).

Q: Yes.

GILMORE: So what I was trying to suggest was that I had now to operate in Russian in a way that was really challenging. But I think it could have been read both ways. But I think the big problem was that the State promotion board literally did not understand the USIA terminology. I don't think they knew what a "USINFO", a USIA channel telegraphic message was. I think they may not have known what an exchanges officer did. But, subsequently, the job I did was taken over by two people: a science attaché and an exchanges officer. So what I'm saying is I did a lot of work. It seemed to me to be very useful too.

By the way, I got to travel some in the Soviet Union. I had daily contact with Soviet officials. I was at the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education all the time. And I actually got to work with real Soviet bureaucrats on a very regular basis. So, I thought it was a great experience.

Q: So, having been in Hungary, how did you find getting into the Soviet empire?

GILMORE: It was quite interesting. In many ways, the embassy in Moscow, as a whole, was under a very similar kind of surveillance from the police and the security services as the mission in Budapest, so there was comparability there. Soviet citizens were generally much more cautious even than the Hungarians in being in touch with us. Except the ones that you knew, obviously, were licensed, who were instructed to buddy up with you. Contacts with ordinary

people were even harder than in Hungary. Contacts were generally easier outside Moscow and Leningrad. I was lucky because I traveled. The whole press and cultural section traveled frequently because we accompanied American visitors, performing artists. I accompanied several performing arts groups. We traveled all over the Caucasus; all over the Ukraine; traveled to Leningrad a couple of times. We had students one year in Rostov-on-Don, of all places, and I went down to see them. So, I had a first-hand exposure to the Soviet Union that was as extensive during my two-year tour there. So, in that sense, I traveled more than I did in Hungary, but that was because of my work.

Q: The exchange program, in many ways, it was really a major instrument for getting the message across and getting contact.

GILMORE: I agree completely. And it was very skillfully run by Boris Klosson, who as I noted earlier, went on to Moscow to be DCM, and in many ways ran the place, not only as a DCM, but as an intellectual force.

Q: His name comes up a lot. Could you talk a bit about his background and how you saw him operate?

GILMORE: Well, I saw him in two places: as the director of the Soviet and Eastern European Exchanges Staff, and as the DCM in Moscow. He spoke fluent Russian, very serviceable Russian. He engaged easily with the Soviets; he could be alternately tough and relaxed. He had good contacts with senior officials. He was also a good manager. He understood the Soviets very well; they couldn't fool him on anything that was happening. He also had a good sense of humor. And he inspired loyalty from the staff. He knew what "loyalty down" meant. When he got to the top he cared about his people; he knew what they were going through. For example, if you were the head of the consular section during his time, you'd get a damned good efficiency report because he knew what you were doing and he knew how important it was and how tough it was. That was the kind of person he was. He subsequently achieved the rank of ambassador as an arms control negotiator. But all those of us who knew him thought he should have been ambassador at least once to an important country, and maybe eventually sent back to Moscow as Ambassador. I think the State Department didn't do itself a favor by not getting him into the ambassadorial ranks.

Q: Boris Klosson, what happened to him afterwards?

GILMORE: He went to do work on the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitations Talks) Delegation, with the rank of ambassador. That's the last I saw of him. He may have done work as a senior inspector after that, but he had an important role in the SALT talks.

Q: Is he alive, still?

GILMORE: I believe he is dead. His son was a very distinguished Foreign Service Officer, and served as an ambassador.

Q: By being at the embassy at the time, did you feel that you were on the "A Team"?

GILMORE: Had I been there in a State position, a typical Foreign Service Officer position, I would have felt more like it. A number of my State colleagues at the embassy would come up to me and say, "Are you a foreign service officer?" I said, "Yes." "Why are you with USIA?" "Well, I'm on reimbursable detail. I'm doing exchanges work." And they would say, "Oh, you made a mistake. You should be working in one of the State positions." And they would say things about USIA, some of them, that showed they didn't know what we were doing, and they thought we had no real substantive work to do. Of course, anybody who had worked on exchanges or tried to run an exhibit in the Soviet Union would have known it was immensely hard work.

Q: Yes, it was so important.

GILMORE: It was crucial. If we wanted to retaliate, for example, if we wanted to cancel some high visibility activity because we were angry with the Soviets politically, you could stop an important high-level exchange or hold it up and send a signal. It was used frequently as a kind of a political tool, the exchanges program. But only some of my colleagues realized that. By the way, my boss in Moscow, McKinney Russell, was a very distinguished USIA officer. Went to the very top of USIA.

Q: Yes, I interviewed McKinney (and his oral history is on the ADST website)

GILMORE: And a superb speaker of Russian, and student of the Soviet Union and Russia.

Q: But it really does show this cultural divide between the State Department and USIA. And I've come from the State Department stable, but I must say that so often the work of USIA got you out and meeting people, if it's the cultural side and the press, and also provided valuable management experience

GILMORE: Right. When I got to Belgrade as DCM, my USIA experience turned out to be very valuable because in Yugoslavia we had a huge USIA presence with the American centers. You are right, and the Moscow assignment gave me an in-depth exposure to Soviet officialdom. That experience proved of considerable benefit when as U.S. Minister and Deputy Commandant of the American Sector of Berlin I dealt extensively with senior Soviet officials.

Q: Tell me about some of these trips that you made and groups that you shepherded around.

GILMORE: Well, for example, I escorted the University of Illinois Jazz Band, which was one of the exchange program participants. Officers in the Press and Cultural sections took turns as escort officer. I escorted half of the band's tour of the Soviet Union. They were very good jazzmen. They were grad students, and many of them were Army vets who were back in university. Cecil Bridgewater, for example, the trumpet and Flugelhorn player, and his wife, Dee Dee Bridgewater, became well known jazz musicians. One got to see real people when one traveled out in the boondocks, even though the Soviet security officials, including the interpreters that were sent with us, tried to keep our groups isolated from ordinary citizens. They couldn't. That kind of group was too much of a magnet. So you got a chance to see another part of Soviet society. Also, you got a chance to work with the Soviet State Concert Agency, the Goskontsert

interpreters. They were all carefully chosen. You were with them day and night for three weeks in a row, including at meals, and you got to see how the Soviet Union actually functioned. During the Nixon-Brezhnev summit in 1972, when I had already left the embassy in Moscow and was teaching at the Naval Academy, my next assignment, I was asked to escort a chamber music group on its tour of the USSR. The group was composed of the Composers String Quartet from New York, the New York Woodwind Quintet, and a stringed bass player. They were top flight American chamber musicians. We played in six cities during the Nixon-Brezhnev summit, the three Caucasus capital cities, and Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev. We were taken very good care of, particularly during the summit, because there was an effort to promote a sense of warmth in U.S.-Soviet relations. When we got to Moscow, for example, we suddenly were in touch with a whole series of people from the Bolshoi Orchestra meeting with our clarinetist and oboist. The same thing occurred in St. Petersburg now, then Leningrad. So we got a chance to look more deeply into Soviet cultural life. Also, I got to travel to the three capitals of the Caucasus. I subsequently became the first U.S. ambassador to Armenia in 1993, and it was an advantage to have visited Soviet Armenia years earlier.

When I was the exchanges officer, working for USIA in Moscow, I visited Rostov-on-Don. We had to travel in pairs. We had three graduate students down there - a couple, and then a single student. We'd never had students in Rostov before. It was a rough, tough port city with one of the worst crime rates in the USSR. We didn't know the full extent of it then, because crime was pretty well covered up in the former Soviet Union. But I saw Rostov through the eyes of the American graduate students who were literally struggling to survive down there. The embassy officer who traveled with me, Robert Peck, Bob Peck is now dead - we wrote up some telling reports on that trip.

Q: What were the students doing there?

GILMORE: They were graduate students. One was working on getting a Ph.D. in Russian language and literature; another was doing research for his doctoral thesis for a Ph.D. in history. They were assigned to different university faculties. Typically, the only places where long-term exchange students were placed were Moscow and Leningrad state universities. But the Soviets had expanded the program to include Rostov and Voronezh state universities. That experiment lasted only one year. What I'm saying is, the insights you got from working on exchange programs with the Soviet Union were very, very special, and in a closed society such insights were rare.

Q: But, didn't you, over a couple glasses of vodka, get into heart-to-heart talks and all?

GILMORE: I was careful, partly because of the danger of provocations. But when escorting performing arts groups you could have a little more of that. In the first place, you and the Goskontsert escorts were out together for two, three weeks. Typically, the head escort on the Soviet side was a fellow in his 50s who had been around, been through WWII. One could drink with some of those escorts. I remember a fellow by the name of Drozdov. I got to know him pretty well. He was guarded and we didn't get into current politics; but we could talk about WWII. He would say positive things about Lend-Lease; he would say humorous things too. The Soviets, for example, called Spam "The Second Front", because they said, "The Americans

won't open another front in the West, they'll just send Spam." But you could have more contact and more in-depth contact with Soviet officials when traveling than in Moscow, where the police blanket was all over you.

Q: Did you get any feel at this time of divisions within Soviet society? That places like the non-Russian republics were just not part of, or weren't going to be part of the Soviet empire, if they had a chance?.

GILMORE: Well, only hints. One place I got it, of all places, was in Armenia, when I was escorting the chamber music group. When U.S. ensembles performed in the Soviet Union, they had to have their programs pre-approved by the state concert agency. They didn't want performing arts groups to perform any music that they didn't know about in advance. The chamber music groups had three pre-approved programs, and when we sat down with the Armenian State Concert Agency, the escort from the state concert agency in Moscow said, "This is what our guests are going to play." But the representative for the Armenian agency, said, "Wait, you are in Soviet Armenia, and we will decide what our guests are going to play here." So he basically just faced down the Soviet central concert agency's tour manager.

Georgia and Armenia seemed clearly more relaxed than Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev culturally. We had a post-concert party in Georgia featuring new Georgian wine from that year's harvest, and the Georgian officials who attended were a little more relaxed and open than those in Moscow and Leningrad. But the most interesting experience was at the cathedral in Armenia. Etchmiadzin is the seat of the Catholicos, the universal bishop, the head of the Apostolic Church. It is a short drive from the capital, Yerevan. We went there briefly on a Sunday morning. The service of the Divine Liturgy was underway and we observed that the singing was of a very high quality. We asked our hosts why, and they said, "Well, some people from the Opera sing at the church." Well, that would not have happened in Moscow or in Leningrad. If you were an important opera star in Moscow in the 1970s, the last place you could be seen was singing in a church. It would be considered beyond the pale, considered a kind of an anti-regime gesture. So, we saw little differences like that. We could see that cultural nationalism was one way that the Armenian and Georgian republics could show their special Armenian-ness or Georgian-ness.

Q: Did you get any, I think of Armenian composers and all that...were you able to delve into that at all?

GILMORE: Well, several people in the group were fans of Aram Khachaturian, and we did visit his museum in Yerevan. But we were still, when we got into our hotels for the night, whether they were in Baku, Tbilisi, or Yerevan, we were still under control. If the participants left the hotel it would be noted. One exception to that was with the University of Illinois Jazz Band in Leningrad. Turns out there was quite an underground jazz scene in Leningrad, and several Soviet jazz enthusiasts just took a couple of guys from our trumpet section home. I didn't know where they were for a while. In fact, one of them picked up a venereal disease. Which was an interesting thing. He mentioned it to me, when we returned to Moscow. I had the doctor at the embassy look at him, and sure enough, it was a venereal disease. But, basically, there were just hints like that, that there was another kind of cultural and social life going on that we at the embassy weren't a part of.

Q: Did you get a chance to play the piano with these groups?

GILMORE: Not really, although my musical background helped me with the music groups. But what I did do in Moscow, with my wife as a professional singer, singing in the British ambassador's choir, was occasionally to accompany the choir. There was a British student at the Moscow Conservatory, a pianist, who was better than I, and he did more than I did. But being an occasional accompanist opened doors for me with the musicians. For example, I remember David Glazer, who was the clarinetist with the New York Woodwind Quintet. He and I hit it off because we could talk music, and when he did make contact with some important clarinet players from the Moscow Bolshoi Orchestra, he included me as the interpreter. So, it was that kind of enhancement. And also, with the Composers String Quartet, Matthew Raimondi, the lead violinist, and the second violinist, Anahid Ajemian, and I became good friends. We talked music, and when we met Mrs. (Lina) Prokofieva [Ed: wife of Sergei Prokofiev] who came to their concert in Moscow. Mrs. Prokofieva was a gracious and charming person. - they brought me right in and again I interpreted. So there was an advantage to being a musician. [Ed: For a general description of U.S. cultural programs see: Wilson P. Dizard, Jr., Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 2004), especially Chapter Nine and pages 192-195.]

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

GILMORE: Jacob Beam [Ed: who served from April 1969 to January 1973]. Boris Klosson was the DCM.

Q: Now did Beam, was he culturally interested in these things, or was he mainly political?

GILMORE: He was a career Foreign Service officer, a very shy man personally, very disciplined, with long experience in German and Communist world affairs. He had a dynamite wife, Peggy Beam. She kept Spaso House, the residence, lively with films with subtitles, or films dubbed into Russian with English subtitles. She kept him in touch with the cultural scene, and he encouraged this because he knew what kind of an asset she was. Otherwise, he was very kind, and very courtly, but not a particularly gregarious or outgoing person. But you always knew that he had long experience, and knew where he was. He was also a bit unhappy because Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor at that time, was making some contacts with senior Soviet officials that weren't always shared with the embassy.

Q: Well, he would appear in Moscow without letting the ambassador know.

GILMORE: Yes, and it was hard for Beam because he was used to being in every loop. He was a very disciplined and loyal person; it wouldn't have been a problem to bring him in. But I remember before the Nixon-Brezhnev summit, when Nixon came to Moscow, Ambassador Beam did not feel that he was fully kept abreast of developments and preparations.

Q: Well, this is sort of a nasty side of this. One almost has the feeling that Kissinger, particularly in this early time, was playing the sort of the Iago to Nixon's Othello, or playing on...

GILMORE: Yes, when Kissinger became Secretary of State, I think it changed a bit. Now I follow him as a columnist, and he's a tremendous national asset in terms of his understanding of foreign affairs. But you are right, he was operating very much close to the vest, and he was literally cutting the senior State Department people and the top State Department leadership out at that point. I guess Secretary Rodgers was not in the loop on a number of things.

Q: What was your impression of...did you get involved in the Nixon-Brezhnev summit [May 22-30, 1972]?

GILMORE: I left Moscow in July 1971, so I was only there with the Chamber music groups. I was the escort, so I was not involved. Subsequently, when Brezhnev came to the States, I was one of the captive audience, on the eighth floor of the State Department when they had a signing ceremony...but, no, I wasn't involved.

WILLIAM N. HARBEN
Science Officer
Moscow (1969-1971)

William N. Harben was born in New York, New York in 1922. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University. His Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, Indonesia, Rwanda, Mexico, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, and Australia. These are excerpts from his memoirs.

HARBEN ... In late 1969 I was posted to Moscow as Science Officer in charge of negotiating scientific exchanges and reporting on scientific developments in the USSR. I was the only Russian-speaking Foreign Service Officer with a scientific degree (geology). As it turned out, the job was primarily political - I was constantly dealing with American scientists expelled as "Zionist spies." Before leaving, however, I received a superb month-long briefing on all aspects of science - high energy physics, space exploration, chemistry, medicine, meteorology, etc.

My opposite number in the Soviet Academy of Sciences was a steely-eyed old colonel in the secret police who masqueraded as Head of the Foreign Relations Section, Stepan Gavrilovich Korneyev. At the State Committee for Atomic Energy I dealt with Ivan Smolin, assisted by a tall, full-lipped young woman interpreter, Valentina Kondratova, who was probably KGB and assigned to watch me and Smolin, who was, however, a Russian patriot who had lost parts of several fingers in the tanks in the Second World War.

During my Washington briefings I was told that my predecessor had sent many translations of newspaper articles on scientific subjects which were not needed, since they received all the newspapers in Washington, where they were translated by experts. But my predecessor, Christopher Squire, had moved up, not out, and was my superior. Although I told him of Washington's disinterest in the articles, he constantly instructed me to make reports of articles he thought were interesting, which kept me away from more important things. Due to the close

KGB surveillance normal diplomatic practice was impossible and the embassy staff underemployed and kept busy reading newspapers which were sent to Washington anyway.

As I said later in a letter to the Washington Post, we lived in apartment blocks to which no Russian without KGB permission was admitted past the guard. We were driven to and from the embassy by KGB chauffeurs, and closely followed whenever we left the embassy. As a result the political section could do little but read the newspapers, summarize articles, and send them to Washington with bland comments. Despite the fact that we had no real secrets, all rooms contained listening devices, as did our apartments. Our presence served only to justify the reciprocal presence of an equal number of Russians in Washington, where they used their abundant freedom to collect all sorts of military and technical information.

In the exchanges of scientists, too, it was mostly a one-way street. The Russians always arranged to have their scientists visit the U.S. first. There they were briefed on the latest scientific research, shown laboratories, etc. When the American return delegation went to the USSR they were shown very little. Many were infuriated by their treatment, but, in the interests of detente, were persuaded to write highly favorable trip reports on their return home. One General Electric researcher banged on Korneyev's desk and swore that he'd never again let a Russian near his laboratory. A high-energy physics delegation called me on the phone to say they were going home, for the Russians were showing them nothing. I asked them to come and see me first. They did, and I wrote on my blackboard that their telephone conversation with me had been taped by the secret police, who were undoubtedly alarmed; if they would return to their hotel they would certainly find some sheepish Russians waiting to take them to see what they wanted to see. Which is what happened.

During that period the Russian government was strongly anti-semitic - partly for historical reasons, partly because of demonstrations and attacks on Russian diplomats in New York by fanatic Zionist groups demanding free emigration of Soviet Jews, and partly because Zionism - an allegiance to a foreign state - was incompatible with Soviet patriotism. About ten percent of the Soviet Academy of Sciences were Jews. They were hard to punish or persecute because they were indispensable. The secret police seemed to be trying to prove that the discontent of these Jewish scientists was due to foreign, mainly U.S., spies and agents. As the American Science officer I was the obvious choice as mastermind of a fabricated plot. Literally carloads of KGB agents followed me, ransacked my apartment and my car when I was out, in search of some incriminating detail which could be embroidered into a "plot." Had I had sinister motives, however, I would never have executed them due to the tightness of the surveillance.

The disparity between the view of Russia held by the liberal scientific community in the U.S. and reality made my job very difficult. American scientists were quick to accuse embassy officials of being "cold warriors" and yet it was my job to ensure that they did not unwittingly play into the hands of the KGB. I briefed them in a jocular way, frequently praising the Russians but remarking that they were suspicious and not to be alarmed at surreptitious search of their baggage, warning that "pickpockets" in Moscow were especially fond of address books (here I would wink).

I had to try to protect their Russian scientist counterparts from their naivete. An opened and

resealed letter (with the new KGB glue drooling out from beneath the flap) from an American scientist asked me to thank a Professor So and So next time I saw him, for the valuable information on his research. This was sent right through the open mail! Once even a letter from some office in the Pentagon which had simply been dropped in a street mailbox! Since this missive concerned Russian civil defense and was classified, it was quite impossible to dispel Russian suspicions of me, and Russian civil defense was not in my area of responsibility anyway!

Stepan Gavrilovich was extremely thorough. The Viglierchio case gave me some insight into the workings of his mind. He summoned me one day to inform me that a Dr. Viglierchio, a specialist in nematodes (a less military subject cannot be imagined) was a “Zionist spy” and had to leave the country immediately. Amused, I replied, “Mr. Korneyev, in Washington they’ll believe almost anything, but not that anyone named Viglierchio is a Zionist anything. Why not say he’s an agent of the Mafia?”

“The competent authorities have determined that he is a Zionist spy,” Korneyev insisted stonily.

So I had to find out why poor Viglierchio had been singled out. He was stunned.

“What have you been doing in the past few weeks?” I asked.

“Working on Nematodes...!” he replied.

“What else? Any social activities?”

“Well, he took me to a party one evening.”

“Who was at the party?”

“A lot of Russians,” said Viglierchio.

“What did they do?”

“Mostly we listened to poetry of some poet who was there.”

“What kind of poetry?”

“I don’t know. I don’t understand Russian.”

I took Viglierchio to McKinney Russell, our cultural affairs counselor and explained the problem. Viglierchio thought he could recognize the name of the poet if he heard it again. Russ recited the names of “bad” (in the eyes of the KGB) poets, and Viglierchio cried “That’s the one!” after one name of a Jewish poet. This coupled with the fact that a Jewish journalist Anthony Astrakhan, had left his card in Viglierchio’s box at the hotel was enough to convince Korneyev, apparently. So Viglierchio left, and gave me a large number of gift scientific books to send by embassy surface pouch, since he would be overweight otherwise.

Next a young physicist named Stephen Solomon, from the University of Oklahoma, fell into Korneyev's net. I worried that Solomon might be a target because of his juicily Jewish name. Tactfully the KGB launched its shocking expose of Zionist skulduggery just after Solomon's departure: a full page article describing how he received from traitorous Soviet Jews rocket secrets in men's toilets, etc. McKinney Russell was named as the spymaster of the whole operation.

Why not me? Russell had never even met Solomon. I was passed over probably because I was in a position to exact revenge. Some months before, I had been detached, with a Jewish embassy officer, to escort three Congressmen around Moscow. One of them insisted on visiting the synagogue. When we were leaving the Congressmen's hotel the infuriated KGB was smashing my car and that of Martin Wenick, my colleague. An obvious KGB officer was impassively supervising the destruction. I walked up to him and said, "Tell your boss that this is going to cost you about a billion dollars!"

A young man stepped off the sidewalk to help me change my slashed tire. He apparently thought I merely had a flat. The KGB plainclothesman muttered something to him and his face suddenly became a mask of fear. He stumbled quickly back into the passing crowd.

The embassy was always short of cars for errands. I used my personal car for business when my wife did not need it. In it I used to deliver scientific information of incalculable value to the State Committee for Atomic Energy from our Atomic Energy Commission. So when the material came I just stacked it in my office and in my bugged living room I told my wife, "I'm not going to deliver anything until I receive all the parts for the car from Germany. And if this happens again I'll throw all this nuclear technology in the river and they can swim for it!" This may have been the reason I was not named as Solomon's "spymaster." The AEC material was desperately needed by the Russian nuclear energy program. There must have been some angry exchanges between Smolin, the GRU man at the State Committee and the thugs of the KGB

The delivery was humiliating anyway. I had to bring the boxes - cubic yards of technical data - to a small, one-story brick extension to the State Committee. Inside there was a narrow room about the size of a small apartment kitchen. The floor consisted of a hinged trap door so that the workers behind the roll-top steel curtain along one side could push a button and send any suspicious visitor hurtling into the cellar. There were two buttons on the wall. One was marked "SECRET;" the other "non-secret." They never opened the curtain if I pushed "non-secret," so I pushed "SECRET." On a couple of occasions they refused to accept the shipment. Once because it was "non-secret" and the other time because it was addressed to a certain professor by name and they claimed not to know of him. Infuriated, I replied that delivery to the proper office was their problem, not mine, and as far as I was concerned they could throw it all in the garbage if they wished, and I walked out. I held up the Soviet nuclear energy program about six months. The VW parts were slow in arriving.

I don't recall if it was before or after this that Dr. Glenn Seaborg, Chairman of the AEC, arrived for a visit with several prominent American scientists. They were particularly interested in meeting with Dr. Flerov, at Dubna. Flerov claimed to have discovered Element No. 116 in

nature. Seaborg spoke in awed tones with his colleagues about this discovery, which was far over the heads of the KGB (and mine), who would have prohibited the article in which Flerov announced it, had they known of its implications. Unlike U-238, which splits into only two parts, Element 116 split into very many, releasing incomparably more energy. A revolver bullet made of the stuff would blow up a city (if the problems of manufacture could be worked out).

Radioactive elements leave traces in glass caused by the particles emitted. A study of these tracks indicates what element is emitting the particles. On the earth's surface cosmic rays leave such a multitude of tracks that they obscure everything else. Most radioactive elements occur with lead and disintegrate into isotopes of lead. Lead began to be used in bottle glass in the late 18th or early 19th century. Dr. Flerov reasoned that exuberant drunkards often threw their empty bottles down wells, which, if deep enough, protected them from cosmic rays. It was in such bottle glass that he found the tracks. Seaborg said, "This is a very sobering discovery, Dr. Flerov!" The KGB people looked at each other in confusion.

Apparently they decided to educate themselves by stealing Dr. Seaborg's attaché case in Leningrad, claiming it was a burglar. Seaborg's assistant called me, very agitated. "Don't worry!" I said, "I'm quite sure they will catch the burglar before Dr. Seaborg departs." The attaché case was returned the next day.

The Russians had pirated several of Seaborg's books and gave him several thousand rubles which they said were "royalties" just before he left. Seaborg thought he might buy a few dozen watches with the money, but I warned that few of the watches worked, and not for long. The stores were out of cameras, so he had to buy art books. These being very bulky, I offered to pouch them along with any other papers. I did so.

I then uncovered still another example of American bureaucratic stupidity. I began to be bombarded with telegrams from Seaborg's staff asking where his pouched books were, and letters from Viglierchio making the same complaint. I had been told by the security officer (why Washington would send such an idiot to Moscow was beyond me) that the classified pouch (i.e. secret) was taken to embassy Helsinki by an embassy officer on the train. I had sent other parcels to other scientists via this pouch and all arrived within three weeks. Seaborg and Viglierchio were the only scientists whose parcels had been pouched who were of special interest to the KGB. I went to see the Security Officer and asked him to tell me, step by step, what happened to the pouch on its way to safe hands in Helsinki.

"Well, an embassy officer takes it with him in an embassy car to the station and he takes it onto the train with him and accompanies it to Helsinki."

"In his compartment?"

"Oh no. It's too large for that!"

"Well, where the hell is it?"

"In the baggage car," replied the fool, as though it were the most natural thing in the world.

“You mean the Russians have our secret pouch in their sole possession for fifteen hours?”

“Well, yes, but it’s sealed!” Such stupidity was beyond belief. I remembered Brautigam, the prewar German consul in Tiflis telling me in Germany how the Tiflis and Kiev consulate pouches were received in Berlin with the seals reversed. So I had to explain to Seaborg and Viglierchio that the delay was caused by the secret police going through the contents of their parcels and that they would receive them in due course.

One day a visitor to the embassy called me from the Marine desk. An American scientist. He insisted on seeing me although I was very busy and asked him to come the next day. I offered him ten minutes. He was a paleontologist specializing in the Permian - a subject even more harmless than Viglierchio’s nematodes. He was quite agitated. When he tried to hail a taxi at the Academy of Sciences Hotel to come to the embassy a man in front of the hotel said something in Russian to each taxi and they drove off. Finally he had walked up the street and caught one and managed to leave.

“And that isn’t all,” he continued. “The Academy fellow who came to the hotel asked if I had any foreign literature, and I said I had copies of Time and Newsweek but hadn’t read them yet. I said I would gladly give them to him when I had. Then he wanted to take me on a tour of Moscow. I said I was too tired. Then he asked if I could buy a gift for his mother-in-law in the foreign currency store. I was specifically told in Washington I wasn’t to do that. I think he wanted to get me out of the room so that somebody could search my baggage.”

“I can’t imagine why they are interested in you, particularly,” I said. “They could always look in your baggage at the airport before they bring it out where you pick it up. They often do.”

“Well, I arrived a day early, so...”

“Aha! So you slipped by them...”

“I guess so. But I wanted to see you anyway because a fellow named Solomon at my university asked me to deliver a package to some friends of his at Novosibirsk, where I’m going.”

I was stunned. “Didn’t Mr. Solomon tell you that he had been exposed in the Soviet press as one of the most sinister spies ever to set foot in Russia?” The paleontologist’s eyes bulged. “So now we know what they were looking for. But how did they know you had it?”

“Solomon said he’d write a letter ahead. I guess they intercepted it.”

“My God! And where is this parcel?”

“Here. I brought it with me.” He held it up. I took it and opened it. A Hebrew grammar, a history of Israel and similar subversive literature.

“Okay. Here’s what you do. Go to Novosibirsk. At some point somebody - obviously a KGB

agent - will sidle up to you and ask if you brought a package for someone. Tell him very nonchalantly that you were going to but you were afraid your baggage would be overweight and you had to leave it. Apologize profusely.”

It happened as I predicted and the fellow had no further trouble.

I love wild mushrooms and had studied them for years. The Russians are also avid mushroom hunters and will travel tens of kilometers to get to a suitable forest to look for them. I therefore was very puzzled to see one of the most succulent mushrooms of all, the “shaggy mane”, or *Coprinus comatus*, growing abundantly and untouched all over Moscow’s parks and vacant lots. Together with a mushroom-loving colleague I spent weekends and lunch hours happily gathering them and eating them in every way imaginable. Once, as I stooped to pick one, a passing Russian said, “Nyet - poganyy!” (No! poisonous!)

Our KGB tails became frantic. Why were the imperialist spies picking poisonous mushrooms? I had examined the official mushroom identification chart and “shaggy mane” was missing! Shown, however, was a related species, *Coprinus atramentarius*” which is somewhat poisonous when taken with alcohol. The state had decided to omit “shaggy mane” lest it be confused with *atramentarius*, or rather, vice versa. I had planned to return to a spot near the embassy to get some that were just emerging the day before and found them all stamped flat. The KGB, of course. I mentioned it to the new security officer, who said, “Obviously they think you’re picking up microfilm wound around the stems.”

The Nixon administration was eager for some spectacular joint venture with the Russians in order to impress the voters, and, as I was told after my return to the U.S. by a colonel in the NSC, to gain the votes of the many NASA employees in Florida and California. Thus the Apollo-Soyuz space linkup was born. The Russians were wary, but Washington moved patiently. The scheme alarmed me, since it would involve a massive transfer of space technology to the Russian space program, which was entirely military. With such technology the Russian goal of an orbiting space station would be greatly advanced. I forwarded to Washington translations of articles in the Soviet press which spoke frankly of such military uses. An article by Academician Zuyevov said that from such a station targets on the earth thousands of kilometers apart could be located with an accuracy of a few tens of centimeters - i.e. missile targeting. Articles in Red Star, the organ of the armed forces, even spoke of launching missiles from such a platform.

For forwarding these translations I got the reputation in the White House and in NASA as a “hard-liner.” This underscores an interesting problem of Foreign Service reporting. If an officer does his duty by reporting facts which tend to call into question the desirability of a particular project or policy he may be accused of a personal distaste for that project or policy. If he fails to report such facts and the project results in disaster, he may be accused of concealing essential information. I thought I would avoid risk by expressing no opinion of my own and relying entirely on the published utterances of those with whom NASA proposed to enter into a joint venture. I was wrong.

I did what I could to bring the scheme to fruition, but there were other pitfalls along the way. A Foreign Service Officer must learn to disregard the official designations “Secret” and

“Unclassified.” In fact much that is stamped “Secret” can be revealed without risk, and much that is “unclassified” should never be revealed. During the period when NASA was wooing Moscow it offered, in an unclassified telegram to me for delivery to the Russians, to help the Russians with the latter’s unmanned lunar landing, which was in difficulty. The McGraw Hill correspondent, Axel Krause, came to see me and asked if NASA had offered cooperation in the Russian space program. Some instinct made me deny it. That very day the NASA functionary who had sent the telegram was asked by suspicious Congressmen the same question, and he denied it! If I had told the unclassified truth to Krause I would have been accused of “poor judgment” if not sabotage.

Finally a NASA delegation was to arrive in Moscow to start talking. Since I learned by experience that visiting American scientists had to wait as long as an hour to get their baggage at the airport while the KGB picked the locks of their suitcases I advised the delegation not to lock their suitcases. The trouble was that the clumsy KGB, after examining the contents, locked the suitcases and two of the five NASA engineers had not brought keys. A locksmith got one open, but the other had to be broken open. Upon their departure there was an embarrassing moment when we had to search high and low for a string to tie it up with!

There was another embarrassing moment at the technical meeting. Lunney, of NASA, had brought a model of the crucial docking mechanism. When he put it on the table to show how it worked, it would not! “God damn, the thing worked perfectly when I packed it in Houston!” he cursed. The KGB had obviously taken it apart at the airport, and, unable to get it back together, had forced it and bent something.

Ambassador Beam was a quiet, but perfectly honest man. He signed my warning communications without demur.

GARY L. MATTHEWS
Soviet Affairs Officer
Washington, DC (1969-1971)

Gary L. Matthews was born in Missouri in 1938. He received a bachelor’s degree from Drury College in 1960, a master’s degree from Oklahoma State University in 1961, Columbia University in 1969, and a master’s degree in international affairs. He served in the U.S. Army from 1955-1958 and joined the Foreign Service in 1961. His career included positions in Germany, Poland, Vietnam, Malta, and Washington, DC. Mr. Matthews was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: So you moved over to Soviet affairs, SOV, in the Department of State, and you were there from when to when?

MATTHEWS: I arrived there in the summer of ‘69. At that time the Office of Soviet Affairs had two main sections, bilateral political relations, and multilateral political relations. Bilateral

political relations was your day-to-day normal back and forth relations with the Soviet embassy in Washington, and of course our embassy in Moscow, and all the things that go on in terms of bilateral issues. The section I was in, multilateral political relations, was essentially to deal with all of the other issues where we and the Soviets came into conflict, for the most part, conflict and competition. That involved what they were up to in Asia, Africa, the Mid-East, Latin America and, of course, Europe. It also involved functional issues, certain scientific nuclear related issues, limited space cooperation. Many of these cooperative programs were in their extremely initial formulative stages. It was essentially a very competitive adversarial relationship. And most of my two years in that job was, in fact, dealing with the problems of how the Soviets were basically trying to screw us every place in the world that they could conceivably have a chance of doing that, and what we should therefore do about it.

Q: Who was the head of Soviet affairs at that time?

MATTHEWS: Spike Dubs was the head of the desk at the time. A great guy, a dear friend.

Q: He'd been chief of the political section, political counselor in Belgrade when I was there, and later assassinated in Afghanistan.

MATTHEWS: Herb Okun was the deputy director of the office, later ambassador to East Germany, and the UN, also a good friend. My immediate boss, the officer in charge, head of the multilateral political section, was Lewis Bowden. He's still around and I see Lew from time to time. And generally in that section we had five officers assigned to it. Jack Perry came in to be head of the section for my second year. We always had officers assigned there more or less who were experienced in the region of the world where you were tracking what the Soviets were doing, and dealing with the policy implications for the US. For example, our chap who looked at the Mid-East was someone who not only was an Arabist in our Foreign Service, but had also served a stint in Moscow. My watching brief was Eastern Europe and Germany, since I had experience in both of those areas. Similarly the other guy that worked full-time almost on China and other areas of the Asia Pacific had also served in that region. I'll come back to this office later on because some years later I came back to be the head of that office.

Q: Again, it was '69 to '71. In the first place, to recreate the time, could you explain how we saw the Soviet threat at that time?

MATTHEWS: Well, the Soviet threat was certainly seen as very real, very possible. This was in the aftermath still of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the expressions of the Brezhnev doctrine. They had laid it out pretty clearly, this is how it was going to be, by golly, etc. Of course, this was also the period when we had our own major buildup in Vietnam, and the US perceived threats in many areas of the world, either directly from the Soviet Union, or backed by them, the liberation movements in Africa, Latin America, you name it. So it was a highly adversarial and confrontational time, and virtually all of our considerable work pertained to that side of things. There were very, very limited cooperative contacts between the US and the Soviet Union, including some limited cooperation on retrieving space objects which came down from orbit.

Q: Nuclear matters...we both wanted to keep other countries from getting in the club.

MATTHEWS: We had a committee for disarmament in Geneva, and there were the SALT negotiations.

Q: One of the charges that has been made, and particularly made a little later during the Kissinger time which would be just after you left there...or you got a little of that while you were there.

MATTHEWS: He was still at the NSC.

Q: Right, you were there during his time. We saw things as a global conflict with the Soviet Union, whereas most of the disputes, particularly the Middle East...the problem there was mainly Israel, there were other problems. In Africa most of the problems were at a local basis, and Latin America was the same thing. You were at the heart of the monster looking at it almost from what the Soviet Union was doing. Did you find you were at all in conflict with what you might call regionalists against globalists within the Department?

MATTHEWS: No, I don't recall any of that. In fact it was our office which had most of the contacts with the regional bureaus, obviously NEA, the Middle East Bureau, or FE, or East Asian Pacific affairs would have people directly dealing with these issues. But I can't recall any time really when...you're right, we did tend to take the global challenge as it was presented, and something which had to be dealt with. My recollection is that we worked quite congenially with the regional bureaus, and that there weren't any great differences of opinion in that regard. We also worked very closely with INR, the Intelligence and Research Bureau, which had a very strong Soviet and East European research office at the time.

Q: Your particular area of focus was East Europe and Germany...

MATTHEWS: And the whole then budding steps, some very tentative, many very propagandistic on the part of the Soviet Union and its allies, to marshal up a European Security Conference, the big grand poobah of all gatherings of European nations.

Q: What was the European Security Conference?

MATTHEWS: Viewed from 1996, or even a few years ago, one would say now that back then it really was the precursor to what eventually became the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. But at that time, and I well recall, it was seen almost entirely as a ploy on the part of the Soviet Union to score propaganda points, and to divide us to the extent it might succeed, to divide us from our good and loyal NATO allies who might be more susceptible to these insidious aspirations for contacts in this and that field. Not much happened. Every now and then there would be a major piece in Pravda or a Soviet government commentary on the need for this or that in European security, and we would mutter back about self-serving aims of this and then it would all subside until the next Soviet thing got cranked up. It seemed more or less perfunctory on their part. They were doing the same thing, by the way, in terms of Asian security schemes which we were equally suspicious of, with good reason I believe. It was all seen as being in that vein.

Q: From your perspective we're seeing a stepped-up Soviet domination within the area you're looking at -- the European, Germany and Eastern Europe -- after the Czech business, were the Soviets calling the shots a little more than before?

MATTHEWS: That's my recollection, that indeed they were. Now that you ask that, I think I have that strong recollection. At that time the great exception, the beacon of "democratic life" shining away out there was, guess where? Romania.

Q: When you're dealing with Romania, Ceausescu, this is fairly early Ceausescu. Well, medium Ceausescu, he'd been there for a while. Was there any disquiet on your part...I'm talking about our representatives and what we're getting from the embassy about what was happening in Romania?

MATTHEWS: I don't recall any. But on the other hand my good friends in the office of East European affairs, where I always thought I should have been anyway rather than in Soviet affairs, I can't fully ever recall anyone expressing undue concern about the course of events in Romania. Generally it was known to be the very authoritarian, dictatorial place that it was in fact was. But on the other hand, the whole region was so dominated by the Soviet Union.

Q: Well, actually, Nixon had made a trip there.

MATTHEWS: Nixon made a trip there, that's right.

Q: Probably '69ish. I remember when I was in Saigon in 1970 I had to get William Randolph Hearst II, who was as far right as you could come had been on a trip with Nixon going to Romania, but the fact he had a communist visa in his passport I had to personally vouch for him at the Saigon airport.

MATTHEWS: Yes, you've got to watch out for these people with communist visas in their passports. No, you're right, in fact that was the spirit of the times.

Q: Were you all feeling the hand of the NSC and Henry Kissinger during this time? Or were you kind of far removed from all that?

MATTHEWS: It was a very congenial hand in my personal experience. The chap at the NSC with whom we dealt most directly was Bill Hyland, who was and is a marvelous person. An expert in his own right, a very solid person. My memory is that on certain things we needed an NSC chop, though I don't think to the extent that you do now. Everything now flows electronically so essentially you get it that way. But back then it was a pretty big deal, call up the NSC and talk to the person...usually Bill Hyland if you needed a clearance because you were doing such and such. I recall doing that, several times, for greetings on national day events, pretty tame stuff but it seemed pretty exciting at the time. I don't have any memory of calls from the NSC, why have you done this, why are you not doing that? It seemed to be quite congenial.

Q: Were there any issues at the time that particularly engaged your attention, incidence issues?

MATTHEWS: The big, big incident of the time that affected my colleagues in the Office of Bilateral relations was the case of the seaman, it turned out a Lithuanian-American seaman who jumped ship, in Boston I think it was and was returned to the Soviet ship captain.

Q: The Coast Guard returned him after a rather perfunctory check. A lot of heads rolled on that one.

MATTHEWS: So that was a painful experience for many as you know. I know there were periodic problems and incidents of an espionage or other nature, although since my duties were in multilateral affairs it was really hearing about them from the colleagues who were having to manage the bilateral aspects of the problem in the office of bilateral relations.

Q: What was the feeling you were getting from the Soviet desk? Was there a feeling of comfort with Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the saddle?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes. I certainly have no memory whatsoever of any discomfort. It was felt, I believe, we all felt that we were managing the major relationship, challenge if you will, as handsomely as could be. There was, I think, a decent interface with our embassy in Moscow about issues and we always paid great respect and heed to cables from the embassy and particularly if they were from the ambassador himself.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MATTHEWS: I think Foy Kohler was there for part of that time. Malcolm Toon, I think, was subsequently our ambassador there during part of my second tour on the Soviet desk. An assignment to the embassy in Moscow was sort of the Mecca for many of those aspiring to go on in Soviet affairs.

MCKINNEY RUSSELL
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Moscow (1969-1971)

McKinney Russell was born in New York, New York in 1929. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University in 1950 and served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1951-1953. His career included positions in Germany, the Congo, the Soviet Union, Brazil, Spain, and China. Mr. Russell was interviewed on May 10, 1997 by G. Lewis Schmidt.

RUSSELL: In the middle of '67, after 2 years in the Africa area office, I was transferred to take over the direction of the VOA broadcasts in the 4 languages of the Soviet Union that the Voice broadcast in at that time, Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian and Armenian. My earlier experience at Radio Liberty, where I was Deputy News Director when I left, prepared me for this job, as did my knowledge of Russian. Those 2 years were, I have to say, singularly demanding and

complicated. There were 120 people in the division which had been, when I arrived, part of the European Division of the VOA. We all felt rather uncomfortable under that umbrella, since the problems we faced were so different, and I began early on working for the creation of a separate division. After 6 or 8 months, that was successful, and the USSR Division was created.

The non-Russian services were much smaller-the Georgian and Armenian services had only 5 or 6 members, the Ukrainian might have had 10-but the Russian had some 85 or 90...they were broadcasting in Russian 17 or 18 hours a day. There was a challenging range of complexities in that job. One, of course, was that of creating interesting programs every day for the audience, and it was an audience with which, at that time, I had never had any contact. I had never been to the Soviet Union when I took over this job in August 1967. I had hoped that soon after the move, say within 6 months, I would make a trip there to gain on the ground some direct sense of the audience. I made that trip in December 1967 to all four of the areas, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia to which we were broadcasting.

The policy issues were very complicated, among other things, because there were political differences within the services, often between people who had divergent backgrounds and saw things very differently. In the Russian Service, for example, there were those who had come out after the 1917 Revolution who were men and women already in their sixties. Then there were those who had remained in the West during or after the War. And there were yet others, most of whom had come out in the 1960s. These different generations had very varied different experiences and perspectives and often they were at loggerheads with each other. There was a lot of mediation and keeping people apart that came with heading up that broadcasting unit at the VOA.

The most striking single event during my tenure was the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. When I joined the VOA, there had been no jamming by Soviet jammers since 1962. It was during the invasion, with the move of Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia, that jamming was reinstated and again created the problems of getting through that interference.

The mid-'60s were in general a period of Americanization of the VOA broadcasts to the USSR. My immediate predecessor, Terry Catherman, a particularly energetic and effective officer, had spent 3 years there, and had made it his policy to bring on many young Americans whose Russian may not have been perfect but who had a much brighter and fresher approach to broadcasting. He had introduced programs of popular music with the disc jockey work being done by young Americans rather than Russian emigres. Terry's predecessor had been a former Soviet general who had defected in 1934 in Athens, a man named Alexander Barmine. He was a very conscientious, very committed broadcaster, but also a very authoritarian figure, and one who did not think that young Americans whose grammar in using the Russian language that was not perfect should be on the air. Well, Catherman had made a new approach stick during his tenure, and I was very pleased to continue in the same track that he had initiated.

I was scheduled to go as Cultural Affairs Officer to Moscow in 1968 after one year in the Voice of America, but that transfer was postponed for a year until 1969. So I had 2 full years in the VOA, and still have friends from that period. There is a special kind of esprit de corps among Voice people that we foreign service officers came to appreciate very much.

The standard procedure in those years was that the heads of the various geographic divisions would be foreign service officers. The head of the Near East Asia Area would be someone who had recently served there, and the result was that there was usually a close and cordial personal relationship between the Agency's foreign service and the broadcasters. At the same time, though, in part because of the pressures that built up when broadcasters had been on the job for 10 or 12 years, 15, 18 years and had gained real expertise as broadcasters. Repeatedly there would be a foreign service officer who would move in as head of the division and this was bound to generate resentment.

A policy shift began later that saw civil servants, broadcasters with the VOA, at the head of the various division units. This must have started in the early or mid-'70s. By now it's become standard and there are very few, if any, foreign service officers in positions of broadcasting authority at the VOA. But despite some tensions in those years, it was, I thought, a very positive way of keeping two distinct elements of the Agency talking to and working with each other. John Charles Daly was the head of the VOA at that time, a serious American broadcaster and well-liked quizmaster, a very open-spirited, energetic man. An old friend from Radio Liberty days, Francis Ronalds, was VOA program manager. It was a very stimulating and interesting place to work, and I have, as I say, very fond memories of it.

I then went to Moscow as CAO, arriving in July 1969, arriving on July 2 to be exact, with my wife and children. The 3 children were, at that time, 10, 8 and 5. As CAO, I held the number two position in a five-officer post. Five officers and two locals made up the full USIS staff at the American Embassy in Moscow in 1969. We were not called USIS but were known as the Press and Cultural Section of the American Embassy, and that was then standard practice in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Arriving on July 2, the first thing that we did that was particularly memorable was to attend the 4th of July events at Spaso House and at the Embassy's dacha. Four or five days later, the Public Affairs Officer, Yale Richmond, left on home leave so that I was Acting PAO within a week after arrival.

Now on the way back to the United States, Yale Richmond joined the then Director of USIA, Frank Shakespeare, and PAOs from Poland, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, for a PAO Conference in Vienna. This was the first time that Frank Shakespeare had met the Public Affairs Officers from Eastern Europe. He had been appointed by President Nixon as Director of USIA in the spring of 1969, and was a particularly activist anti-Communist in his view of the world.

Apparently, as I understand the story several public affairs officers later told me, the Director asked each what he thought would happen if Communist power were to collapse tomorrow in each of their countries. How the other people responded I don't know, but Yale Richmond reportedly said that he assumed that after -- at that time it would have been some 50 years after the communists seized power -- that many people in the Soviet Union would opt for some kind of socialism and that an immediate shift, a total shift into new political direction, seemed to him to be unlikely. This response reportedly made the Director extremely angry and very critical of Yale, to the extent that he removed him as Public Affairs Officer in the Soviet Union more or less on the spot. Yale Richmond never went back to Moscow then, and the USIS secretary, Mary

Keeny, packed up his family's effects at his apartment and had them shipped back to the U.S.. He went on to an extremely active and effective tenure in the old CU, and is today a recognized expert on East-West exchanges. But in summer 1969, I thus found myself as PAO in the Soviet Union.

By late August Frank Shakespeare had decided that I could hack it, that I was the one he wanted to take the job, which put me rather on the spot, because here I was PAO with only two years of overseas experience in the former Belgian Congo. So, although it was at that time a Class I position, old Class I now corresponding to Minister Counselor, my rank at that time was Class III. I was in a way over my head, and had a lot to learn. At that time, I had, between working in the Radio Liberty and at the VOA, something like 11 years of experience of working and using the Russian language a great deal, so I was quite at home in it. I was able to get much involved in things Soviet without having to worry about interpreters or major misunderstandings.

First of all, I was very interested in supporting the VOA. I set up a system, soon after my arrival, of a monthly reporting and analytical airgram to the VOA in Washington. . In those days, the airgram was used a great deal. It was a message sent by pouch, not by telegram, and, in order to give the Voice of America broadcasters a sense of what was going on, what people were talking about, what might be interesting to them, my staff and I wrote every month a detailed airgram telling them what seemed to be on people's minds and trying to reflect the atmospherics of life in the Soviet Union. We also let the broadcasters know what their audibility was -- we set up a system of having travelers to other parts of the country take along a VOA radio on loan and try to tune in and report back to us on whether or not they had been able to listen to VOA.

Q: Were you able to travel quite freely at that time, or were you quite restricted?

RUSSELL: It was always a problem to travel at that time, but what made it necessary for us to travel was a rather interesting circumstance. In return for our agreeing in the original cultural agreement signed, I believe, in 1958 with the Soviet Union, to allow a very limited number of Soviet scholars to come to the United States on an exchange basis, a whole cultural agreement was developed under which there was also a system of national exhibitions. The Soviets would do an exhibition on some aspect of life there that they would send to us, and we in return, i.e., USIA, would mount one and send it to them. Our society, at that time as now, was a completely open one, but theirs unlike the present, was still tightly closed. Naturally, the impact of these national exhibits was far greater in their country than in ours. Our exhibit on education, for example, was shown in 1970 in the city of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, which had never seen an exhibit of any kind about anything in the United States. Its popularity was enormous. The arrangement was that an exhibit would be in the country for one year; it would go to 6 cities for about a month in each city and then take a month to pack up and move on by train to the next city.

Just before I arrived in July of 1969, a new American exhibit on our educational system had opened in Leningrad. The first time that I left Moscow was 3 or 4 weeks after arrival to take the measure of this important show. There were serious problems with it, including inadequate coverage of certain aspects of education, not very lively exhibits, in fact, a whole range of problems. The exhibit was to move on to Moscow in September and everyone wanted it to be as

successful as possible in the capital. I recall writing a lengthy and detailed critique back to the Agency describing what was lacking or wrong as I saw it, along with comments from Soviet visitors and from the young American guides at the exhibit. The Agency responded very quickly and by the time the exhibit opened in Moscow, a number of improvements had been made.

The guides in these exhibits had learned Russian or knew it from the families. They were, of course, the stars of the show, because they would spend 7 or 8 hours a day talking to audiences and explaining, for example, how one got into a university or how public schools worked in the United States. There were 25 or so guides, young men and women and they took advantage of a very interesting opportunity to participate in the exhibits and gain unique access to Soviet citizens who came to the exhibit. It was unquestionably one of the best things that the Agency was ever involved in doing, because the long-range impact on the minds of the young Soviet citizens was very great and lasting.

The guides and staffs of the exhibits helped make an enormous difference, and many of them have now gone on to many kinds of other things. Jack Harrod was with one of the exhibits, perhaps the education one, and retired recently as Western Europe Area Director. There is a marvelous broadcaster at the Voice of America named Mary Patzer, whose Russian was virtually native, who got her start as an exhibit guide back in the '60s. In any case, the fact that this exhibit, besides going to St. Petersburg and Moscow, went to Ukraine, to Kiev, Baku in Azerbaijan; went to Tashkent in Uzbekistan, and also scheduled to go to Novosibirsk out in Siberia...six altogether interesting cities.

This meant that the USIS staff, which was called Press and Cultural, had to do the advance work, negotiate with the local Chambers of Commerce, agree on a site, to install the exhibit. It was extremely labor-intensive to do that and demanded a lot of effort. I made 2 or 3 trips to Tashkent by air, 4 or 5 hours from Moscow, or maybe more, to set the exhibit up there for its opening for instance. I recall being scheduled to go to Baku to open the exhibit there, and having prepared a short speech in the local language, which I was never able to give because the plane, it being deepest winter, was never able to take off. I recall that my wife and I spent over 24 hours at one of the airports outside Moscow waiting for the departure of the plane to Baku that never left.

Q: I have one question in that regard. The young people who were handling the exhibits up to that point had studied Russian, but these exhibits in other locations required the knowledge of other local languages...for example, Ukrainian, and so forth. Did you have young people who were also sufficiently fluent in these other languages to handle the question and answers involved, in showing the exhibits in these varied places?

RUSSELL: I don't think any exhibit we sent went to Ukraine without having Ukrainian speakers, though there were fewer of them than Russian speakers. There may have been Armenian speakers in those that went to that republic, but the principal effort was that, since Russian was understandable everywhere and we were going to have exhibits going to 6 cities and 3 of them were inside Russia, the guides would need a good command of Russian.

There is one interesting political event connected with the opening of the education exhibit in Novosibirsk, in Central Siberia. In May of 1970, when the exhibit was supposed to open,

everything was all set and was going to be opened on, as I recall, May 9. A very significant group of people were coming from the United States, fascinated by this rare opportunity to go to Siberia. Frank Shakespeare himself was coming; William F. Buckley, who was then a member of the USIA Advisory Commission at the time was coming. There may have been a few Republican members of the Congress that were planning to come. They were all set to leave to go to Moscow around May 4 or 5 and go on to Novosibirsk and to be there for the opening of this American Education Exhibit.

Two or three days before they were to leave, I received a call very early in the morning from the Foreign Ministry to tell me that the Exhibit could not under any circumstances open on the intended day because there was a shortage of electricity in Novosibirsk. The exhibit used very little electricity, in fact, and the whole story was completely invented, but there was no room for discussion. The exhibit would not open and it would not be open until some time later when the electrical system would be fixed again. As a consequence, all of the visits by the VIPs coming from Washington had to be canceled.

It was only several days later that we realized what it was that had happened to cause the cancellation, or the postponement rather, because the exhibit did open a week later. That was the precise time, May 1970, when the incursion into the Parrot's Beak Region in Cambodia had been ordered by President Nixon and had touched off a tremendous storm of reaction and criticism in the Communist world. At a time when the propaganda criticism of the United States over this decision was so intensive the Soviets decided that it would look very bad to have Frank Shakespeare and William F. Buckley and other representatives of the American Administration wandering around, being seen, and reported on in Novosibirsk. It was a kind of a lesson to all of us that the reason that people give for something happening can often be far from the reason. It had nothing to do with the electricity. The faulty generator in Novosibirsk was all in Southeast Asia.

In those days our problems in Moscow were much affected by the problems and challenges of dealing with the Soviet authorities. The Foreign Ministry's Cultural Section, the Ministry of Higher Education, these organizations' people were extremely hard characters to negotiate with because they all had political agendas of their own to limit access and the ability of American cultural diplomats like us to what was going on in the country or influence attitudes there. We had all kinds of complex negotiations about these national exhibits. They would check the list of all of the books in the library that had come in, for example, and if in one of those books there was critical comment about Karl Marx, say, that book had to be withdrawn, not burned, but not put on the shelf.

There were politics everywhere, and it was rather exhausting. On the other hand, every time that you gained some fresh insight into what was going on in that society, it gave a special satisfaction that you had learned something that you didn't know before, something that was worth knowing and reporting. I found during those years we did a great deal of cultural-political reporting and received even, I recall, a commendation from the Department of State for the quality of the reporting on the cultural activities that we produced.

Marlin Remick was my Deputy at the time, a stalwart, first-rate negotiator with the Russians, and

very helpful. Our Cultural Affairs Officer was Harry Gilmore, a State Officer on loan to USIA, who was later Ambassador in Armenia and is now the head of the Senior Seminar at the Foreign Service Institute. I recall that relations with the Embassy were very close because USIS, called the Press and Cultural Section, was very much part of the Embassy structure and one was treated on a par with other sections.

Working at this period in Moscow, when access to the society was so limited and policed so rigorously, U.S. correspondents and the Embassy worked quite close together. Every Friday afternoon, the Ambassador would meet in his office in an unclassified way simply to exchange impressions and ideas with the resident American press corps. We entertained each other a lot and became good friends during those years. For example, the New York Times correspondent at the time was Bernard Gwertzman who is now the foreign editor of the Times. A Time Magazine reporter was Stan Cloud, now an author and senior editor of the Time Magazine.

Within the Embassy, most officers were people of very high calibre. The recent Ambassador in China, Stapleton Roy was in the Political Section; Mark Palmer, Thomas Niles, William Farrell, Bill Maynes-these were some of the well known names in the diplomatic world who were all in Moscow at that time. It was an important place to be.

EDWARD HURWITZ
Political Officer
Moscow (1969-1972)

Edward Hurwitz was born in New York in 1931. He received his bachelor's degree from Cornell University in 1952. After serving in the US Army from 1953-1955 he entered the Foreign Service in 1956. During his career he had positions in Moscow, Seoul, Washington D.C., Afghanistan, Leningrad, and an Ambassadorship to Kyrgyzstan. Ambassador Hurwitz was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in August 1996.

Q: You were in Moscow this time from when to when?

HURWITZ: From 1969 to 1972.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

HURWITZ: The ambassador then was Jake Beam, he had just gotten there.

Q: How did he operate?

HURWITZ: He seemed to be pretty much low key. I don't think he spoke Russian at all, if any it was very, very minimal. He seemed to be not heavily involved. I don't know why. Maybe he was already getting beyond his most active period. He did go on to write a book, but I have not read that.

Q: Who was the DCM?

HURWITZ: The DCM was Boris Klosson.

Q: What was your job?

HURWITZ: The political section was divided into two parts. One was multilateral and one was internal. I was head of the internal section and had three people under me.

Q: Now this is middle Brezhnev wasn't it?

HURWITZ: Yes. It was 1969 and Brezhnev came in in 1964.

Q: Did you find any differences in the way you were operating then and the way you had operated earlier?

HURWITZ: Yes, there was a big difference. The regime closed in on itself with respect to contacts. When I was there in 1958-60, Politburo members would show up for the Fourth of July and there was a lot of contact. It was an atmosphere, I recall, for example, in 1958 at the Queen's Birthday Party at the British embassy, a lot of diplomats went in their cords suits and I remember standing with Kirichenko, who was a member of the Politburo, in a dark black suit and he looks at me and says, "Do you think I am dressed all right?" That came to a sudden stop and you were lucky if you got a few people from the America Section or a few of the technical ministries. No Politburo people or Party people would go around.

Q: Was there any sense that the embassy was being somewhat bypassed by the Kissinger/Dobrynin relationship?

HURWITZ: Yes, some things we only learned about later. Even Kissinger's memoirs talk about back channel. The most glaring example of this was made clear to us out there when Kissinger came to Moscow in 1971 or '72 and was there for at least a day without Beam, the ambassador, knowing about it. He had brought on his plane Dobrynin. So you have the situation where Dobrynin is chatting with Kissinger all the way across the Atlantic. Beam was left out of the picture entirely.

Q: In many ways one might say that Beam was particularly selected in order not to be a challenger.

HURWITZ: Yes, you could conceivably say that. Kissinger cut out not only the embassy, but the State Department too.

Q: How did this reflect itself on what you all were doing?

HURWITZ: It didn't affect my work. My work was very low level. We were seeking out information where we could get it. The newspapers became much less revealing, although they

had never by any means told the full story under Khrushchev, they told less and less of the situation as time went on. So, I was doing again a lot one on one, man -in-the-street type of conversations. I would go to lectures, etc. An example during my first tour, although there were others later, right after Pasternak won the Nobel Prize, the press was full of denunciations of the Nobel committee and Pasternak was a turncoat, etc. I went to a lecture at the University of Moscow, a student lecture, and the lecturer is standing up there denouncing the book, denouncing Pasternak, saying the book says this and it is wrong. Then one student leaps up in the back of the hall and points his finger at the lecturer and says, "Have you read the book?" The lecturer had to admit that he hadn't read the book. That was the end of lecture, consternation.

This sort of thing didn't make the press and it was the kind of thing that we reported on. We reported on food shortages, salaries levels that were never published. It was the kind of thing that Kremlinologists were doing carefully with the analysis of the press and the journals. One of the great coups really along these lines was Marray Afeshbach who was analyzing data from seemingly innocuous Soviet statistics. But, if you put them together with other obscure statistics it showed terrible developments in infant mortality or in alcoholism or in population welfare in general. A lot of our effort was trying to determine what was really going on, where things really stand. It was not a question of talking about policy, you knew what they were going to say. And, certainly at my level, and even at Beam's level, it wasn't a question of making demarches frequently on what the Soviets ought to do. That was done by Kissinger, by Nixon.

Q: What were you getting about the Soviet attitude towards Vietnam?

HURWITZ: Well, the Soviets, and this became clear in so many ways, didn't know what to think about Vietnam. Yet, if you absorbed the line and you were inclined to spout it yourself, it was easy for a Soviet student or a man in the street to parrot that line. More often than that though, you came across this sort of conflict. The Soviets through many, many years of experience almost automatically wrote off what the regime told them. If the regime said so, it can't really be true. I can't think of any specific instance, but there were many instances where I struck up a conversation with somebody and after you got through all the praise for what the Americans did for them in World War II, he would then go into, "We don't know what is going on in Vietnam. I don't know, it is a question. Maybe you should be there, maybe you shouldn't be there, but if our press is saying that you are doing wrong, I am not so sure." The Soviets faced that problem in later years. Almost everything they said was almost immediately discounted, and that was true about Vietnam.

Q: Were you picking up disquiet about what China was up to?

HURWITZ: Absolutely. That stems not only to the concern about this huge neighbor that is making claims about Russian areas, but it is also a prevalent Russian racism that extends to the Chinese, and their own "black" people, the Central Asians. They are terrible racists.

Q: There had been a great push in the late '60s, Lumumba University and all that. What were you getting both times about third world students and their indoctrination or lack thereof in the Soviet Union?

HURWITZ: There were many, many incidents between black African students and Soviet students. Both sides were very unhappy with the situation. The Russians were unhappy with these guys going out with Russian girls or flaunting money, which even the limited money third world students might have, seemed like luxuries to what the Soviets had. And the Africans were unhappy with the way they were being treated. One would have to question in retrospect was this much of a plus or just throwing away a lot of money at something that had a counterproductive effect. I seem to think it was counterproductive. It certainly worked with some. I think it worked with Afghans, but they were neighbors and that would be a special case. It worked with Cubans because the Soviets followed up with enormous influx of technology and bought the Cuban sugar. But, in other cases, I'm not too sure how that really paid off. I don't think it paid off at all.

Q: Did you find since you were in internal affairs for the second time that there was a certain change of focus yet about looking at the nationalities as nationalities?

HURWITZ: Yes, it was beginning and again more so with the Baltic states. My view at the time I think was pretty much borne out, was that Central Asia was not an area that was either a tender spot at the time nor would it really develop into one. Central Asia with some exceptions, Uzbekistan is probably an exception, really benefitted--Kyrgyzstan, no question.

Q: Oh, it was very obvious that it was on the receiving end rather than the giving end.

HURWITZ: That was the debate that took place sub rosa all the time. By the time Khrushchev came in with glasnost, people could talk about it publicly. The debate was whether Central Asia took more from Moscow or was forced to give more. In most cases they took more. And, they were Islamic to the extent in most cases they were circumcised and they married and died with Muslim rituals, but other than that there was no real interest in Islam. That has sort of almost artificially been stimulated now.

Q: What about the Orthodox Church during this time, the '70s?

HURWITZ: I used to go very frequently but there wasn't much movement. Khrushchev, liberal as he was in other areas, was not very friendly to the Church. For years you would go to church and there would be only old people there, basically old women. We always used to go to the Easter service, which is bigger than Christmas, and you would have the midnight service and then there would be a procession around the church (Christ has risen). At all these events, outside partially held back, restrained by the police, there would be a big crowd of Komsomol types who had been dragooned into this. Although this was one instance I think where the political line, atheist line, was pretty much in line with what most students did honestly think. That is, the Church is corrupt, was a narcotic to the masses. This, of course, was stimulated by the press.

Q: What about the Jewish community at this time?

HURWITZ: Well, even during my first tour, we began following very closely the Jewish question. I did it partially out of curiosity to see what it was like. The congress was beginning to get interested in seeing what the situation was--not immigration that was too far in the future. Remember in 1948 Stalin was gearing up for the Jewish doctors plot but he died fortuitously. So,

part of every officer's itinerary when he went to a town was to see whether there was a synagogue. Now that led to some odd situations. I remember looking for the synagogue in Lvov, which was a big center of Jewish settlement years ago. There was no active synagogue and I couldn't find it. The Russians very, very rarely had a phone book, and even if they printed one they were always unavailable, but they did have these information kiosks where you went and asked for an address or phone number and paid your three kopecks. I used to have these little jokes. I would go to a kiosk, and my Russian for a brief sentence was accentless, and I would ask for the number of the American embassy and they would get very concerned, they didn't know it. In Lvov I went and asked for the address of the old synagogue. She was very disturbed and may have even called somebody. So, I walked around town and finally went into a small bakery shop. The guy looked Jewish to me and I asked him where it was. He knew and pointed down the street. I went down there and it was now an indoor basketball court which was ideal because under the old system the men sat downstairs and the woman sat in the gallery so you had a place to play basketball on the floor and the spectators would sit around the top. We followed that in every city we went to if there had been a Jewish population.

Q: Was there something that was identifiable as a Jewish community?

HURWITZ: In Moscow, yes. In my first tour we went frequently to the main synagogue and in those days everybody was old who was going in. Around the synagogue on Saturday morning were old Jewish beggars. There would always be one or two Jewish guides who were working for the government who seeing you were a foreigner would try to separate you from the people so you couldn't talk to them and offered to bring you inside and talk to you. You tried to avoid that. That happened wherever there was a synagogue. That was in the '50s and the beginning of tourism and the Soviets quickly learned that they had to control the Jews that might be coming to either see relatives or see what it was like. That changed drastically in my second tour for one reason, the Six Day War.

Q: We are talking about the Israeli tremendous victory over the Arabs.

HURWITZ: Yes. That energized the Jewish population, particularly the young who had nothing to do.

Q: It also meant they were no longer losers.

HURWITZ: Right. It gave them pride. So, when you went to the synagogue on Friday night, the street was filled with kids dancing and just talking. We had an embassy officer who was assigned to go down there every Friday and just stand around and talk to people because you found out lots of things because the Jewish population by this time was willing to talk. This was sort of a turning point from a group that had been very frightened to a group that was becoming self assertive. Now, the older ones were still sort of frightened because they remembered the worst. These younger kids didn't remember the late forties. The Soviets gradually, even under Brezhnev, began to open up. There were Yiddish traveling theater groups that played for a few days in various cities. And then, of course, you had the opening up, the immigration infusion which began in the early '70s.

Q: Was the political section involved in the immigration?

HURWITZ: At first there was real immigration, they allowed it. We got involved in the whole issue of Refuseniks when they were shutting it down. That happened when I was on the Soviet desk in 1979. Back to the 1969-72 period, immigration was just beginning to get underway.

Q: Was there any Israeli representation of any sort?

HURWITZ: During my first tour there was an Israeli embassy which was closed after the Six Day War, so by the time I went back in 1969 it was closed, there was no representation.

Q: What about Arab representation during this 1969-72 period? Were they very apparent?

HURWITZ: Oh, yes. The Egyptians were there in full force, the Egyptian military people were there. I remember I got friendly, and it was sort of touchy for him but he was interested, with an Egyptian air force major who lived in my complex. He had me to dinner once or twice and we talked. He was a very nice fellow. It started because somehow they were delivering my "Herald Tribune" to his mailbox. But they were there in pretty big force as well as the Syrians and the Iraqis.

Q: What was the impression of our embassy to the relations of the Soviets with the Arab group? Was this a marriage of convenience or was there more to it? This was the Kissinger period when there was sort of the feeling that everything that happened in the Middle East was somehow instigated by the Soviets.

HURWITZ: I didn't work directly on that but, yes, I think the view was that we were backing the Israelis and the Soviets were backing the Arabs and that was that.

Q: Because, when you talk with people dealing with the Middle East they were saying that this was a home grown thing and the Middle Easterners were taking advantage of both the United States and the Soviets.

HURWITZ: I don't think we viewed the Soviets as stimulating any of this, but that they were to some extent clients which was taken as a matter of course, I thought.

Q: What about the feeling towards the Soviet economy during the 1969-72 period? Looking at this Brezhnev period, how was the economy?

HURWITZ: They were going through some difficult periods then, although it was much worse in 1981 when I went back for a couple of months TDY in Moscow as political counselor. It was far worse even in 1986-88. But, already in the '70s you were getting shortages, hidden price rises, items disappearing and reappearing either at smaller quantities for the same price or higher prices for the same amount. We all saw big problems, although I don't think anyone in the embassy had a big enough picture or privy to enough information to make global estimates as to what the Soviet economy might do or was doing. Things just didn't trickle down. Cement production might have been the greatest in the world but didn't mean a thing. Later at lectures in

Leningrad we would hear things like, “The USSR is the largest producer of shoes in the world. Leningrad was the center of shoe production yet what we do with our shoes, the lecturer was saying, “is to take them directly from the factory to the warehouse. We don’t send them into the retail network because nobody wants to buy them. So, we just let them rot in the factories.” We were all beginning to see what was essentially a basic flaw in the Soviet system, and that is that there was no connection between production and consumption. The factories produced to meet a plan, not to sell. We were reporting this kind of stuff, but I don’t think anybody drew the conclusion at that point that if this continues they will be exhausting resources for no real gain. You could see the waste there. They were living high on the hog with oil exports, but not really doing anything with the proceeds.

Q: The thing we were really concerned about was the military threat and all accounts were that the Soviets were building up a tremendous fleet, had very advanced aircraft, tanks, artillery, etc. I would hear tourists come back and say, “How can the Soviet army be that much of a threat when the elevators don’t work?”

HURWITZ: We constantly reported on these anomalies that whatever the overall statistics say for production of A, B or C, it simply is not evident in the civilian economy at any rate. What is evident is exactly what you said, the elevators don’t work, things break down, people 50 kilometers outside of Moscow were living Tolstoyan lives in terms of food transportation and facilities.

But, I think what became clear and was becoming clear at that time was that there is a real separate approach to the economy--the best in resources, the best in facilities, the best in minds were devoted to the military production. And, this is something that we in the embassy really couldn’t see. At the time there were obviously overhead photos, but this was something that I didn’t see. And, going back now, I worked in the historical office for a while, you would see some of the reports CIA was doing and you would be looking down on pictures of submarines in various places and see what they had access to which didn’t exist in the embassy, at least at my level. So, you couldn’t see the best. If you looked at what we saw and the perceptive tourist saw, not just the Kremlin and things like that, yes, the feeling was that these guys were going to hell, they were not going anyplace. What we didn’t see was the elite military kind of devotion of resources.

Q: Looking back but also at the time, was there a mind set, do you think, within not just the embassy, but within the government, and maybe the United States in general, of the Soviets as being a threat and not looking at the other side, the major weaknesses that brought it down?

HURWITZ: Well, there were things that brought it down that were not evident at the time at all, in fact, didn’t exist. No, we saw the threat. Washington through all these intelligence reports was aware of the military capabilities. We tended just prudently to accept a lot of what the Soviets said about “We are the wave of the future.” We did see them active in all parts of the world. So, it was perfectly reasonable and prudent to consider the threat real. That we in the embassy and some other people who visited saw the weak parts of the Soviet Union, the economic weaknesses, the grumbling, public discontent, lack of initiative, yes, that was there but you still

didn't say that despite all this other stuff it really was not going to work. I think we felt it would work.

What we didn't see at the time and neither did the Soviets see was that there was something else that would begin to work (and this is all retrospect, although we played a role in its beginnings), and that was that information could not be controlled. They tried, there was jamming, but in time technical advances just made it almost impossible to control. And the Soviets, I think were faced with a dilemma. If they were to bring the rest of the country along, to match the West economically, technically and militarily, they had to have contact with scientists in the West. They had to know what was going on elsewhere. That is the kind of dilemma. How do you keep abreast of what is happening and get nuclear scientists believing we are the best when they know that everybody else is doing a lot better? We contributed to that from the very beginning with the radio. I remember I had a funny feeling...I was in Donetsk, which is way in the south of either the Ukraine or Russia. It is an old coal mining area and where Khrushchev is from. I remember standing in the square, I had gone there in 1971, of Donetsk and looking around and feeling...I had been listening that morning to see whether VOA...that was another thing we carried radios with us to test VOA or Radio Liberty reception. Well, Radio Liberty and VOA came in very well and I was just thinking that these people need this information from the outside the same way that they need bread that they were buying at the store. The Soviets couldn't have it both ways. They couldn't show the world through exchanges and things like that, that they were doing fine and keep out the rest of the world. And that was something that hastened or made the fall inevitable.

RAYMOND ELLIS BENSON
Language Training, Russian Language Institute
Garmisch, Germany (1970-1971)

Raymond Benson was born in New York City in 1924. He served in the U.S. Army between WWII and the Korean War. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin and attended the Russian Institute at Columbia University. He joined the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1957. His overseas posts include, Zagreb, Belgrade, Hamburg, Turkey, and Moscow. Mr. Benson was interviewed by Robert Daniels in 2000.

Q: Then in 1970 you went back to Europe.

BENSON: In 1970 I went to Garmisch. During those two years when I was the head of Research, the question of my clearance for service in Moscow was settled favorably. When I went to Garmisch to the U.S. Army's Russian Institute, it was as a step already signed and sealed to go into Moscow. This period of two years during which all of this was settled brought to a culmination all of the things you and I have talked about, Bill, in the preceding hours.

In the first place, Dick Davies began, greeted me as the head of Research, and said we must have lunch, so we had lunch. And he said, "It's too bad things worked out as they did in 1967, but this

is a great job you have now. You can go in now as PAO (Public Affairs Officer) instead of CAO, cultural affairs officer, but we've got to get the clearance question settled, which remains is your father alive or not. There's no way that we can send you unless we can attest to that." I said, "I have no way of knowing," and he said, "I have an idea. You write to Mikoyan." I said, "What do you mean by that!?" and he said, "Well, let's go back to the office." And he called somebody in the State Department who gave him Mikoyan's address. Well, it was not a very elaborate address. He was then retired from his position as president, and he had an office in the Kremlin and everybody knew that he had an office in the Kremlin, so an address was sort of jerryed up. He said, "Write to him," so I did.

In 1968 in the autumn I sent a letter to Mikoyan, mailed it in Bethesda just in a post box, in which I said that for personal and legal reasons I should wish to know of the whereabouts and welfare, or something like that--of your colleague, Mikhael H. Benson. In the spring of 1969, I was mowing the lawn when a truck from the Post Office, came zipping up, came to a stop right in front of me there on the lawn, with a huge envelope from Moscow. I signed for it, and it was a letter from my half-sister, whom I'd never been in touch with before. She said, handwritten in English, "You were right to have tried to find out about our daddy," something like that, "in the way that you did." So then she goes on to tell me that he had died in 1964 and that she had a son, and so on, various other inconsequential family matters. I wrote back to her a letter which I thought was less than gushy--oh, we have found each other, and that sort of thing--I didn't do anything of the type. And I told the security people at USIA, to whom I gave a copy of this letter, a xerox of it, I said, "You see, we now know that he is dead." And they said, "We don't know anything of the kind. We have a letter from your sister. We don't have a death certificate." I told them that I don't know anything about her husband. I said he might be the chief of police of Moscow for all I know. I know that she is a doctor and she has a son, and so on, and my letter was very formal. I thought she should have it in the open, since they knew who I was. So, I wrote I am a Foreign Service Officer of the United States. I've served here and there and I am now in Washington, so on and so forth; and anything you have written to me before, I never received.

Q: We are returning to our Oral History interview with Ray Benson, today is May 1st, 2000. Ray, we were discussing your time in Washington with USIA and the experience of getting cleared to serve in the Soviet Union.

BENSON: I think we got to the point of my presenting to the Security Office of USIA the letter from my half-sister, which they said was not sufficient proof. She said my father had died in 1964. This was 1969. But it wasn't sufficient proof for them. I discussed the matter with Dick Davies, with others in the Soviet and East European area and with USIA's personnel people, and told them I really did want to go there. But there was nothing they could do, they told me, and time passed. Later in 1969, I was at my desk at USIA when I got a call from the Red Cross, Constitution Hall headquarters, and they said that they had a message for me, if I could prove who I was, from the International Red Cross in Geneva; they further said the message was from Russia, the Soviet Union. So I told them who I was and all that. They trusted me on the phone. They sent over a courier, and it was a copy from the Russian Red Cross to the Geneva International Red Cross for me. It was a copy of the death certificate of my father.

Q: Just what you needed.

BENSON: Well, I had sent that letter which said “for personal and legal reasons,” and personal reasons were taken care of by the letter from my half-sister, and this was the legal document that I suggested that I needed. It did not say, they could not tell me, from which person or office it came; just that it came from the Russian Red Cross. Anyway, here it was. So I went back to the security people and the Soviet area and personnel people, and the Security people said, “This will do it,” and I was cleared just like that, no further questionnaires or panels or anything, for service in the Soviet Union. The question then was how to schedule my departure, so that it dovetailed with the departure from Moscow of the Public Affairs Officer there, who was then McKinney Russell. It was decided that what the Agency would do would be to appoint me to be director of the next exhibit, USIS exhibit, USIA exhibit, which would be going through the Soviet Union, and I would do that, travel with the exhibit as its director. When Russ left, I would leave off being the director of the exhibit and come into Moscow and take up that post. So they decided that the schedule was such--it would be about a year away that the exhibit would be going in--they decided that a good place to park me for a year would be at the US Army’s Russian Institute in Garmisch. I forget who replaced me in Washington as the head of the Research Service, but there was somebody who wanted to do it and who was available, and so this would fit.

Now there are always, certainly then, four/five/six/seven civilians at the Russian Institute in Garmisch. The State Department would send two or three, USIA one or two. The NSA had people there. The CIA had people there. The rest were military. The instruction was in Russian. The faculty was all Russians except for one who was a Serb who had been educated in the Soviet Union and through some circumstance that was very strange really but it doesn’t matter here, and an Estonian who had been in the Soviet Foreign Service assigned to Copenhagen when the war broke out and chose to remain in the West. There was a Chechnian, Afterhanuf.

Q: I know about him. In fact, I even met him at Radio Liberty in Munich.

BENSON: Sure, Abdulrachman Afterhanuf. The rest were Russians. It was an unclassified school; there were no classified documents there. By then, this faculty, they were all, to a man and a woman, stateless. There was another person who was not--no, she was married to a Yugoslav--she was a Russian, she was in the language department. So we spent the year from 1970 to 1971 in Garmisch. In the spring of the year, April first, April Fool’s Day, I got a call from Washington saying that Frank Shakespeare had decided that a friend of his, who was a Foreign Service Officer, Andrew Falkievicz, who had served in various posts and was desirous of being an ambassador--he was very conservative, he had very good connections--they couldn’t place him as an ambassador. He was relatively junior, he was a Grade 3 Foreign Service Officer, and there was no place to assign Andy, and he was going to assign him to Moscow and that was that. So friends called me from Washington, from the inner circles of the Agency, and said, “This is a disaster. No one was asked, but at the morning staff meeting--the one per week at which personnel, senior personnel, positions were either opened or closed; that is, people were told that they were open or people were told who would serve there--this was announced, to gasps from the people who knew me well, including Henry Loomis, who was then the deputy to Frank Shakespeare. He ordered a friend of mine--it was Walter Roberts again, who by then had been appointed to the position of deputy, you might call it a Deputy Under Director of the Agency. He

would be the fourth person in the Agency. "Call Ray and tell him we owe him." So I got another phone call, this one telling me that they owed me and where would I want to go. And I said, "What, in heaven's name, is open?" The question of being on the exhibit is out of the question now. This was in the spring of 1971. What's open in 1971? Well, there was only Iran, which my friends said to me, "You would not want to go to," because MacArthur is the Ambassador there and he's very difficult to deal with.

I said to them that what I want is to go to the Soviet Union somehow sometime or a country proximate to it with which it has very close relations. That's of interest to me. So we were talking about Germany, perhaps Poland, Turkey, Iran, of countries where I could aspire to speak the language, but Turkish I didn't know. Turkey was going to be open only in 1972. They said, "We will assign you to Turkey as of 1972. In the meantime we will give you Turkish language training in Garmisch if the Commandant will allow you to stay.

The Commandant would, provided, in addition to Turkish language study, I did research on topics he would suggest, Russian-Turkish relations in certain periods, and I would read papers before the various classes. I said, "Fine, that's good with me." They sent a man down. They'd hired a man from Berlin and Munich, the United States Information Agency did, a Turkish émigré, linguist, married a German, living in Munich. He would come down by train every morning, five days a week, and try to inculcate into me, then he would go back. This lasted only a few weeks of the summer. He took a vacation. I went to Berlin to visit a friend with Shirley when we got a call from the embassy in Bonn. They were looking for me.

The Public Affairs Officer in Turkey had been assigned to Saigon because the Ambassador there, whoever he was [Ed: Ellsworth Bunker, ambassador to Vietnam from 1967 to 1973], knew him from an earlier posting. The Public Affairs Officer was leaving, somebody was going to replace him, and the ambassador said, "No, I want this guy, Bob Lincoln." So they called me and said, "How soon can you go?" I said, "I can go soon, but I don't know any Turkish. I know 300 words. It's a complicated language." They said, "It doesn't matter. He doesn't know the language at all, Bob Lincoln." And so at the end of July, early August, of 1971 we went back to Garmisch, and I packed up and drove to Turkey. The family followed more gracefully after I got set in the house. That's how my tour in Turkey began in September of 1971.

PETER B. SWIERS
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1970)

Consular Officer
Moscow (1970-1972)

Peter Swiers was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He graduated from New York University and entered the Foreign Service in 1961. He served in Greece, Germany, the USSR, Malaysia, and Denmark. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.

Q: Then what happened?

SWIERS: Then I went into Russian language training.

Q: Where did you go for your Russian language training?

SWIERS: I went to FSI. The teachers at that time were Nina De LaCruz and Mrs. Bouchet. Nina De LaCruz was from a minor aristocratic family, if I remember correctly. She had been born in Estonia where her father had fled from the Soviet regime and she ended up in Brazil with her family. She married somebody of Spanish origin and came to the United States, divorced and then became a teacher. She was there for years and years. She had a very elegant, old-fashioned way of speaking Russian, but she was an excellent teacher; there was no question about that. She had a native ability for it.

Q: Had you volunteered to go to the Soviet Union?

SWIERS: Yes, I volunteered even before my Harriman days. It resulted really when I was in the Op's Center in 1966. Frank Meehan was the senior watch officer. He had been in Moscow in the late 1950s through 1961. Then came the famous part of his career. Frank was the man who did the prisoner exchanges in Berlin and became a friend of Wolfgang Vogel, the infamous lawyer.

Q: He exchanged Soviet spies for American spies.

SWIERS: Abell was one of the cases that Frank handled. Frank was the one who had the major role in all in the Cheroniski affair though he wasn't quite as visible because he was then ambassador to East Germany. I have his address if you would like it.

Q: Yes, please.

SWIERS: He is somebody that would really be fascinating to interview. Frank urged me to consider Moscow even if I did not plan to make Soviet affairs a career. He said that one really needed to have a tour there to understand things. I had put in from the Op's Center for the language training which was scheduled for 1969. Naturally if Harriman had stayed on and the Democrats had not lost in 1968, I guess that would have been postponed. So I went into the language training. The other teacher was Mrs. Bouchet; she was not quite as cultured as Nina De LaCruz. The tension between the two classes was very visible throughout and at times quite amusing. Then there was another lady whose name I can't remember; she was from Leningrad. The training was good.

Q: How long was the training?

SWIERS: The training started in August with the three week area course and then you were supposed to be in language until June of the following year. In my case, that was until June 1970. Unfortunately, Bill Farrand, if I remember this correctly, had to leave Moscow for personal reasons about a month early; so I was pulled out of the course early. In addition, and this is one

of those interesting choices that you make in your Foreign Service career, I had been promoted at the time and I was then told that since I outranked the other two that were going out that I would be chief of the consular section. That was a political officer's job in the old days and a very interesting one. However, that meant that I had to leave in June. I had the option of going to Garmisch for another year, but I didn't do it. I had the Vietnam business with Harriman and I really thought that it was time to get on with a normal job. In retrospect, it meant that I never acquired Russian fluency at a full level and today my Russian is really quite rusty. I haven't used it in many years. I went out then to Moscow. We entered the Soviet Union on June 22, 1970, and in retrospect I really think it's funny, as June 22 is Barbarossa Day.

Q: That's when the German's in 1941 launched their attack.

SWIERS: My wife and I had visited her family in Denmark. We had picked up a car; in those days, the two cars that were the highest rated by "Consumer Reports" for being trouble free were the American Motors Javelin which was sort of a sporty car and the Dodge Dart. Prior to leaving I met Tom Buchanan who was to be the political counselor - he was one of the real old Soviet hands.

Q: Where is he now?

SWIERS: Tom is here in Maryland. He lives just out on MacArthur Boulevard in one of those houses overlooking Little Falls Dam. He would be very fascinating to talk to. Tom got the Dart and I got the Javelin. We drove and arrived in Helsinki on St. Pance evening. The weekend was coming; so we decided to drive in the general direction of the border and we were about to reach the town of Paulbu which is this beautiful old Finnish town. It was the first Finnish capital. Just before reaching town, we had seen a sign for a hotel; so we turned and we came upon a place called Hikon Katano, which is a manor house that had been changed to a very lovely hotel overlooking the gulf of Finland. Why I mention this at all is because what its great claim to fame was it was where the Czar came to visit. This was Nicholas II. The whole family had been there and they still had the menu autographed by them. When drove to the border in those days you drove on this beautiful Finnish road. Then you began to know that you were in an almost "no man's land" or a zone which the Finns controlled very carefully because of the tremendous increase in the number of Finnish troops that you would begin to see on the Finnish side at the border. Basically you went through the town of Hameenlinna and continue on to the border and there was a small, very neatly done, Finnish border station where you would turn in your passport and then drive on a bit. This beautiful Finnish road would dead end at a barrier and on the other side was a young Soviet soldier. You could see fence all the way up and down on either side. The soldier would then first scrutinize your passports - not friendly at all, not welcoming you to the Soviet Union. When he saw that we were diplomats he gave us a little bit faster treatment, but I wouldn't say too much faster. They opened the gate and then you drive for another two or three miles along a winding, terribly maintained road. It was worse than roads normally were in the old Soviet Union. Eventually you got to this very large station. There you would park and go in with your passports and stand and wait. They knew I was a diplomat, but always the customs tried to get me to open the trunk. That was your first lesson; say "No." You refused; they knew you were diplomats and that was the end of it. Then we drove on through the beautiful Birch forests of Karelian, to Leningrad arriving fairly late in the evening. It was the

high point of summer; it was quite nice. Beautiful as you came in even though it was slightly run down. We were put up in something called the Baltiskia Hotel which is where the embassy always put people up. It was a totally run down place and you had to pay to make the reservation. They had a little scheme there; they were pretty good businessmen in a certain way. If you were staying for two days, you paid for three; if you staying for four then you paid for five - there was a day for reservation. That was our first introduction to the Soviet Union. We had to park the car back at the Astoria parking lot; it was the only protected place and we didn't lose our mirrors - yet. Side mirrors went very fast in the Soviet Union in the old days. I remember going into the hotel to verify that everything was okay and came out to see my wife and son looking not frightened, but somewhat concerned. This rather unusual American car was surrounded by Soviets three to four deep, looking at it curiously. They were fairly polite. We took our bags in and went back and parked the car and then walked back again. The restaurant was closed, but then we had one of the positive experiences in the Soviet Union. We had a small, blond child, (he looked very much like his mother) and obviously we needed food and there was no food. We went down to the kitchen and explained it and instantly they agreed, because of the child. It seemed to take ages; there was nothing pre-prepared there; it was all freshly done and finally up came the best chicken soup you could ever have, plus chicken that was a bit bony but there was enough meat in it and some saulk - that strange fruit drink that they have - and potatoes and cold cooked cabbage and carrot salad. They came in beaming, because there was the little boy that was going to get fed, along with his parents, thank God. It was quite charming.

The next day we drove on to Novgorod, the beautiful old town with the Kremlin and stayed at a place called the Satko, just downtown. It was equally run down, but it worked. I think that's when we quickly began to realize that things worked. With the embassy, you had to file a note permitting you to travel and it was very clear that every point along where there was a State automobile inspection Police - the GUYE. They would have a post overlooking the road and as we passed, somebody would run out to note our license plate which had been given to us by the embassy. Sometimes they would see it from the tower and they would notify the next place that we were coming. This was a cycle that you had - literally from the Finnish border until we reached the embassy in Moscow. It sometimes had its value. Tom drove out later that year and there was some snow and he slid off of the road into a ditch. After a period of time one of the GUYEs came past and slowed down very slightly and then continued on. Within a short period of time, a truck showed up and pulled them out of the ditch, so that they could continue on their way. It was interesting that the truck came from the direction in which they were going, not the direction from which they were coming. One assumes that the GUYE from the one before was checking on them reports to the next one and it's the next one that is responsible for sending out the truck. So it had its advantages, one could say.

Q: You arrived in June of 1970. What was the political situation of the Soviet Union with the United States?

SWIERS: Very cold. It warmed up considerably within the two years that we were there. Vietnam was still going on.

Q: Nixon had been in power for little more than a year.

SWIERS: It didn't have anything to do with Nixon. Things started downhill again with the Sinyovski Danielle trials - that must have been sometime in 1966. We had that brief moment in 1968 when Kosygin came to Washington; then things went up a little. But then came the invasion of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 and relations really deteriorated. Our relations became very cold and very formal. For other reasons, harassment surveillance had not yet started; that came later on. To travel around the country was very difficult. Even more difficult than usual. 90% of the country was permanently closed. Even the areas that were temporarily open would be closed at the time when somebody wanted to travel.

When I first arrived, as I mentioned, we relationships were very cold in political terms and for that matter economic terms - to the extent that there were any economics. We had very little contact with the Soviets other than "official" and that consisted of going to whatever ministry it was necessary to go to. Most of the time, we were required to do things through the foreign ministry. I recall one incident after another related to military attaches in particular going out and doing their work.

Shortly after I arrived, Bill Farrand took me to Donetsk where a naturalized American woman of Ukranian origin had been arrested ostensibly for speculation - i.e. sending things into the country for sale to her husband's family and herself trying to smuggle gold into the country. A typical case because as it turned out and I think there was truth to it, she and her husband had been sending things back to his family in Mariopool from which both had come. I don't think they were married until after the war. The only member of her family left was her sister who was living in Lvov. The case was being dragged out and we were having quite a bit of difficulty getting to the bottom of it. It turned out that there were two elements to it: one of which we found about in the course of getting the woman out and the second in effect afterwards. Dick Combs, who is now working for Senator Nunn as his foreign policy advisor was with me during this time. The consular section was composed of three offices - the chief of the section and two others, Robin Porter and Larry Sumakes, both of whom are retired now as well. But when you normally went on a trip you took somebody from the political or economic Section with you. You always traveled in pairs. We generally got access, but we were not allowed to see Ishdonof until the actual trial took place. We were only allowed to go to Donetsk. We could then meet with the woman. She was allowed to come up to Donetsk in the presence of the KGB investigator. Because it was a smuggling case, it came under the jurisdiction of the KGB rather under the police which was part of the ministry of the interior..

It was very much like the FBI and the CIA together versus the local police. As you know they dropped the word "police" and called them "militia". I think they have gone back to calling them "police" again, but I'm not sure. The word "police" was close to being abolished with the revolution. As it turned out, the case was began when her husband's family had some type of break up and the people to whom all of these "care packages" had been sent, instead of using them for themselves, were selling them on the black market and then rather stupidly putting all of the money in the bank. They began to develop this huge bank account. Another branch of the family was in some type of political struggle at some lower level in the town of Ishdonof and was on the outs with the local party chief or the local government chief or both. She in many ways was the unwitting vixen in all of this, because when she arrived on a visit to the family, they had somebody to stick it to. Then began the investigation. In fact, they confiscated all of the

money that these people had acquired as a result of their operations. We finally began to piece the story together. The reason they got her - she claimed that this was true and I would see no reason to lie because the amount involved was so small - was because she was a dental technician and had in her pocketbook a small package, no more than 1/8 of an inch thick of these little sheets of gold that dentists use. She claimed that she had forgotten that she had them in her purse. Whether she was carrying it as a little insurance in case she needed it we don't know, but it was enough to hold her in jail. It was only when this "investigation" was concluded after a period of several months, that she was then able to have a defense lawyer. Or rather the defense lawyer was then able to have access to the investigative materials. How much of the file he saw is unclear. The defense lawyer was Jewish and as one began to see that the only real positions that Jews were allowed to have in the judiciary system was as defense lawyers. So you had defense lawyers who were largely Jewish and the investigators who were largely Slavic. I thought that was interesting as to the structure of the society even then. He built a case, and basically all the defense lawyer could say was that she had to plead ignorance of the law. That was her best bet. Finally, we were allowed to go to Ishdonof. I believe we were there twice - once to talk to her and secondly for the trial. The first time, Dick and I stayed in a hotel and I remember that it was interesting because it was the first time that I had ever been under surveillance. It was very clear that people were following us around. The location was lovely, overlooking the sea, but you could already see the beginnings of the terrible pollution which built at an accelerated pace over the next twenty years. Today in the Soviet Union, many areas are an ecological nightmare. I remember this very large factory, presumably a chemical factory in Ishdonof, which was had about four stacks from which were spewing different colors acidic smoke from each stack.

The woman was staying with her family and needless to say the tension between her and her husband's family by this time was quite strong. They lived in a rather primitive house without any amenities, in the upper part of town with this view overlooking the water. Really primitive conditions, but they were not poor in that sense. The food was adequate; it was like a peasant's house except that it happened to be in the city. The case went to trial. The other relative's were there; they were all criticized for it. There were the usual three judges and she was convicted. They said that although her defense might have had some validity, the law was the law and so she was convicted and sentenced to two years in prison. But we were going to appeal it. It was interesting that as one of the judges came out of the court (she had looked sort of sympathetic throughout) she said to the woman in Russian: "By all means, appeal." That signaled something and sure enough a few months later we were up in Kiev in the court of appeals. By this time she was in contact with her sister who was furious with her that she had not been in touch with her before. She hadn't told us about the sister. Needless to say, she was still a little suspicious of us. It was very difficult getting her confidence. We went to the appeals court and within a few minutes there was the decision that while she had technically committed a crime, it was clear that it was unwittingly and since she had already been under detention for several months, she was released and she was not expelled from the Soviet Union. If there was no further incident within the period of the sentence of two years, the case would waived. We then went to the airport with her and the sister and got them on a plane to Moscow.

I remember that they stayed at the Metropol for the night, (they had money) so that we could get her out on the very next plane the next day. We took her to the airport as we did in those day to

make sure that she got on. Somewhere along the way we got the other side of the story, or maybe it came out actually during the appeal case. She had been working in the labor office in Ishdonof during the war and when the Germans left, she went with them. She successfully convinced them or they began to realize that she had not been a collaborator and that she in fact had saved several Russians or Ukrainians who were being put into forced labor. She managed to frustrate that process a little and she did not leave with the Germans, but she was taken by the Germans. In any case, she got on a plane and went home and we never heard from her again.

Q: To follow-up on this, as a consular officer at that time this type of case was rather unusual because there weren't many American citizens in the Soviet Union and also the consular officers felt that by their presence it would help the case and it would also make sure that she would get out of the country.

SWIERS: Absolutely. The rule of thumb was "get them out of the country as quickly as you can". The rule of thumb was in terms of dealing with the Soviets was to get it over with and get them out.

Q: What about the presence of the court?

SWIERS: Basically our position was that this case better go smoothly. Needless to say, we were all in frequent contact with the foreign ministry. This was not a matter of presenting our side of the case, forcing it. Our question to them was "do you really want this," recognizing that this was a very low period. It was only later on in 1971 that one could see something changing. They were working on SALT I at the time.

Q: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

SWIERS: The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty - SALT I - which was signed during the first Nixon summit.

I just described a good example of a case that we would have. Other cases involved Americans losing passports. They were much more complicated than usual because when they lost their passport they also lost the Soviet visa. Then we had to get the visa replaced and the travelers had to go through an agonizing process of determining for the Soviets when they entered and how long had they been in the country. Of course, if they had overstayed, there would be a problem. If an American ever got sick, which unfortunately a number of them did (they would make the mistake of arriving after a long trip and having stomach trouble en route or as a result of something they ate upon arrival, they would be put into Bubkin Hospital, which was an interesting place, for ten days for observation and by then their visa had expired), we had to go through that process of helping them to regain their entry visa and their exit visa. It was constant drama and a huge relief as one reached the airport and watched the PANAM plane land. These people looked at it as if it were heaven and get on it and on their way.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

SWIERS: The ambassador at the time was Jake Beam.

Q: Could you talk about his method of operation?

SWIERS: Yes, indeed. Jake Beam was not a gifted speaker. He was, on the other hand, a gifted writer. He was a very shy man with very good political sense. He was a classic old line foreign service officer. His wife Peggy who is still alive - Jake died last year - was an absolute character. I think she may have been a foreign service secretary. She was very funny and a total contrast to Jake Beam. He gave his staff quite a bit of flexibility. He judged us accordingly. I remember when I arrived that there was a lot of nervousness about me because I had just been promoted and according to the rules I had to be chief of the section. I was only 32 and I looked terribly young. It seems the best way to get ahead in the foreign service is to look as though you're going to die the next day. I remember that Boris Clausen, who was the DCM, was particularly nervous; he thought that I was too young. This issue was highlighted because of the two fellows that I ended up supervising, one was five years older than I was and the other was four years older than I was. Both of them looked much older. Robin was absolute first class. I must compliment them; they were very good consular officers. There was never any tension because of the age differential. Robin had been in the Navy for a lengthy period of time; he was from an old Navy family in fact. It was an interesting period. Jake had confidence in me right from the beginning. On the other hand I really had to work on Boris. My age really worried him. Boris was a dear, but I guess he forgot that he had been that age once.

Q: I've heard stories that for the chief of the consular section, they wanted somebody tough there. Why was that? In other words it was not a traditional thing.

SWIERS: You had to be tough; there was no question of that. That's one thing they got with me; I was somebody who was very tough. Because you dealt with the Soviets, they would always try to intimidate the American official. In a real nasty period, they would just be nasty and would throw up bureaucratic obstacles. Their method of operations would be that if they could find a regulation to stop something, they would. So you had to constantly go after them. You could never take "no" for an answer. You would just have to go back and be quite forceful. I fortunately had the experience with Harriman and the Vietnam negotiations, which was quite a bit of help.

I do want to mention something else because I probably share a view closer to George Kennan's on this than I think many others do. I think quite often we tended to look at the Soviet Union simply in terms of the Soviet Union as a communist country. I felt that you should also look at it in terms of its history and Russia. Many of the systems that you saw, the ways of doing things, had been in existence under the Czar; it was very, very Russian. The double headed eagle had been replaced by the star and now the double headed eagle is back again. Interestingly enough, the fact that my first post had been Greece was enormously helpful as well - the Byzantine culture and Russia as the third Rome. One could apply a lot of the psychology that one had learned in Athens for example in terms of dealing with the Soviets and the Russians. I use the word Russian a lot and perhaps it's just because we're getting used to saying that again. I found it quite effective to deal with them in those terms. I think too often we tended to look at them strictly in Western terms and in Marxist terms, almost as though they were German. After all, Marx was a German but the Soviets aren't. They thought differently in many ways from how we

did in the west. They had missed the Renaissance. There was that Oriental side to it as well. I often felt that Soviet Union was a schizophrenic society, constantly struggling between east and west. These were all factors that came to play and exacerbated the problem of a totalitarian society.

I learned from Harriman to was push them, to push them very hard. Be very hard, be very firm, be very tough, but at the same time make sure you always leave an escape, or loophole - something that would help them get out. When you've really backed a Russian into a corner and he felt that there was no way out, he would really come out fighting. I don't mean literally, I mean figuratively although sometimes it could have turned the other way. I think that was very important in dealing with them. Particularly in cases where you had consular matters, because after all we were dealing with human beings. We were either dealing with Americans who were in trouble for one reason or another or you were dealing with Soviet citizens who had come to the embassy for one reason or another. I never believed that you could sacrifice those people for whatever particular principles you wanted to establish.

Q: I think you're making a very important point. Our system is that the individual in the long run is more important than the principle. Whereas on the other side - am I overstating it? - the principle sometimes got to be more important than the individual. It's two different approaches.

SWIERS: Yes, two totally different approaches. We had that throughout and it was important that we dealt with them in those terms. I might talk about another incident involving Jim Peipert of AP. I don't know where Jim is now; I lost touch with him when he left Moscow. He had been summoned to an interrogation at La Bianca as a witness in a case that was being built. In retrospect, we know now they were building a case against Vladimir Vocolski, a dissident; he was eventually expelled from the Soviet Union and I believe he lives in Britain now. Jim wisely came to the embassy to talk to me about it. He sought embassy support before going to the Soviet interrogation. He agreed that I could demand of the foreign ministry that I accompany him; he would refuse to attend unless a consular officer could be with him. I think in that particular case I was paid what I consider to be one of the biggest compliments a Soviet ever paid me. It was an old consular officer type named Posnekov who was either GRU or KGB; I don't know. His English was excellent and of course he spoke Russian formally. I looked at the consular convention and decided that we could try to invoke article seven. Under the normal consular convention, the Soviets had either 24 or 48 hours before they had to notify us of the arrest of an American, or detention of an American. This situation did not fit under that category; in fact there was no real specific reference to this situation, but I found that under article seven, there was phrase concerning "protection" or something like that. I demanded it under that I be allowed to accompany Peipert; Posnekov looked at me and said in Russian, a word that meant sly and clever and it's usually derogatory, or it sounds derogatory. I was paid that compliment and I was also able to accompany Jim and we did go to La Bianca I guess I was one of the few Americans who have had the dubious pleasure of seeing the inside of a La Bianca interrogation room. The interrogator was a short, stock man - very Slavic in his appearance with what I would call "fish blue" eyes. They were dead. He was cold and he was formal and you realized that this person, if the system had changed again and allowed torture to be used or whatever else was necessary to produce a confession, he was quite capable of it. However, he was under restraint at this time. He was under even more restraint because he was interrogating

an American witness to a case who had the American consul with him. So he was a little bit more careful. His room was basically bare except for a desk, a table with chairs and one portrait of Duzinski who had been the first chief of the Checa. Duzinski was Polish. I asked him where Brezhnev was and he said something to the effect of we only have him, meaning we only answered to him. From the manuals we found later, the KGB's description was the KGB only had to answer to itself. We saw that this was one of the things under Khrushchev, where what had been a ministry or separate organization became a committee of the council of ministers and that the subsequent chiefs of the KGB were members of the Politburo. That I think was quite significant in itself. Perhaps it goes back to an earlier discussion we had of the changes in 1953. One forgets that there was really a change in the Soviet Union with Stalin's death. If you were an ordinary citizen you didn't have to be concerned any longer if there was a knock on your door. If they knocked on your door there was a reason for it. Also the extreme methods which I learned about in greater detail in another case, which I will describe, were stopped. The KGB interrogator had some questions which turned out not to be anything particularly special in terms of how Jim. He knew the person and clearly what the KGB was trying to do was build a case against Vocovski as having betrayed something of the State to Americans. He also wanted Jim to sign the document. I had with me a copy of the criminal code of the Russian Federation and the criminal procedural code. It's a very interesting document if you read it because on paper they were quite similar to the codes you would find in any Western European country that used the Napoleonic code system. It was very clear that you didn't have to sign a document and you didn't have to admit things. There's a whole series of protections built into it. I counseled Jim not to sign and I understand Jim did not sign it. He did not have to do it. Needless to say the KBG guy was quite sour, but he realized there wasn't much he could do about it. On the other hand, I did develop a great admiration for the courage of a Soviet dissident who even though he might have been familiar with these documents, would be alone in a room with the investigator and perhaps others who would be harassing him, and threatening to harass his family and saying to him if you don't go along with what we put down here and sign it, we'll find something else to get you on. Of course in that system they were bound to find something on somebody. You began to get a real appreciation of it, but it was an eerie experience; I can tell you that. Going in there you felt totally what it means to be in a totalitarian society in terms of the police, the control they had as you came in, the uniformed KGB who were around. If I recall correctly, they wore a lavender band around their hat at the time.

There was another case. It was most interesting and concerned Alexander Doldent who was an American citizen, born in Buffalo, New York of Polish parents. He and his sister were born there. In the 1930s, the parents "returned" to the Soviet Union. I assume they had been born there before Poland became independent. They took their two children with them; they were one of those couples who had been attracted by the socialism. The Doldent children for some reason or another never accepted this philosophy and never became part of the system. I never explored the psychology of this in depth with Alexander. During the war, the parents were alive; the father became a chauffeur to some very high official, but there was something complicated in the life. The sister got a job with the British military mission during the war and Alexander was employed by our embassy. At the end of the war, the British got the sister out by putting her on a train to Helsinki sitting between two British military liaison officers. The sister was willing to leave. I believe their father had died by then. When I later met the sister, she had married an Austrian working for the IAEA and was living in Vienna.

Alexander, on the other hand, foolishly decided to stay on and take care of his mother. He had good job at the embassy. He even had an apartment in the embassy complex. He was in this “never-never” status - he was an American citizen and he had an American passport, but lived permanently in the Soviet Union. He had refused to accept Soviet citizenship. In 1958 he was, in the classic fashion, grabbed on what used to be Gorki Street (today is called Tavaya Street - named for the town Tavaya) and disappeared. What had happened to him was that he was first taken to La Bianca and then to Sukenofka which is even a worse prison, interrogated by the commander of the prison, who was a sadist. He nearly died and eventually was sent to the Gulag. Because of his illness, he was put into a hospital where he learned to be a practical nurse and developed a skill with medical books. Finally, in 1956, he was pardoned, not released, and forced to accept a Soviet passport. Then he made a living as a translator at a Western medical publications office until his sister managed to visit Russia in 1968 and relocate him. Then began the process of getting them out. I arrived in 1970 and we through a very difficult process trying to convince the sister and the ambassador in Austria that this was not a case to go public with. Something about the case bothered me and I felt that if we went public we might lose harm both of them. We kept putting pressure on the Soviets to release him as an American citizen. The Nixon visit was coming up and finally in September of 1971, we were informed that Doldent would be allowed to visit the embassy. I will be leaving quite a bit of this story out because there are some sad parts to it. I have some reservations about how our government originally handled the case; there are some participants who are still alive and I don't want to talk about them at this stage. But there was something about the case that disturbed me. There had been no real effort by the embassy to contact Doldent between 1948 and 1956. When he resurfaced in 1956, there was a decision to not contact him. When he came in to get what was left of his effects from the embassy, it was a surprise visit and there was no further contact with him until his sister arrived. That decision for those 12 years may have been correct; maybe be not. But certainly I disagree with the decisions that were made.

I remember Doldent coming to the embassy. I went outside to the police who were always in front of our embassy to “protect” us and I said to one of the officers: “I don't want to get into a debate with you, but there is a man by the name of Alexander Doldent arriving at 11:00 in the morning and he has full permission to enter and I don't want a hard time about it. Would you please go to your superior and tell him that?” and he said: “Oh we never stop anybody from coming in; we're here to protect you.” I said: “Look, let's skip it today and just do what I tell you.” I phrased a little bit more politely than that, but he got the message. As I walked back, I could see him signaling to a fellow officer and had him come in while he ran to the phone. At the appointed time, when I came out again (our embassy had two archways) I could see Doldent walking and I knew him instantly, even though I had never seen the man before because he looked like an American. It's something I confess that still gives me a certain emotion today. He had his head up high while a Soviet would come past the embassy slightly hunched over. There was something in him that made you realize that he was an American in spite of the fact that he had lived in the Soviet Union since he was a teenager. The clothing he was wearing was Russian, but he was an American. It was the most extraordinary feeling. I went out and put myself between him and the militia and brought him into the embassy. He started to tell me a story of what had happened. It was sort of an opening of things and I just pointed and told him that we would have plenty of time in the future to talk about this.

Q: You knew that the place was bugged?

SWIERS: Yes; there was no way that we could carry on a conversation, particularly if he wanted to say anything sensitive because I'm sure all of the bugs were on unless we had cleared them out. We simply assumed, that even though there had been a major effort to clean out back in the 1960s, that there were still bugs. It still took another three months to get Doldent out. They kept throwing up obstacles at the visa registration office. We couldn't quite figure it out. In particular, his new wife's mother had refused to give permission for him to get out. Your parents had to provide permission to emigrate if you were a Soviet (if you can imagine this) even though you were an adult. Finally in December 1971, we got Doldent out, but even at the airport they were still giving him a hard time at customs. I intervened and he wrote in his book later that I had leaped over the scales to come to him. I didn't quite leap, but I did come pretty fast and I flashed my pass and we went right in. I literally walked him to the plane and we got him out to Vienna and to his sister. It's interesting now that he can finally tell the full story. First of all, his wife's father was a KGB Officer. He and his wife were divorced but nevertheless it really upset the KGB that this was happening since they had a little son. More importantly though, as we learned a few months later, there was a report that a woman in Leningrad who had been one of the messengers for Solzhenitsyn's Gulag who had hung herself. A Norwegian correspondent named Paragel Hager, whom we knew, was PNGed after that. He had gone up to Leningrad to see this woman. She had been one of his contacts and I assume Paragel Hager was one of the couriers that helped to get Solzhenitsyn's book draft out of the country.

Q: We're talking about the book Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago.

SWIERS: The last time that Paragel Hager got to Leningrad he was accosted by "hoodlums" who beat him up and more specifically smashed his eyeglasses. He was quite myopic and he had no choice but to go back to Moscow and then he was subsequently PNGed. In fact my wife and I were at lunch at his house when he was late coming home; he had been called to the ministry. We were having lunch with his wife who was Danish, when he showed up to announce that he was PNGed. He laughed and said that he had completed his work, which I assume was being the courier for the "Gulag Archipelago." When you read the "Gulag" you'll notice that one of the principal sources for Solzhenitsyn's description of La Bianca and Sukanofka interrogations were a "AD" or "Alexander D;" that was golden. I think the KGB had a sense that there was something there, but they didn't have the facts. Doldent literally got out in the nick of time because when the book was published, they would have noticed the reference and I'm not sure we would have ever seen Doldent again. It was a very close one.

Q: We mentioned some of the things you'd like to talk about, such as the dissidents. Could you explain what dissident meant in the context of what is was at that time?

SWIERS: Even at that time one had to distinguish between a dissident; that is somebody who was objecting to the Soviet government in one form or another, but who was not planning to emigrate from the country and those who wanted to be emigrants. Most of the people that I dealt with were in that latter category. The first person who was more a dissident than an emigrant was Anatoly Sharansky. He was expelled; they accused him of making efforts to undermined the

state - the usual charges - and then they added some spying things. We ended up exchanging of Sharansky for a few others - an arrangement who Frank Meehan helped to arrange. I often think he may have been not given him enough credit because he went public with Burt and all of the other people. But it was really Frank and his contact with Wolfgang Vogel in Berlin which resulted in the success of so many of these exchanges.

Let's start with Leonid Rigerman. We had a list of people in whom we were interested that we gave the Soviets every year. A specialist prepared that list for Nixon's visit near the end of my stay in Moscow. Leonid Rigerman was the son of an American woman and a Soviet father. I'm saying Soviet but I'm not really sure if he was Russian or Ukranian; they were Jewish. The mother was an American citizen; the father was not and I'm not sure if the woman met him in the United States and if they married there. There was a large group of people who returned to the Soviet Union in the 1930s at the time of the depression. They were attracted by the "brave new world" they thought they saw in the Soviet Union. Some of them were disillusioned and some were not. Rigerman's mother whom I eventually met, left the United States; she was not disillusioned with communism. Maybe she was disillusioned with the way the Soviets implemented the theory and by the bigotry which the Soviets showed against the Jewish. Rigerman was conscious of being an American through his mother although he was born in the Soviet Union but had a claim to American citizenship. Once Stalin died and even during the periods of ups and downs since then, more and more information began to get through to the Soviet Union because of the such institutions as the "Voice of America," "Radio Free Europe" and newspapers. I think at some point Riegerman realized that he had a claim to American citizenship. One day when I was in my office I was told that there was a man outside my office who claimed to be an American. He spoke perfect English. I walked out and there was this fellow that looked like an American tourist. He was wearing a very nice jacket and tie and he had a camera over his shoulder. Once he entered my office, he announced who he was and that he was trying to get out. What he had done was to fool the militia in front of the embassy door into thinking that he was an American. That did not happen again, I can tell you! They knew about it because we were located in a secure area which was access-limited. We also had local employees were who reported to the KGB and we were "bugged" as well. So the police realized that this guy had fooled them. I took down all of his information. I have always felt that if somebody came in and claimed American citizenship, you had to consider the case favorably. The object was to get the person out of the Soviet Union; we would worry about the technicalities afterwards. Needless to say the passport division did not always share that view. I was very distressed because this was the early Nixon Administration and these guys pretended to be high patriots. I remember when I went back I saw all these people with all of their Halderman-like crew cuts and their little American flags on their lapels. But at the same time they were still willing to keep the people out of the U.S. even if they had some claim. I asked Rigerman to return at another time.

Q: How do you spell his name?

SWIERS: R I G E R M A N. His story was written up in the newspapers when he finally got to the States; an aunt of mine actually sent me the article. He ended up in the Bronx where his family originally came from. I believe his mother and father had died by that time. In any case, the next time Rigerman tried to come in to see me, he called me; I knew there was going to be

trouble and I met him at the gate of the embassy. At that time there were these big double gates for each archway of the embassy. We made a very strong principle of access, which was canceled sometime in the 1970s by Ambassador Malcom Toon after an incident when somebody set himself on fire or managed somehow to get to the consular section. I personally felt that it was a mistake; you had these incidents once in awhile, but it was important to maintain the principle of the right of access; what we did was simplify the militiamen's work. The north entrance was sealed off except for a door which was kept closed which made it easier to block people from getting in. On the other entrance, they put in one of those gates that went up and down. The second time Rigerman tried to get in, it was something to see because he was a little fellow and the militiamen usually resembled the Olofon caricature of the police.

Q: Olofon being a cartoonist showing rather beefy types.

SWIERS: I remember that I was protesting saying that they couldn't block access to the embassy. The militiaman said the usual thing about "We don't know who he is and he's a threat." You had to be very careful about how you handled things; you always had to remember that it was Rigerman that was going to suffer, not me. The worse they could do to me would be to PNG me. You have to draw that line. The militiaman finally got disgusted with arguing and picked Rigerman up under his arm. I can still remember Rigerman's eyes as he was being carried away. He was desperately trying to maintain his dignity but he had that look of a deer that was about to be killed. You could see his fear in his eyes. In many ways, this gave us a crisis that we needed and we made a massive protest to the foreign ministry. This was 1970; they wanted to minimize the number of incidents they had and we were eventually able to get Rigerman out of the country. I gave that story to the press. I thought that was a useful one to give.

In the Dulgan case which we discussed earlier, something bothered me about it and as we found out later on, he not only knew the details of La Biana and Sukonofka, an even worse prison then where a sadist was the commander and he actually personally tortured Doldent. Naturally he gave all of this information to Soschonika's for the "Gulag Archipelago." There were a number of other cases back and forth that got out with varying degrees of difficulty. It was interesting because we were building up to *detente* and occasionally we would have to stop.

One of the more difficult cases involved a woman by the name Dora Gashonawitz who had also worked in our embassy at the same time as Doldent did back in the 1940s. That was a case that we worked on for some time. I have to apologize, but the details have escaped me over the years. She was living somewhere in the Ukraine. I finally was able to get through to her on the telephone not too long before the Nixon visit and just before I left. We finally broke her out so that she could also leave. She likewise had a claim to American citizenship as did Dolgen and the others. Similarly to Dolgen, she had either been denounced or the police had been able to build up their case probably through Valinko. We've never been able to prove this, but it was generally felt that they brought her in and she cracked.

Q: What was her position?

SWIERS: She was the senior local employee. She was very efficient and was very good. I confess that I never looked up in detail when I got back what her background was, but it was

always felt that she was another one of the Americans or partial Americans who had remained a communist. She was caring for her mother. She's dead now, I understand that she died of cancer. It was a very complicated story. As you know, we have many locals working in an embassy, particularly in the consular section. The ones in Moscow were terribly efficient. They did their work well, but you always knew that whatever they did would be reported to the Soviet government.

Q: We had an old woman who was our receptionist in Belgrade, just about this time and we were sure that she had to be reporting. But she would come and say "Somebody is seeking asylum;" she was trying to make the waiting room clear.

SWIERS: Mary would notify us if somebody managed to get into the waiting room in the embassy if we hadn't noticed. Sometimes that happened; somebody would get in. It was a strange relationship.

Q: They had a very difficult time and I think that all of us realized that, but you could work around it.

SWIERS: You could work around it; the question was how much were they doing because it was the only way to survive and how much was because they wanted to, which is a question that usually goes to the grave with most of them.

Q: Did you run across Pentecostals or Jews?

SWIERS: Pentecostals. There was a case but I can't remember the name. Her maiden name was a German name; she was an American who had gone to Czechoslovakia and lived there. She and her husband had been Pentecostal missionaries. Her husband was Ukranian and she had a Ukranian name. She had a substantial family in the United States who kept trying to make contact with her. They did periodically get through and they were desperate to have her come home for a final visit. They thought maybe she wanted to immigrate and she really just wanted to visit. It was one of those more ambiguous cases because again when I was finally able to get through to her, she actually complained to me that the embassy and her family had been making trouble for her because the local administration was very upset with her for seeking an exit visa. I think that case finally ended after I left. There were a number of them that were finished and I think that was partly because of the Nixon visit. I believe she did in fact manage to get over for a final visit with her family and made it very clear that at that stage in her life she had no intention of returning to the United States. So often these people had "acquired" Soviet citizenship - usually forced upon them. We had a strange process for these kinds of cases. We would issue the American passport, quite often limited just for travel to the United States; they would have to get a Soviet passport with a Soviet exit visa and then we would put a phoney visa in the Soviet passport. That seemed to satisfy the socialist legality which started to evolve after Stalin's death. Mary Lidvininko and her crew had the little stamp that they would use to do this; then we'd issue the parallel American passport. They used the Soviet passport to get out of the country and then used the American passport for travel once they were beyond the Soviet Union - e.g., if their flight had to put down somewhere, or they were stopping somewhere. Usually this didn't happen because they just barely had enough money to get out of the Soviet Union. The visa cost a huge

sum of money, the tickets cost them and then they were only allowed to take out a certain amount of cash with them. That meant that they had to abandon all of their property and possessions. I can tell you that it was a regular process all of the time. The consular section was busy with these exits on one side and with protection of the American citizens on the other.

Q: What about American citizens who got in trouble there?

SWIERS: That was a hard one because you had many combinations of that. We would have people coming in to make trouble, or doing something that would get them in trouble - not necessarily political. Then there would be people who were totally innocent, and then there were people that the Soviet system wanted to go after when they came back. Let me start with the case of an old woman who had come the Soviet Union; I had Robin Porter take care of that one. When she arrived they found a disassembled pistol in her luggage; she was arrested and we went through a long process. She was quite elderly and finally we discovered, as did the Soviets, that she was bringing the pistol to shoot a member of a local government in the district in Ukraine where she had come from. He had betrayed her to the Nazis. She was sent out to a concentration camp or something like that and she was coming back for a final piece of revenge on this man who had done some terrible things to her and her family. Once this was determined and verified by the Soviets themselves, they gave her the technical penalty for bringing a concealed weapon into the country and then expelled her rather than put her in jail. Needless to say, the Soviets were delighted with get this information about the Ukrainian which they were going to use against him. I think he may have died.

Q: It sounds like in a way despite difficult relations the same thing goes on in almost every country. The greatest weapon of the consular officer is that you usually are working on the same side of the street as the authorities; they usually want to get rid of foreigners for the most part in their jails. They want to make sure their laws are observed, but foreigners are just a problem an if they can expel them after making their point, it's all to the best.

SWIERS: I would say that unless there's a reason - e.g., if she had been proven to have collaborated with the Germans, that would have been the end of it. The same went with this older woman; if there had been another reason I think that would have been the end of it. It varied from case to case, but I think there were three things I realized: one, there really was a change in the country with the death of Stalin. We have to understand that the ordinary person was no longer had to be afraid of a knock on the door and a "final" solution. If you basically just lived a normal life, while it may not have been a pleasant life, in fact it was a difficult life, you would not get in trouble on the political side.

Secondly came the emergence of a socialist legality. This development is also related to the Stalin period when people were simply shot. Afterwards the Soviets did ostensibly want to follow the laws; they could bring pressure to bear (I'll get into this in the third case which is probably pretty relevant to where we're going) on the way they wanted the law interpreted. You could use the law against the government if you knew it. One of the things I made sure I acquainted myself with was the code of the different republics in the Soviet Union. So we if we used the Soviet code of criminal procedure, we had the two things we used for example in signing a document. One did not have to sign a confession under the procedural code, but

naturally in very few cases, did the people not sign because their interrogator would remind them, unless they had the protection of somebody like us, that "Fine, we'll find another way of getting you." And they could, as we well know, the way the system worked.

The third thing was the bureaucracy. This was a massive bureaucracy, and in dealing with it one needed to realize you were dealing with a bureaucracy which was like most bureaucracies. It was simply accustomed to saying "No," trying to block, putting obstacles, and one had to overcome that all the time. The important thing was to keep your cool.

I guess there is a fourth aspect which was the psychology of a society that was essentially Eastern Orthodox - Byzantine in nature. I think too often people from the West started to deal with the Soviets as if they were dealing with Westerners. In fact that they were not; they had been split off from the West at the time of our Renaissance, and had adopted a highly mystical religion.

It turned out oddly enough that my experience in Greece was quite relevant. Some of the things I remembered in terms of dealing with the Greeks became quite relevant in dealing with the Soviets. The Soviets had a similar psychology in that they had both totalitarian and ideological components. Kennan has actually written considerably about that. Kennan I think gives more weight to what we were seeing to the view that the Soviet system was an extension of the czars under another system. I would say: "Yes, that was true," but you also had a schizophrenia which was brought on by the imposition of what was in effect a Western ideology - i.e. Marxism. It enabled them to be totalitarian in a way the czars never were. Nevertheless they never approached the efficiency of the totalitarian state that you found, for example, in the GDR.

Q: German Democratic Republic being eastern Germany.

SWIERS: I found that in many ways the only saving grace for the East Germans was that that government never completely achieved a "legitimacy" as you found had in the Soviet Union. Even in the eastern European countries where a regime was imposed, people somehow still reflected an element of their society. The East Germans regime remained in power simply because Soviet power was there, and then we saw this thing collapse.

Q: There was nothing to hold it. When you were there, did you get involved in the Nixon visit?

SWIERS: Yes, very much so. That was in May in '72.

Q: That was shortly before you left, wasn't it.

SWIERS: Exactly. We divided up all the responsibilities. I had one of the escort responsibilities, and also the handling all of the passports and documentation. It was quite a visit. Very dramatic visit. Let's see if I can go through it. Would you like me to go through it?

Q: Yes, please. Was he the first American president to go there?

SWIERS: Yes, he was. I just thought of that the other day when the issue of whether Clinton

should go arose. I frankly recommended to the White House that this was commemoration for the Russian people and their suffering. That it meant no approval of Yeltsin was really necessary; the Russian people would understand that - i.e., that the American president was coming to honor the Russian people; they know exactly what that meant; he was not coming for the government business or to argue that the Soviets facilitated a war by the Hitler-Stalin pact. That may be true, but the fact is that the Soviets ultimately lost 20 to 27 million people in that horrible conflict.

I remember that Harriman told me at one time that he always regretted that Eisenhower was not able to make it to the Soviet Union in 1960. In fact, and I want to be careful of my memory (I believe he said this as well; I certainly heard it elsewhere), that Khrushchev really used the Francis Gary Powers shooting down as an excuse not to have Eisenhower come.

Q: Because this was one of the main effects of the U2 incident.

SWIERS: It was, but Harriman felt, and I certainly did, that it was more an excuse not to have Eisenhower to come. They could have obviously very easily had the shoot-down and handled things quietly, but they decided to make an issue out of it. I think that the reason was because the Soviets understood (remember it was only 15 years after the end of the war), that there would be an outpouring of emotion and positive attitude toward Eisenhower that probably would have exceeded that shown during his 1945 visit to Moscow..

Q: He actually stood in Lenin's tomb with Stalin.

SWIERS: With Stalin and Harriman. Stalin did control the visit; Eisenhower planned to travel around the country; there was no question that the Soviet people knew who Eisenhower was. Another Eisenhower visit would have reminded them once again that Americans were their great helpers. Remember that Stalin tried to limit Soviet understanding of what lend-lease meant to the Soviet ability to sustain the war. He was unwilling to acknowledge Normandy. The Soviet Union was a continental power, but very few people understood the magnitude of effort required to make an amphibious invasion - far beyond that for mounting a land invasion. Nevertheless even Stalin finally and reluctantly acknowledged the Normandy operation.

So Nixon's visit was the first presidential, but naturally he could not convey the emotion that an Eisenhower visit would have generated. It was difficult to control, and I remember, almost to the end, going on one of the last buses with the remains of the delegation which included Marty Hillenbrand who was an assistant secretary of State, to Minukover. Nixon was leaving from Minukover to go to Kiev first and then to Leningrad or the other way around. Literally as the last bus was going they were taking the flags down in the streets and on the buildings; in other words, they did what they had to, but they did not want that to get too far.

I think the visit was overwhelming for the Soviets. An American president's visit is not simply Air Force One. Since he was going to three places that meant a steady stream of staff going from Moscow to Minukover to Kiev to Leningrad bringing in all their equipment. For a couple of weeks before Nixon's arrival and after, we were in seventh heaven because in those days the Soviet telephone system was distinctly primitive; even if you could place the call it would take several hours before you could get through to anyone, in part presumably because they were

hooking up the listening devices.

While Nixon was there, we had the White House communications office which installed instant communications between the three cities which we were allowed to use. All we had to do was dial an embassy extension and you get on the phone this obvious military voice saying "Kiev, Sir." You would tell the number you wanted in Kiev and get right through. It is difficult to describe to the average American what that means when you could just take care of anything of that nature.

I remember very much the final signing and the announcement of the SALT treaty. Jerry Smith, our principal disarmament negotiator, and a number of others hit some final snags which were being negotiated in Helsinki; therefore they were delayed in Helsinki. Kissinger, though, went ahead with his press conference at the embassy cafeteria. To this day, I remember Jerry Smith coming into the press conference, furious, because Kissinger had, as Kissinger was wont, stolen the limelight on the announcement of the details and the briefing of the press on SALT which was obviously the crowning point of the visit.

Politically it really did represent an opening. I was there from '70 to '72 and you could feel things sort of loosening, remembering always what we were dealing with. But the key thing was, just before Nixon arrived, he made the decision to bomb Haiphong harbor and that was...

Q: This was in North Vietnam.

SWIERS: That was interesting on two counts: number one, the Russians went ahead with the visit anyway despite - I can't remember, was Kosygin actually in Haiphong at that time?

Q: He was there during one of the bombings, I can't remember exactly when.

SWIERS: The fact was that in spite of a real humiliation for the Soviets - not just because Kosygin was there but bombing just before the start of the visit - they went forward with the trip. I would say that Kissinger and Nixon correctly judged what the Soviet response to the bombing would be. It signaled how overriding to the Soviets was the bilateral relationship with the United States, and their desire to reach these arms control agreements and open up detente.

The second part of it was that at the time of Haiphong there was a huge coverage of it in the Soviet press, almost building up to the conclusion that they might cancel the visit. All of us, at almost the exact time for everybody, were approached by the locals in our embassy. We should put that, for the readers who don't know it, the Soviet locals in the embassy were not directly hired by the embassy. There was an organization called UPDK, "Administration for Assistance to the Diplomatic Corps," and we in effect contracted with UPDK for the employment of local staff in the embassy. They would be periodically called to UPDK for various conferences. When we bombed Haiphong they were called - that one was actually done quite openly. We were subsequently approached, all of us by our respective locals, really expressing deep concern over this Haiphong thing and the danger for U.S.-Soviet relations.

The visit was important, not just the formal statements which each side had been told to make -

they were almost identical, but for the way each phrased their comments. The Soviets looked at us and we saw a real fear on their part on two counts: one was the image they had of the U.S. formulated during and after WWII; we must never underestimate the Russian people's regard for the United States. It was very rare that we ever encountered personal difficulties in the Soviet Union, or let's say at least in the Russian part of the Soviet Union. On a personal basis, the average Russian was very friendly to the United States. Of course, there were officials who were nasty; there was this image of that.

There was also the very real fear of conflict in the mind of the average Soviet which remained from the war. We saw that in Afghanistan when they finally went into that conflict; we're seeing it again today in Chechnya; it has not left them. The effect WWII on them is much stronger than the effect of Vietnam on us. The important thing is that the Soviets went through with the visit and it was an enormously successful one.

I'll tell you another little anecdote of the visit. As Nixon was leaving, we went out to the Minukover; he was on his way to Kiev and Leningrad. Since it was in-country flight, he was going to fly on an IL 62 which was fairly new at the time. There were two IL 62s on the runway, but Air Force I was around somewhere. Kosygin accompanied him to the airport. I got up real close to the party; the Soviet officials knew me and I sort of fought my way up. I remember at one point, one of the Soviets finally said to me in Russian, "Mr. Swiers, you know you can't go any further than this." I sort of laughed back.

We were watching. I was right up close to Kosygin who had walked Nixon to the plane and walked back to the steps of the VIP hall at Minukover. He was standing there watching; the plane didn't take off, the engines didn't rev up or anything, and this went on for a good 15 minutes; and you could see Kosygin getting fidgety. Kosygin was noted for his temper; he was much more a technocrat than he was a real hard-line politician; you could see the red beginning to creep up on his face. Suddenly the door opens and out comes a stewardess followed by a crew member; it turns out there was something went wrong and the plane couldn't go.

So all of the Nixon party had to come down and get on the back-up plane. Kosygin was absolutely near purple with rage - the humiliation of that. Of course, he walked back and smiled, but you could tell that underneath he was fuming; I don't know what happened to the ground crew or the crew of that plane, but I suspect they never flew a VIP flight again; they ended up on some Podunk route out in Siberia. You should have seen the look on his face.

The communique which was issued ended up talking about a Quadripartite agreement had just been signed or was just about to be signed at the time of the trip. Somewhere the Soviets had inserted a reference to what they called the Quadripartite agreement on West Berlin. Marty Hillenbrand, who was in the bus with us, had not been in on the final draft negotiations; this was the major thing Kissinger and Nixon went to do. I remember Marty was really in distress in the back of the bus, but it was too late; the document was had already been agreed upon and included the reference to a Quadripartite agreement on West Berlin.

I don't know how familiar you are with that issue, but the Soviets always wanted to say it was only referring to West Berlin; we wanted it to say it was referring to all of Berlin; so the final agreement brilliantly done by Ken Rush was that it simply said Quadripartite agreement, and

Berlin was called a referenced area or something. In many ways you can trace the unraveling of the Soviet system to that agreement, because it legalized, three years before Helsinki, which confirmed it, a relationship and exchange of information between East Germany and West Germany. In effect it broke an existing theory; there were a number of supplementary agreements to the Quadripartite agreement which finally acknowledged that what in the old days used to be called “interference in internal affairs” was acceptable.

PIERRE SHOSTAL
Political Officer
Moscow (1970-1972)

Pierre Shostal was born in Paris in 1937. He graduated from Yale in 1956 and from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1958. His postings include Leopoldville, Kinshasa, Brussels, Lilongwe, Moscow, Kigali, Hamburg and Frankfurt. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 16, 1997.

Q: You left there in 1969 to where?

SHOSTAL: To FSI to study Russian for a year and then go to Moscow.

Q: What caused this move? Did you apply for this?

SHOSTAL: Actually no. It came as a surprise. At that time, the Embassy in Moscow had an Africa watcher. The job was created in the mid-'60s because of concern that the large numbers of African students coming to Moscow to study that they would be brainwashed and would have no American input into their thinking. So, a position was created in the Embassy to maintain contact with students and African diplomats.

Q: Before we get to Moscow and your Russian training, I know I've been through some sense of language training before and often you pick up quite a bit from your, not just the language, but also the culture and the outlook from your teachers. What was your impression of this?

SHOSTAL: Well, I was very fortunate and had a remarkable Russian teacher. By the way, it was a very, very small class, only three of us.

Q: Who were the three?

SHOSTAL: Peter Swiers and Jim Schollaert. Peter has been working for the Atlantic Council for several years and Jim Schollaert is still in the Department.

Q: Were you picking up anything about, I mean sort of what was your attitude about going into the Soviet Union at this particular time?

SHOSTAL: Well, it was an interesting problem, let's put it this way. At that time the Russian

teachers at FSI that I had were people who had left Russia many years before. The principal teacher was really excellent, Nina Dela Cruz, left in the early 1920s when she was a small child. 1920s, in the early '20s anyhow. Her family was a member of the aristocracy. So, the view of Russian society, Russian culture that she gave us was of course, an old one that did not have the Soviet overlay. The other teachers had come out, both of them, during World War II. So, it was not an up-to-date view of Russia that we had. And, that was a problem that existed for several years until the first Soviet emigres started coming out in the late '60s, early '70s when you started getting people who had a contemporary view and experience of Russian society.

Q: What was the attitude, we're talking about '69, '70 about the Russian speciality? Obviously, in the '40s and '50s and early '60s anyway, this is where the top stars, the Kennans, the Bohlens, the Thompsons and there was a lot of competition to go to Russia. Had things changed by this time, do you think?

SHOSTAL: To a certain extent there was still some of that esprit about it. We did have some really outstanding officers serving at the Embassy at that time. Stape Roy who was there; Mark Palmer as well. So, the Soviet career track was attracting some very fine talent. On the other hand, I discovered pretty quickly that the Administration at that time was not interested in having a strong Embassy and a strong Ambassador. This was the period when Henry Kissinger was National Security Advisor and was dealing directly with the Soviets, the back channel was of course the principal channel and most of what happened in policy terms was going on in Washington between Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin.

Q: I'm told at one point that Kissinger went to Moscow but the Ambassador didn't know he was there, or something like that?

SHOSTAL: I was there when that happened and that was really, perhaps the biggest shock that I had as a professional Foreign Service Officer. It was a shock of humiliation for the Embassy and for the Ambassador that Kissinger came and met with the Soviet leadership and the Ambassador didn't learn about it until later. I think that is just about the ultimate humiliation an Ambassador can suffer.

Q: You served in Moscow from '70 until when?

SHOSTAL: To '72.

Q: What was your job?

SHOSTAL: Well, there was some confusion about that. I had been told before I left that I was to be the Africa watcher, the liaison with African diplomats and students. When I got there I discovered that the Embassy was not particularly interested in my doing that. They wanted me rather to do other things. The other things being to monitor what the Soviet press was saying in terms of the United States, the theme of anti-American propaganda and trying to discern in trends there. That was a particular interest of the Ambassador and DCM. Another area of interest was Latin America. This was the period when you had Allende in Chile; you had a leftist military regime in Peru and it looked like the Soviets might be on the march in terms of influence

in Latin America.

Q: That's when Cuba was there?

SHOSTAL: And Cuba was there of course. So, there was a lot of interest in the Embassy in coverage of that and in maintaining contact with the Latin American Embassies and getting to know Soviet specialists in the Latin American field. So, I found myself really kind of torn during the two years that I was there between, what on the one hand I had been told the African Bureau was expecting me to do and what the Embassy was expecting me to do. So, I tried to balance those things, but because there was an awful lot happening on the bilateral U.S.-Soviet track, as well as in Latin America, I found myself spending more time on those issues than on Africa.

Q: Let's talk about the African students and Lumumba University. What was your impression of the students at the University and I suppose other technical schools too?

SHOSTAL: Well, they were a very mixed bunch. There were some people who were very bright and talented, also trying to work hard to get a good education. But, that was by no means the rule. And, what I certainly learned very quickly was that most of the students there felt that they were in the minor league by being in Moscow. Had they had the choice, would have much rather been studying in the United States or in Western Europe where, they felt, the quality of education was higher, living conditions better, climate better. To me the big surprise was their view that interracial relations were better. I'd heard over and over again that African students were very badly treated by Russians on the street.

Q: They use the term "black monkeys?"

SHOSTAL: Yes, that kind of thing was very widespread.

Q: I heard that in Yugoslavia and talking to African students who came through when I was there. And, Bulgaria was particularly bad.

SHOSTAL: That was rough and of course, anything like African students going out with Russian girls exposed them to a lot of abuse.

Q: Did they have a little more money than the normal Russians?

SHOSTAL: In some cases, yes, but not in all of them. The stipend they got from the Soviets was very meager, but some of them had money from home.

Q: In a way, was it the sort of general feeling that this effort on the part of the Russians to create a new Soviet African man was pretty much on the way out and what had been done and being done at that time?

SHOSTAL: That period, 1970-72, I think marked a low point in Soviet interest in Africa. There was, a few years later, a revival of interest when the Soviets thought they saw opportunities to make strategic gains in Southern Africa, in Angola and eventually in South Africa, but that came

several years later. That came when they started using the Cubans as surrogates.

Q: Let's turn to the other part of this international watch you had. What were you getting from the Latin Americans?

SHOSTAL: On the whole, an anti-Soviet attitude with rather mixed feelings about the United States. Here, I have to add that I've never served in Latin America and didn't speak Spanish, which was a handicap in dealing with the Latin Americans. My own contacts with them revealed that there were some Latin Americans who were really very friendly toward the United States, admired our country, but others that had degrees of skepticism and even antagonism which I felt pretty quickly in my contacts with them. But, I did have a number of very good contacts and even friends among the Latin American diplomats. Although it took some time to kind of develop those relationships, I'd say by the second year that I was there that it was really very productive in terms of reporting and in terms of my own understanding of what was going on. So, it was really valuable from the educational viewpoint.

Q: What about the situation in Chile? I'm not clear on my dates. When did Allende come in and when was he overthrown?

SHOSTAL: He came in, let me see, I believe it was late '69, or it may have been early '70. He'd just recently come to power when I arrived in Moscow. I can't remember when he was overthrown. I think it was '73.

Q: So, the whole time you were there, Allende was in power? So, you didn't have the repercussion afterward?

SHOSTAL: That's correct, yes.

Q: Was he the darling of the Soviet press? How was he playing in the Soviet press?

SHOSTAL: He was very much the darling of the Soviet press. Not portrayed as a Communist, because I think that the Soviets recognized that portraying him as a Communist would have negative repercussions in the United States. People who were hostile to Allende would say, "The Soviets, his friends, are embracing him as a Communist." So, they were careful to call him a progressive nationalist and somebody who was leading the struggle for liberation from Yankees Imperialism and that kind of thing.

Q: Were you getting cables from Chile and from other places, sort of keeping up on Latin American affairs?

SHOSTAL: To a certain extent. It wasn't frequent enough. I think this point that you're getting at is a very good one and that is that there was, and I think perhaps there still is a certain degree of bureau parochialism in the State Department. The natural tendency when a reporting officer does a cable, is to think in terms of sending copies to the posts that he most frequently deals with or that are really on his mental horizon. I think that showed itself, for example, in reporting from Latin America. They didn't include us as much as I think would have been useful for me to be

well informed about Latin American affairs. I wouldn't say that it was entirely bad, but it wasn't as good as it might have been. I think it was symptomatic of a fundamental problem.

Q: What was the feeling that you were getting, both from the Embassy of the offices that had been dealing with this problem for a long time and from the Soviet press and your various contacts with the Soviets about Cuba?

SHOSTAL: On the official level for the Soviets, everything was hunky dory. Fidel Castro was a great patriot, a true Communist, etc. etc. Though, in talking, for example, to a Soviet journalist that I got to know there was definitely an undercurrent suspicion about Castro, that he was a kind of a cannon that might go off and do things that would embarrass the Soviet Union. He wasn't as disciplined in his approach to communism as they would have liked it, too impulsive in launching initiatives that didn't have follow-up and that kind of thing. So, there was among Soviet experts on Latin America quite a lot of skepticism. And, I think there was a worry that Cuba might also turn out to be an economic drain which to a certain extent it was. Let me just add to that. I think that the Soviet suspicions were overridden by the attraction of having a toehold right next to the United States, even though it was a tenuous one, which a few years before had led to possible conflict. So, the Soviets I suspect at that time were also suspicious of Castro's ability to drag them into a new confrontation with the United States.

Q: What was the Soviet government like and how did we view it from the Embassy during this period?

SHOSTAL: It was a very slow-moving, bureaucratic, uninspired operation. There was certainly nothing in the way of charismatic leadership from Brezhnev or Kosygin. You also sensed that any kind of impulse for reform that had existed with Khrushchev had really petered out. I think here the real turning point in all of this that produced a very defensive attitude and policy by the Soviets of putting down the government in Czechoslovakia.

Q: And this was when?

SHOSTAL: 1968, and I got to Moscow two years later. I think that what I perceived as the big fear internally of the Soviet leadership was that any real experimentation, any loosening up would produce a momentum that could end up in something like the Prague Spring. Now, what they tried to do, I think at that time was to very gradually improve the supply of consumer goods. During that period if you kind of looked at it from a two year time span, you could say, at least in Moscow and the major cities, that life seemed to be getting a little bit better. There seemed to be a few more consumer goods available, more variety of clothes, a little bit more variety in way of food, especially things like fruits and vegetables, exotic fruits and vegetables. But, it was still pretty miserable as compared with Western standards. Externally, I think that regime was beginning to really kind of feel its oats, it seemed to have recovered some self-confidence from the Cuban missile crisis.

Q: Of 1962?

SHOSTAL: That's right. The Cuban missile crisis of '62 produced a real shock in the Soviet

leadership and they vowed never again to be in a position of such military inferiority that they would have to back down. They then embarked on a very intensive military buildup, which by the period of '70-'72 was giving them increased self-confidence. They were beginning to produce MIRVed intercontinental ballistic missiles and the Soviet Navy had been built up.

Q: Blue Ocean they called it.

SHOSTAL: Their Blue Ocean navy was perhaps not at the level of the United States', but was still considered by the American military as an increasing threat. And, of course, the Soviet conventional land forces looked pretty threatening at that time as well.

Q: As you're sitting there in Moscow, what was the feeling of what the Soviets are going to do with all this military might. Are they going to go through the Fulda Gap in Germany or what's going to happen?

SHOSTAL: I think there wasn't a very clear view at that time. There was a concern about what could they do, why were they building all of this. One area where there was obvious concern was the Middle East and whether the buildup would mean increased capability for foreign intervention.

Q: Air borne?

SHOSTAL: Air borne and that kind of thing. Well, not just air borne, but building a big transport plane for example, combined with the increasingly close relationships that they had with governments like Syria and, up until a certain point, Egypt. Remember Sadat only threw the Soviets out, I think in '71, or '72, but the Soviet relationship with radical regimes in the Middle East was very strong. There was certainly a concern about how Soviet military power could translate itself in the power balance in the Middle East. We had seen how in the 1971 India-Pakistan War Soviet military equipment helped tip the balance in favor of India. So, I think the principal concern was not so much tanks rolling through the Fulda Gap, but how the Soviets might use their military capability to tip the international balance in other parts of the world.

Q: What was the feeling, I'd like to take a temperature of people who served there. I've never served there. The closest I've gotten is Yugoslavia. Here you are, you've served in various places including Malawi, but to go to the Soviet Union, our great rival and you take a look and see people in lines for food and all that and other things. How were you looking at this great military strength and this obviously, terribly poor delivery system for the people?

SHOSTAL: There was a definitely, as we would say today, a disconnect between those two. Very quickly after most of us arrived there, I think we became very skeptical towards and even hostile toward the Soviet system. I think virtually everybody who served there departed much more hostile to the whole Soviet system, the propaganda, the system of controls, than when they arrived. I think this was the product of seeing how badly the system treated its own citizens coupled with the propaganda which of course painted everything in rosy colors. There was thus the hypocrisy and duplicity involved in it. It was very clear from even the limited contacts that we were able to have that the privileged lived much better than the average person.

Q: Special stores?

SHOSTAL: Special stores and all the rest of it. Sort of golden ghettos for privileged people, large dachas, hunting lodges, all those kind of things which the well-connected in the party were able to have while the rest of people lived in misery. This added to the hostility I think that we felt toward the Soviet ruling class.

In foreign policy it was for me a very interesting period in terms of changing official attitudes between the two countries. And, a real turning point in not just the attitudes, but in the substance of policy. When I arrived in 1970, that Fall, you had one of the real low points in U.S.-Soviet relations, occasioned by a Middle East crisis, the Black September events in Jordan.

Q: Could you explain what the Black September was?

SHOSTAL: These were radical Palestinians living in Jordan which appeared to be ready to overthrow the regime of King Hussein and to install a radical leftist Palestine regime. The King with considerable logistical and other help from the U.S., put down that budding rebellion. But, it looked at that time as if there might be a Soviet move with more direct involvement.

Q: The Syrians actually sent troops on the way and they turned back, I think after the Israelis set a few rules, you know what I mean?

SHOSTAL: That's right, yes. There was real concern that the Soviets might get pretty directly involved as well. You could have had a very nasty situation. So, that was a kind of low point. For the first year or so of my Moscow tour, relations were really very bad, because of that, because of Vietnam. But, beginning I would say in late '71, to early '72, Soviet attitudes began to change. I think that they felt that they had an opportunity to reach an understanding with the United States that would grant them recognition as kind of an equal partner, an international partner with the United States. Something which I think was a driving motivation for Soviet policy was to be recognized by the United States, by the rest of the world, as the other great power and co-equal in influence. That desire produced a policy that was very strongly debated, very stiffly debated within the Soviet government. At the time of the party congress in early '72, Brezhnev wanted better relations with the United States as well as arms control agreements, which I think he also probably wanted to achieve. Here I am speculating, but he probably wanted to achieve arms control agreements because he recognized that if he wanted to improve the standard living of the people, an all-out drive for military hardware and spending on the armed forces would make that impossible. So, he wanted, I think, to have the arms control agreements that would produce, first of all, greater stability strategically, but secondly also would at least restrain the arms race and allow the Soviets to do more on the domestic front.

The opposition to this course was ideological as well as prompted by the Vietnam War and there was a big debate in the Soviet leadership which Brezhnev won in the Politburo. We were able to track really the improvement of the relationship by things like talks between the Soviet and American Navies on ways to avoid dangerous incidents at sea.

Q: They'd been playing chicken with each other.

SHOSTAL: They'd been playing chicken with each other, they'd been a number of really dangerous incidents that could have gotten out of control and both sides recognized and it made sense to try to have some rules. But, these talks were also symptomatic of a desire of both sides to improve the overall relationship. The Administration at that time also was developing its triangular relationship diplomacy with China, which meant that to be influential in both countries we had to have improved relations with the Soviets to play off against the Chinese. So, it became a very complicated chess game, leading up to Nixon's first visit to China, and his visit to Moscow in the late Spring of '72, only a few weeks after he had first visited China. This of course was a very bitter pill for the Soviets to swallow. They had seen Nixon go first to China and then come to Moscow, but they still swallowed it. There was a final stumbling block, which was the Vietnam War and our bombing of Haiphong Harbor just a few weeks before the visit.

Q: As it was a Christmas bombing, I think it was?

SHOSTAL: It was in the Spring of '72 and touched off a new debate in the Kremlin about whether the visit should go ahead. The Soviets went through with the visit because Brezhnev felt that he had a strong commitment to go ahead.

Q: You were there when the news that we were opening up to China. First place, how did that hit the Embassy and then what was the reaction you were getting, both official and sort of unofficial?

SHOSTAL: It really hit like a bombshell in the Embassy. The first hint of it was picked up by our China hand, Stape Roy, who saw the first opening with the so-called ping pong diplomacy. He saw this as really the opening of a very significant change. The visit to Beijing by Nixon produced a lot of excitement at our Embassy, although we weren't quite clear as yet what the strategic framework for all of this was. It was one that did pay dividends, I think, in our relations with the Soviets because it gave the Soviets an incentive, along with the economic incentives to want to improve their relations with us so we wouldn't be completely wrapped up in the arms of the Chinese against the Soviets.

Q: What was the Soviet reaction that you were getting when this first happened? Were they sort of upset or how was the newspapers handling it?

SHOSTAL: The newspapers, as I recall, were hardly talking about it. That was their way of dealing with something they didn't like or that they found unpleasant, it wouldn't be mentioned. My reporting beat was not that area so much, so I really can't say or I don't recall what Stape and others were saying about what the Soviet Asia specialists were saying.

Q: Who was our Ambassador or Ambassadors within the '70, '72 period?

SHOSTAL: Jake Beam was the only Ambassador that I had while I was there.

Q: Can you talk a bit more about how in the political section it was perceived and who was the

DCM by the way?

SHOSTAL: Boris Klosson.

Q: About how this whole thing was perceived with Kissinger, particularly this is before Kissinger became Secretary of State and he was having in many ways, fun. I have to say it, but it sounds like having fun in his earlier days in the Administration doing things on his own and sort of rubbing the nose of his State Department. What was the reaction?

SHOSTAL: Rage and frustration, as it became clear, the extent to which the Embassy and the Department were being cut out of the action. There was really a feeling that we had a lot to contribute to the making of our policy, because we were on the ground and did have contacts on insights that could be helpful. But we also recognized that the people who were making decisions which really mattered weren't paying any attention to what we were doing. So, among the people who were motivated, very bright and ambitious, there was a lot of unhappiness. To what degree the Department was cut out, became evident during the Nixon visit itself, in the plans for what the Secretary of State should do.

Q: Secretary Rogers?

SHOSTAL: Secretary Rogers at that time. I remember being in one of the planning sessions with the White House party when somebody said, "Well, we don't have this particular afternoon anything for the Secretary of State to do." And, somebody said, "Well, we could send him to the puppet theater, there's an excellent puppet theater in Moscow." I remember saying, "You must be nuts. Can you imagine what the American press would do with a story on Rogers going to the puppet theater while Kissinger is negotiating all of these agreements." So, finally a job was found for Secretary Rogers which was to negotiate the agricultural trade agreement, the delivery of wheat to the Soviet Union.

Q: The Nixon visit. What was the impression of the Embassy of how it went?

SHOSTAL: It went very well. I think from the point of view of producing agreements, which was really kind of a yardstick. You had after all, SALT I signed at that visit and a whole range of others, bilateral cultural, agricultural, science and technology agreements. So, from that viewpoint it went very well. There was no question about it, both sides wanted to achieve significant results. There were, however, a couple of things that troubled us and really became a problem. One of them was the fact that we hadn't really consulted other allies, and I remember the day after the summit ended, as usual somebody went to NATO to brief the allies. They were outraged that they had not been consulted at all on what was obviously a major turning point in East-West relations. And, in particular that the United States and the Soviet Union at the summit had signed a joint statement in which the Administration had agreed to a lot of the Soviet vocabulary on how the relationship should be conducted, including the term, "peaceful coexistence." This was a very ideological loaded term which really meant that we were to stop confronting each other, but that ideologically competition could continue. And many of us in the embassy felt that that was a bad concession to have made to the Soviets because it seemed to legitimize this political trouble-making in the Third World.

Q: You said there were two things that didn't go well.

SHOSTAL: One was the content of that joint declaration and the other was the lack of any consultation at all with the allies. That was part of the secretive diplomacy that Kissinger was conducting.

Q: Was there any feeling at that time about this combination of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, both of whom came to be very suspicious of their own bureaucracy and also this joy at kind of doing things on their own and feeling very much in charge. Did you get that feeling at that time?

SHOSTAL: Oh, yes. There was definitely an arrogance about the White House party that was there that was palpable and difficult to stomach. I must say among the top people in that group, the only one who I thought was really interested in what was going and interested in talking to people was Brent Scowcroft. But, the others in the White House staff totally focused on the President and anything that made him look good was what mattered.

To me it was also a very interesting moment, because in thinking back about it, what I was able to see at that summit was both Richard Nixon and Brezhnev at the peak of their power. Everything went downhill from there for both of them. The Watergate break-in took place a month after that summit meeting, so it was an interesting moment historically.

Q: What was our impression from the Embassy of Brezhnev at that time? What type of person was he and what motivated him and how much in control was he?

SHOSTAL: Very much a person interested in power who knew how to exercise it at that point. He had fought his way up the ranks. One of the interesting parts of that visit was that I had several opportunities to see him up close. He was somebody who had the aura of exercising power and was dominating, in a physical sense almost, the people around him. Very different from the feeble Brezhnev of few years later. I don't think that at that time he had much of an idea of what to do with power. He certainly did not have any thought-out strategic vision. He was more I would say a tactician in the sense that he knew he needed some breathing space in the arms race, for example, with the United States to keep things under control at home. During the time I was there he certainly had achieved ascendance and you could see that just by the way he was talked about in the Soviet press, over the other people in what had originally been called a Troika. When I first got to Moscow there was quite a lot a talk about Kosygin, the Prime Minister, being something of a reformer. The President, Podgorny, being something of an old Stalinist. Brezhnev was seen as somehow being between them. But, as time went on it was really very clear that Brezhnev was the dominant personality and the other two tended to fade.

Q: In dealing with the Soviets, were you able to make any contacts and all?

SHOSTAL: Some, but only limited ones. Some of the contacts that I had were among journalists, a few Soviet diplomats, a few people that we met on the street literally, but with whom I felt we needed to be very careful so as to protect them, not expose them or endanger them. And, there

were some dissidents and people on the dissident fringe. But, it was a relatively small circle of contacts given the size of the city and the importance of the country. There were a lot of people who simply shied away and who really discouraged contact with us.

Q: What about trips? Did you take many trips and if you did, was the KGB presence there?

SHOSTAL: I took quite a number of trips and the KGB presence was almost always around and quite visibly so. They didn't really make much effort to hide that they were shadowing us. In fact, I think that they tried to make it quite obvious that they were as a way of intimidating us and of trying to limit contact with people. I think they figured that if we knew or we saw that they were following us we would be more reluctant to have contact with Soviets for fear of getting them in trouble. I tried to strike a balance between, on the one hand, doing my job and talking to people, but tried to do it in a way that wouldn't be provocative and cause trouble for the people that I was talking to. But, I did get to the Baltic, did get to Kiev a couple of times, to Georgia a couple of times. One big regret was I wanted to get to Central Asia, but that trip got canceled because of Nixon's summit. With trips outside of Moscow, I'm sure you've heard this from other people, there was always a problem of getting permission from the authorities. You never knew until the evening before you were going to depart whether you had permission. They would always keep us kind of dangling before we learned whether or not we would get permission to go to a certain place.

Q: Did you ever have any provocation by the KGB or anything like that?

SHOSTAL: Yes, one in particular I can think of. One weekend, a Saturday or Sunday, my wife and I went to one of the outskirts of Moscow and were walking around the street. I think we asked for directions from a woman who had a couple of children and we struck up a conversation. This woman invited us to her place, I think for a week or two later. So, on the appointed day, my wife and I and our two children got in our car and we drove to the area where they lived, on the outskirts of Moscow. On the way there we had to go over a great poorly paved road. As we were going along very slowly trying to avoid pot holes, a Russian car bumped into us from behind. It didn't do any serious damage, but enough that I got out and looked at what had happened and went over and started to talk to the people in the car behind us. Well, it was very clear that these were KGB people and were along for the ride really to harass us. So, we got to the house of the people who had invited us, I told them, "Look, maybe it's not such a good idea for us to spend a lot of time with you, because the police, the KGB is after us." So, we had a rather brief visit with them. I really was concerned about not getting them into trouble. The woman's husband was an Aeroflot pilot and was very uncomfortable during the whole time. I just felt that this wouldn't be fair to them. They were vulnerable and might get in trouble. I've thought often about that incident and I think, were something like that to happen today with my perspective, I think that I would not have cut off the contact as quickly as I did, because I think the point needed to be made, or should have been made that this was a problem of their government, not ours. In a sense I fell into the trap, played the game that the Soviet government wanted us to play, rather than standing firm which I think I should have done.

Q: But, it's very difficult, because you know how vulnerable these people are and is the game worth the candle? When you left in '72 what impression did you come away with from the Soviet

Union?

SHOSTAL: I was revolted by the society, by the system that organized it, and on the other hand, very much taken by the Russian people that I had met. I really loved the language and the culture. I found that in the cases where we were able to make friends that these were really people of depth who cared about our friendship. So, it was really a very mixed feeling and I think a lot of Americans came away with that view, almost a schizophrenic view. The Russians as a people had our sympathy for their plight and at the same time we felt disgust for the system that they lived under.

Q: Where did you go from there?

SHOSTAL: From there I went back to Africa to Rwanda as DCM.

DAVID M. EVANS
Russian Language Study
Garmish Partenkirchen, Germany (1970-1971)

Economic Officer
Moscow (1971-1973)

Mr. Evans was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and was educated at Harvard University and the University of Belgrade Law School. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963. As an Economic Specialist, Mr. Evans served in Warsaw, Belgrade, Moscow and London. In addition to his economic assignments, he served in senior level positions dealing with International Security and Counter-Terrorism. He also served as Political Advisor to the Commander-in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe. Mr. Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Where did you go?

EVANS: I remember that I was at home, I think, in early 1970, when I got the call, "Would I be interested in going to Moscow?" Moscow was my ultimate goal, going back to my earlier studies of Russian, back in 1955, and this is where it was at. The only problem was, I knew that my wife didn't want to go. So, when I broke the news to her, or presented the question to her, she was very upset. At this point she had settled into a very good life. I don't think she had completed her master's degree, but she was working on it. She was teaching art. She was having shows. She is still teaching art in one of the Washington schools here. I didn't fully realize at that time, that she didn't just dislike going to Communist countries, she hated it with a passion. Her father took me aside and said, "David, do you really have to go to Moscow? Couldn't you just get a job here, or really, it would be better to quit the Foreign Service and do something else." I was appalled at this, because here was the fruition of all my life's work up until then, and of my studies and of my whole direction. I had gotten Moscow. Not only that, I was being offered the opportunity to

go to Garmisch first, for a year of language there, and that was the more prestigious way to go, and certainly a nicer way to go. It caused a real problem. I consulted a lot of people in the family. This was the beginning, unfortunately, of a major problem in our marriage. Many marriages did flounder with Moscow assignments, particularly at that time. In the end my wife agreed to go unlike the wife of a friend of ours, who had a very similar career pattern, who absolutely refused to go to Moscow. Her husband came home and burnt his whole library of books about Russia and the Soviet Union, and everything. He never, ever forgave her. Of course, they subsequently got divorced. They had a very bitter divorce which mine was not. Anyway, we left Washington in the summer of 1970, and went to Garmisch.

Q: Could you describe the Garmisch experience? It was a year's course, it was called Detachment R, I think.

EVANS: Well, that name had stopped, I think. The Detachment R referred more, as I recall, to Oberammergau. By the time I went in 1970, it was the U.S. Army Russian Institute, not Detachment R. There were three State Department officers, and one USIA officer, and one CIA officer for five civilians in my class. Then, there was the regular Army class, which was a two year class for them. We were put in the second year, the senior year, as it were, with those military. The most memorable and unexpected aspect of Garmisch was that the Lieutenant Colonel in charge of The Russian Institute was a psychotic. I am trying to be accurate here in using words like that, but I think that is a fair description. He was the extremely bizarre type of military officer that you see depicted in certain films: totally irrational, knew Russian very well, was prone to great rage and hysterical reactions to the failure of students to perform the way he thought they should. It caused his military students, of course, a great deal of harm. I heard from them, mostly about his excesses. We were spared most of that, and I happen to speak Russian quite well, and he seemed to respect that and leave me alone. He was a bully, and unfortunately, one of the worst examples of a military officer. Garmisch, itself, of course, was a beautiful place to be, that goes without saying. The level of the instruction which was all in Russian, by Russian emigrates, was quite good, and their dedication to their work was very high. I liked and respected virtually all of them. Both the language instructors and the substance instructors, in political science, history, and geography met high academic standards. But, there was tension throughout the whole year, as a result of this Colonel's obsessive behavior. That made for a lot of personal and social problems; for friction between us and the military, very often serious. But, overall, I was pleased to be there and proud that I had been chosen to go to Moscow that way.

Q: Then, you went to Moscow from 1971 - 1973?

EVANS: 1971 - 1973, two year assignment, and I went into the Economic Section. By this time, I was permanently implanted in the Economic cone, which I had chosen, because way back in Warsaw I thought, that was the way that, ultimately, the Soviet system would crumble. I wanted to be in the economic end of it, because I thought it would be the key way to pursue my career goal of helping to bring down the Communist system. I think I was proven right in the long run.

Q: During your 1971 to 1973 period, can you describe relations? This is fairly early Brezhnev

period. How were relations seen? Nixon was firmly in the White House, Kissinger was calling the shots, at that point.

EVANS: To the extent that, as you know, he traveled to Moscow several times, without the knowledge of Ambassador Jake Beam, another man of the old school, as was Ambassador Cabot. He, too, was in his last post. Relations in 1971 were terrible with the Soviet Union. They were exacerbated by a number of incidents on both sides, in the intelligence area, and in factions of the JDL (Jewish Defense League), for example, in New York.

One case was a JDL bombing of a Soviet diplomat's apartment. A fire bomb was sent through a window, and fortunately, for that Soviet, the child who was playing in the apartment, was not hurt, but could have been. It was viewed as a very serious thing. I think that occurred in July 1971. I arrived in Moscow with my wife and two small children. About three weeks later, our shipment of effects arrived. We were sent to live in a new apartment block, obviously just for foreigners, diplomats, and a few businessmen. We were one of the first families to be there, and at that time, they still had not completed the fence and the box where the militia men, the milimen, as we called it, with an extra key to monitor us. We had a very large, spacious apartment. It was not in the center, shall we say, and we had a car, because we drove in. But, we did not have a telephone for some time, which was very difficult. About three weeks after we got there, we were unpacking our shipment of effects, which was a great joy, and everything seemed to be in order. It got late. It was about 2:00 in the morning, and we were still unpacking the boxes. All of a sudden, the quiet night air was shattered by the unmistakable sound of glass and metal being smashed. I knew instinctively what it was. I ran to our balcony, we were on the eighth floor, and sure enough, looking down, I saw my car being attacked by three thugs wielding crow bars and hammers. They were systematically smashing every bit of glass they could find, beating in the hood, smashing in the doors, of my beautiful Oldsmobile, the first new car I ever had the luxury of buying. On the seventh floor, lived the junior Naval attaché, Steve Khime. He rushed out to see what was going on. We yelled down to each other. I was so appalled, I didn't know what to do, here I was, on the eighth floor. My wife had bought a big treasure for her, which was a big plant, and it was in a pot. My reaction was to take this potted plant and hurl it down to these people. My wife stopped me from doing that. She was not ready to sacrifice the pot, and of course, it would not have done any good. Steve shouted, "Well, I've got my car. Let's go after the bastards." We raced down and got in his car. By that time, the thugs had gone off. Of course, I knew that there wasn't any point in doing it, but, just for the hell of it, we went to the local police station to make the report. I just thought that I would do it. As we drove in to the police station, I noticed a white Volvo parked there. It was the car with the three individuals, so we went ahead, and I said an act of hooliganism has been perpetrated on me, and my car had been shattered. This was about 2:30 at night. So, of course, the policeman said, "That is impossible, there is no hooliganism in the Soviet Union, and therefore, there can be no hooligans, therefore this thing didn't happen." "Well, it did happen, and, not only that, but the people who did it, are right here, because there is the car." Well, I guess it was lucky we got out of there. But, I called up a friend of mine, named Bernie Gordsman, who is the correspondent for The New York Times, whom I had known at Harvard, and I told Bernie about this, because I was very upset about it. He ran a story, which ran on the front page of The New York Times and The Washington Post, the next day, naming me, and one other American diplomat, who had also come with me and whose car had also been demolished. This was the first and only time I had

been on the front page of The New York Times and The Washington Post. It turned out that this was a retaliation for the JDL bombing, and possibly, because it was publicized, and possibly because, which I didn't know at the time, work was already underway for the planning of the Nixon visit next year. That was not the last nasty incident. There were a lot of nasty incidents, harassment, and threats, and so forth, against American diplomats in Moscow.

I have to say, and I'm being very frank in this interview, that the reaction of the American Embassy was appalling. I found myself, the victim, having my car demolished. But I was taken aside by the political counselor, and very severely reprimanded for having spoken to the press about this. He said, "Don't you realize that bigger things are at play here, and things that you don't know. You just can't go popping off to the press." I think I was right. I think it was very beneficial that it was publicized. However, the State Department refused to pay to repair my car, nor would they lend me another car. The Embassy garage said they would work on what they could. I called PanAm and I called General Motors, and miraculously PanAm, at no expense to me, flew in the parts, and General Motors, at no expense to me, contributed all the windows, all the headlights, new hood, new side panels, whatever it was, the chrome around the whole thing. But, I remember Ambassador Beam saying, "It is unfortunate David, but those are the breaks of the game, and we can't be responsible for such things. I realize you are going to be out of pocket for this." I thought that was pretty shoddy.

When we did get our phone in, we were subject to a lot of threatening, weird types of annoying calls. The Cold War was very much on, which made living there miserable, brought home all my wife's worst fears, and, although she very gamely taught art at the Anglo-American school, the situation changed radically in the beginning of 1972. This was when we found out that Nixon was coming for what was the first pattern of summit meetings. This was in May of 1972.

Q: Could you talk about the Nixon visit and what you were experiencing, and, from others who were dealing with it, how it went. What sort of expectations we had for it, in that whole thing.

EVANS: The Nixon visit in May of 1972 was truly a seminal event in U.S.-Soviet relations. It was, of course, an absolutely momentous event for the Embassy. It affected the lives of, I think, every officer, and therefore, every family at the American Embassy in Moscow, in the months running up to the visit, during the hectic time of the visit, and then, of course, in the mop-up afterwards.

The visit was announced to those of us who were not in the upper echelons of the Embassy. I was number two in a three man Economic Section, as First Secretary. In those days, the Section Chiefs were called "Counselors," now they have been elevated to "Minister Counselors," and then there was a Second Secretary. So there were three of us in the Economic Section. We were told, I suppose, around maybe, late February or March, that this summit meeting was taking place. Neither we, lower down, and I think not even the Ambassador himself knew that the negotiations for this visit had been carried on secretly by Henry Kissinger. He had come over to Moscow, without informing the State Department, without the Ambassador's knowledge; had at some time, been whisked out to private dachas for meetings with the Soviets, and on one occasion, had actually, been living in the basement of SPASO House without the knowledge of the Ambassador . . . Extraordinary.

Q: Extraordinary, yes.

EVANS: What we did notice, about simultaneously with the announcement, was the remarkable change in our ability to contact Soviet officials. We prided ourselves, in the Economic Section, that, although, we were only three, compared to about 12 in the Political Section, on being a lean, mean, team. We had a very active and up-to-date Rolodex of contacts in the various foreign trade organizations, ministries, and business associations. But, we were really unable to contact people. All of a sudden, we were. The Soviets sought us out, gave us their direct telephone numbers, and when we called, they actually were there. We used the analogy that everybody who went through that period, did, simply: the red lights all turned to green. It wasn't an amber first. It was from red to green. Everything was "go", as far as contacts. The atmosphere that I had described previously, with my car being demolished, and the harassment that we had endured on the telephone, and that sort of thing, all abruptly stopped. That was very beneficial.

The visit, of course, was remarkable, in that it was the first Nixon summit meeting with the Soviets. This started a pattern of annual summits, alternating between Soviet Union and the United States, and continued on, pretty much, regularly, until the Afghanistan period, and has continued on up to this date. So, it was an historic moment, setting the precedent for these summit meetings, at which, the precedent was also established of preparing a whole raft of documents and agreements to be signed. The summit meetings had various purposes, and one was to conclude agreements, which, of course, had been negotiated before. The first START Agreement was signed.

Q: START, being Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty?

EVANS: A whole range of treaties were signed by Nixon, I think there were about six to eight, believe it or not: on arms reductions, in science and technology, in trade, which very much affected the area in which I was working. It set off the period of what we called "economic detente" because the Bilateral Trade Agreement was signed. In fact, the summit started the formal period of detente between the two countries. Later, the trade agreement had to be ratified. There were problems with that, and a whole mechanism of implementing trade and economic relations was established, including the establishment of U.S.-Soviet Trade and Economic Council, which was to be chaired on the U.S. side by the Secretary of Treasury. There was also an agreement on the environment, and perhaps, cultural exchanges.

The preparations for it were my first exposure to the White House phenomenon. We were subjected to advance team visits and it was pretty obvious from the, almost fear, of the higher echelons, the counselors and the DCM, that this was something that had to be approached very seriously. I remember sitting in on one of the advance team visits when Haldeman and Ehrlichman came out, Haldeman being Nixon's Chief of Staff. He and Ehrlichman were referred to, among other things, as the two Prussians. Indeed, Haldeman not only looked it, but acted it. So, there was a certain amount of tension, pressure and almost fear, to make this thing successful, all the while, feeling that a whole lot of things were being kept from us that we didn't know about. So, we were trying to do the best we could to make the arrangements.

My involvement was in Kiev. Nixon was to spend, maybe two days in Moscow, and then a third day in Kiev. For whatever reason, the Economic Section and the Science Attaché were delegated to handle the Kiev visit, Kiev, of course, being the capitol of the constituent Republic of Ukraine. So, the Consul, Lou Bowden, and I, went down together with the Science Attaché and some administrative people leaving the third Economic Officer to hold the fort in Moscow. This was a couple days before the summit, to set up the logistics and work with the Soviet authorities in Kiev. One of my duties, to give you an idea of the degree to which this thing went, was to prepare instructions for the President's briefing book on how to eat Chicken Kiev. The White House was convinced that, going to Kiev, the President would be served Chicken Kiev. So, I had to research this, write it up: how you put your fork into it at an angle, away from you, so that the hot juice inside doesn't splatter on your shirt; the history of Chicken Kiev. Well, of course, in the end, they did not serve Chicken Kiev. They served some sort of beef dish. But, that shows some of the attention to detail. Another one of the interesting things, was the clear precedence that Kissinger had over the White House, and that the National Security Council had over the State Department. Kissinger was housed in the best villa, or palace, or whatever it was. It was quite grand, and the poor Secretary of State, William Rogers, was housed, literally somewhere out in left field, away from the cluster of the main players.

Q: But Henry Kissinger was close to Nixon?

EVANS: Right. He had significantly better accommodations, wherever it was. I don't know whether we have time for any anecdotes about it . . .

Q: I'd rather have the anecdotes. We are in no hurry.

EVANS: One interesting, and I think, telling anecdote, that I learned from my wife and son, and other friends, who were at the airport, seeing Nixon off from Moscow to Kiev, since I had already gone down to Kiev. Nixon was really successful, and triumphant, after his ceremonial state visit to Moscow, but he had to fly to Kiev. The Soviets, as a matter of pride, wanted him to fly on their relatively new flagship aircraft, called the Ilyushin 62, which was actually a knock-off of the Boeing 707, and not a particularly a good one. The Secret Service, of course, was against this, and felt that the President should fly down on Air Force One, which was parked at the airport. But the Soviets said that this would be a matter of great honor for them if Nixon would fly down on their plane, the flagship of their Presidential fleet. Nixon finally said, "All right." He overruled the Secret Service, and said, "I will fly down on the Soviet plane." So, the band played and great hordes of uniformed servants loaded up the plane with food, Kosygin came out to see him off.

Q: Kosygin was the President. He might have been the President, and Brezhnev . . . I mean, I don't know, there was a formal President . . .

EVANS: Right. Well, I would have to go back and check, because Kosygin, for many years, was the Prime Minister. He might have become President at that point. Anyway, Kosygin was number two, basically, after Brezhnev, and he was delegated to come out, and come on to the plane to see Nixon off. So, the Nixon party arrived, and my son, who was then about eight years old, took a picture that came out to be Nixon's pocket, but, he always treasured it, because it was

a picture of a coat, and it was Nixon's pocket as he swept by. Nixon got on the plane, and the band played, and everybody was saluting. The engine started and nothing happened, and nothing happened. There was a long, embarrassing pause. The protocol people were starting to sweat, and mop their brows. A lot of stirring around, and finally the engine stopped. One of the rear doors opened and this long line of equipment, and white coated women came pouring into the plane, and began taking off all the food, and carrying it over to Air Force One.

Q: Oh, God!

EVANS: Everybody said, "Oh, my God," you know. So, Kosygin had actually closed the door and bid farewell, but he was now standing there, and was beet red. He went up to the plane, I learned this later from friends, and went into the plane and said, "Mr. President, what has happened?" He was informed by the Soviets that the pilot refused to take off because one of the engines was not working correctly. He said, "Mr. President, this is absolutely a great embarrassment to the Soviet Union, and to the Soviet people," and all of this, "you tell us what to do with this worthless captain," meaning decapitation or whatever. Nixon thought for a moment, and he said, "promote him." Kosygin stepped back and said, "why?" Nixon said, "because he had the good sense not to take off." I thought that was an interesting story.

Q: Very interesting.

EVANS: Anyway, they arrived a little late. We knew there was a problem because we were out in the airport in Kiev, waiting with the cavalcade, and all the numbered cars, and that whole business. Kiev went smoothly and no Chicken Kiev disasters. I got a very nice letter from Nixon, in due course, thanking me for my assistance. We then went back to Moscow, and suddenly realized the whole ground had changed. We were now in a dialogue with a country, instead of being in a hostile confrontation. We were actually in a working relationship, with, if not a friendly country, an engaged country, and that was a major, major change.

Q: You know, when you look at it, with the great annoyance of, you might say, the Foreign Service establishment, at Henry Kissinger playing these games, secrecy, and all, but all the same, something did happen, with the Soviet Union, which is often forgotten because of the China opening. Something really did happen from the Nixon/Kissinger combination.

EVANS: It did. But there were painful aspects. I'm sure the Soviets wanted to keep Kissinger visits secret. And Kissinger liked to play his cards close to the vest too. Moreover, Nixon did not trust many others. He had his problems with the State Department too. Many administration people have felt that the State Department was not to be brought into key decisions. We all know that. In this case, maybe that's the way it had to be. But it was tremendously embarrassing and insulting to the Ambassador to have all this happen without his knowledge. For Kissinger to come live in the basement of SPASO House was extraordinary.

Q: The Nixon visit was in May of 1972, and you were in Moscow until when?

EVANS: I was in Moscow until July of 1973. I had come a year before, and then remained another year after the Nixon visit. The two years were like, if not, night and day, certainly

radically different as far as being able to work effectively with the Soviets; travel, have business contacts. Suddenly doors were open and I was tremendously busy with American businessmen, who immediately got the signal that, now is the time to start doing business with the Soviets. I was just inundated with work that second year and our section was still only three people. There was no staff increase there. Much of what I did tended to be with American businessmen. I participated in some of the negotiations, not the actual negotiation, but the process of negotiation for our first multi-million dollar deal, which was a ten million dollar deal. This must have been signed, maybe in the late summer, or early fall of 1972. It was for Dresser Industries, a subsidiary of Kellogg, to provide a foundry for a truck plant. In connection with that, I went down to a town called Togliatti, which is where the main truck industry was located, in a horrible area of Tatarstan. Things like that weren't possible before. Then, we had the business of American companies wanting to open offices and to obtain accreditation. Occidental Petroleum came over. Arm & Hammer came over. In other words, the welcome mat was out. The green light was on and it was all systems go for American business.

One evening, I was working around 6:00 or 6:30 in the office, and the telephone rang. This American voice said, he had been switched to me by the Marine Guard, this American voice identified himself as an American businessman. He and a delegation of air traffic control people from Raytheon and Westinghouse, a high level group, had come in. But something was either wrong with their visas or they had been so naive with all this excitement that they had failed to get visas. Anyway, they had been impounded in a hotel out at the Sheremetyevo Airport which is used to house people at when they either don't have visas, or they don't have the right visa, or for some other reason. The Soviets wouldn't let them into the country and held them until their next chance to be sent away on another plane. So, he called for help. Well, this illustrated the difference with what would have happened a year ago. I called my contact over at the Ministry of Trade or the Ministry of the industry that dealt with that sector. In any event, within half an hour, I was informed that they were going to be let out of the hotel, and given a bus, and a hotel reservation had been made for them, in town. I was delegated to go out and see that all of this happened and to escort them in. Now, that sort of thing would not have happened prior to the Nixon visit. It would have been unthinkable.

Q: What were you telling American businessmen when they were dealing with the Soviets at this particular time, when they would come in? People who come from American business really aren't that well informed. Nobody was informed on this. What was our line and your personal thoughts?

EVANS: You are quite right. The three of us, and the Embassy in general, and some of the western embassies were probably as well informed as anybody, except the old time. There were a few old time traders who were trading in chromium, and that sort of thing, with the Soviets, going way back. Obviously, we told them it was a difficult market with great potential. We told them that financing was a problem, that Soviet money was a problem, although, ironically they had more money then, than many of the Russians do now. Many of the problems we are looking at now, some 25 years later, are almost identical to the problems we had to deal with then. Bureaucracy was terrible. Red tape was terrible. There was a maze of contacts you had to go through to get to the right person. But, once you did, and had the signal an agreement was reached, you could go ahead. Multiple trips were necessary to establish your credentials, your

interest. The Russians were testing Americans, as they did, I think, with all Westerners to see whether they really were interested in this and whether they were prepared to pay up front the money required, if it was a joint venture. "Joint ventures" was the big word at that time. Joint venture meaning an arrangement by which the American would put up the money and hope eventually to get it out in some way. So, it was a process of not trying to discourage Americans, but sometimes to try to tone them down, and say, "Look, yes, the light is green. Yes, in contrast to a few years ago, we are supporting doing business with the Soviet Union. Yes, the Government is behind it. We have this bilateral governmental body. Yes, it is easier to meet with the Soviets now. Yes, they want to meet with you. But there are problems in financing. There are problems in production. There are problems in quality, if you are not buying a raw material. And most Soviet manufactured goods, were out of the question." So, the emphasis was mostly on selling. The machine tool builders trade mission came over there. We were inundated with trade missions, I think every major association, like machine tool builders, and electronic producers, and agricultural equipment, producers sent over trade missions, there was much wining and dining, and relatively little business done.

Q: Were trade controls your concern, particularly about advanced equipment, or anything electronic, or what have you, that the Soviets might buy a few of these, and (1) turn to military use, or (2) they might copy them? Was this a consideration, or was that taken care of elsewhere?

EVANS: That was basically done, by most companies, back in Washington. They complained to us about it. But that was basically done in Washington, I think. We either held their hand on the issue or explained from our point of view why this didn't make sense in our long-term national interest. It wasn't a problem that the Embassy dealt with so much. It was just getting businessmen together in a climate where for years, you have to remember, we were mortal enemies. The idea was suddenly to get people together when the Soviets wanted, as Russians do, to combine a lot of drinking and dinners with business. We also advised American businessmen to be prepared to be challenged, to be drunk under the table, and that sort of thing. If you could hold your vodka as well as your Russian counterpart, then that pretty well assured you of getting on.

Q: What do you do in a situation like this? It's all very nice to have these drinking contests. But, let's say, for medical reasons, or just for personal reasons, you don't want to get into that, at that time. How did one deal with it?

EVANS: The medical reason nobody mentioned to me. There were some people, obviously, who did not want to, or couldn't handle, more than a couple shots of vodka. We just had to advise them to either somehow make do, but to keep raising their glass, and not drink it down, to the bottom, the way the Russians would, and then ask for another, immediately. So, the advice, basically, was to keep up the game, don't pour cold water on the Russians, after having a good time. What you had to do, was, very diplomatically, reduce the amount of drinking, but be part of the party. If you were a party pooper, that pretty well put the kibosh on your business relationship. First, they didn't like people who were like that, and second, they thought you were a weakling. It was a combination of macho and hospitality. There were also elaborate feasts which were paid by the State and the State run foreign trade organizations, ministries, and State owned things. There were false expectations on both sides.

Q: On the working level, when you weren't dealing with these trade delegations, and all, could you go and meet the number four person in the Ministry of Agriculture or elsewhere, and chat with him or her, have lunch, that type of thing, that you would do in other countries? Or was everything sort of a State secret, as far as getting information?

EVANS: We were able to do that, but, generally in pairs. For instance, the Economic Counselor and I would generally go together. He would call up, or I would call up on his behalf, and say, "we would like to meet with the head of the Foreign Relations Department of the Ministry or the Foreign Trade Organization for lunch," and they would say, "fine." Or they would call us up, depending on where the issue was. That again was different. We were sought out a lot. This was for receptions and dinners, particularly for a reception type thing, which meant, showing up, maybe at 6:00, and going on until 9:00 with this huge groaning board followed by caviar, which was flowing like water, that's a wrong analogy, but there was a lot of caviar. These tables were laden with food. But one-on-one was still not really possible. Our Embassy didn't encourage it either. So, it wasn't just the other side. But, generally, two of us, either the Counselor and myself, or if it was a thing that the third guy in the section was dealing with, he and that person would go. Later, when the Counselor left, I became acting Counselor. So, then, I would take the lead, and go with one of the other two. We did not entertain socially. In other words, this did not lead to inviting Soviet trade, or economic or business officials to our houses. If there was an occasion, like a visiting delegation, the Counselor might host a reception. But just to have a couple to your house for an evening, to watch a film or something like that, was still not possible, at least in our area. There were some areas of the Political Section, that were able to do it. My wife, as I mentioned, was an artist, and we had some artist friends. So, we had some Russians in that field, who came over to the house. But, they were still followed, even after the Nixon visit, when they left, and harassed for coming to our apartment.

Q: When you weren't dealing with trade, the Economic Section, in many ways, was one of the major thermometers. What about this creature, called the Soviet Union was up to? There was all this emphasis on the political side-- you have 12 people in the Political Section and three in the Economic Section. That represents the way we dealt with the Soviet Union. It was who was standing where on the Kremlin reviewing stand, or the Red Square reviewing stand. But, at least 50% if not more of what caused the breakup of the Soviet Union was the economy. This is the high Brezhnev period, but the economy was not producing the way the European economy was. How were you looking at it? We are talking strictly about the time you were there, 1971 - 1973, or so.

EVANS: Well, one of the first things the Economic Counselor did, the very first thing he did after the Nixon visit, was to submit a request to the State Department for more people. This was for the Economic/Commercial Section. I am proud of having been a major player in seeing to the establishment of a commercial office. It was in a building down the street from the Embassy. I recently talked with the Commercial Minister Counselor -- at that time, it was headed by a Commercial Attaché -- and the building is still there. That was the building I was largely responsible for getting up and running as a commercial office. We realized that we would have to have more people because, suddenly, economics, trade, and commercial relations were on the cutting edge. The political area remained sort of the way it was. But, I chose, purposely, when I

was in Warsaw, to go into the Economic cone, because I felt that that would be the cutting edge of bringing down the Soviet system. I think I was right. That is what put the pressure on Gorbachev to make the changes.

Q: We are talking about the late 1980s?

EVANS: Right. So, the seeds were germinating. What did we see in the early 1970s? We saw this tremendous disparity between the Soviet military might, the space accomplishments, the research centers, and the civilian sector. The money going to science, the favored position of the Committee on Science and Technology, which contained the key people. Kosygin's son, I think, headed that committee. We don't know a lot about them. We knew that a lot of them were KGB types. So, there was that level. But, the rest, the 98% of the country, was floundering along, in less than Third-World status. You could drive through the city and see buildings that had holes in the walls. The way the concrete blocks were laid, they were not lined up, and there were air holes between them. Our building, where my wife and I and our two children lived, was a brand new building when we arrived, in the summer of 1971. It was way out in the boondocks. We were certainly in the city. But it was a 45 minute drive to the Embassy. It was surrounded by this sea, absolute filth of mud, which, on occasion, would be almost waist-high. The idea of landscaping a building was totally alien. The building was set in an absolute wasteland of muck. The dirt was unbelievable. I don't know what it is about the Soviet system or Communism, but, dirt in Communism is so much more filthy than anywhere else. It was part of the grease and the grime. The total lack of attention to anything. They started building a building next to us, and when we looked out the window, watching this, my children were fascinated. They would drive up in these old trucks, and, of course, the trucks were absolutely caricatures of trucks. It was amazing they moved at all. The trolley cars were packed with poor people stuffed in. Everything was decrepit, barely able to work. We watched out our window for several days as they were building something next door, which they eventually gave up on, which was typical. A delivery truck of bricks would come, all piled in, and then the truck would tilt up, and dump all the bricks. In the process, about half the bricks would break. At that point, a slew of, maybe, 15 workers would appear, and would load the broken bricks back into the truck by hand.

You had this tremendous disparity between national security achievements and the life of the average person. My colleagues would say, "How can they possibly have the GNP," estimated by the CIA? "How can they possibly be growing at this rate, and how can these figures be right?" Just your visual observation would lead you to believe that this was a decrepit economy, which was equivalent to something in the remotest part of Africa. Yet, we were told by the CIA reports that this was a booming economy; that investments were high; trade was expanding, and building was achieving greater goals. It was hard to believe. It was total nonsense. Sixty percent of glass shipped in the Soviet Union broke before it arrived. Seventy-five percent of fresh vegetables rotted before they got to the market. The waste was absolutely staggering. Now, people say, "Well, how come the CIA misjudged it so much?" One reason, and I do remember talking about this, at the time, in the early 1970s, was that the CIA prohibited its economic analysts from visiting the Soviet Union. So, all the reports that the CIA produced, were based on the statistics they were able to get, and they got most of those statistics, where from? . . . the Soviet Union.

Q: Is it just that they didn't want their CIA people to be exposed to the Soviet Union, I mean,

because of fear of their divulging things?

EVANS: That's right. They were so afraid of a CIA person being compromised, drugged or hit on the head, or God knows what. Remember my previous stories about the Polish blondes. I suppose they still were worried about Russian blondes. If we have time, I'll tell you an interesting story on that score. In any event, it was well known, that while we had a CIA station chief in the Embassy and there were CIA officers there, they were not primarily doing economic reporting as far as I know. They were doing personal contacts and developing resources, and analyzing the traditional, political type things. I remember maybe when I went back to Washington we were told that the CIA can't send economic analysts out. The Big Red mentality was still there. It was shocking.

Q: I used to hear from people . . . I had never been in the Soviet Union, that this place wasn't working. I had spent five years in Yugoslavia in the mid-1960,. I thought, this sure isn't paradise on earth. And then people coming from the Soviet Union, would say, "This is great, this is paradise." All of us would kind of wonder, well if this place can't put it together, why is it such a worry? You would even hear of some visiting Americans, who were not officials, who would say, "You know, nothing works. These people are not 10 feet tall."

EVANS: That's right.

Q: When you went there, did you sense that there was, almost a confrontation, between the CIA analysis and what the Economic Section was doing, or was the Economic Section so busy, that it really wasn't looking at the withering Soviet Union?

EVANS: I have to admit that it was a case of the latter, particularly after the Nixon visit, because we were focused, almost entirely, on commercial relationships. That was my major role, dealing with the American business community and that sort of thing. The number three man in the Embassy was the one who did the reporting on Soviet domestic economic scenes, such as it was. But he was generally pulled off for our commercial work. We were three people dealing with an onslaught of business people in Delegations. We were also dealing with messages coming out of Washington - take care of this group from Texas, take care of this homebuilders association, take care of the concrete makers, and, it was just flat out. So, there was very little economic analysis that we did. What we did do was to try to reflect the reality and to show some skepticism. I remember in the quieter periods of trying to take the reports that would come out in the Soviet press, which, of course, were then used by the CIA, and adding comments as a standard way of reporting. We did it mostly by typewritten airgram. So, you would report an announcement or an event and then comment: "Based on our observations, it is hard to believe this is even one fourth the production claimed," or something like that.

Q: Did INR, which was the intelligence branch of the State Department, play a different role? The economic side of the INR was it more or less, depending on the CIA? Or did it even play any role, as far as you remember?

EVANS: Well, I had come out to Moscow from the economic office of INR, but I was dealing with military shipments to Vietnam. I do not recall, even when I was in INR, let alone, when I

was in Moscow, that we got much of anything of value from INR about the Soviet economic situation. In retrospect, I think it was a black hole that was . . . “neglected” is the wrong word, but there were so many other priorities. This dichotomy between lofty achievements and the obvious visual reality that everybody saw, for some reason, was just not brought sufficiently to people’s attention. In a way, in a perverse way, I think, the United States officially wanted to believe that the Soviet economy was doing better than it was. Let’s say, if I were to have written an analysis saying that the Soviet economy was actually to the point of breaking down, I’m not sure the embassy would have transmitted it. I can’t be more precise, or say why, but there was a two super-power thing. There was almost the feeling: “Well, if they are our enemy or protagonist, then they have to be a worthy protagonist.” We ascribe to them a level of economic achievement, that we almost knew they didn’t have. But we didn’t want to admit they didn’t have it.

Q: How about with your colleagues and the rest of the rest of the diplomatic community? I’m thinking about the French, the Germans, the British, and others. In a country, such as the Soviet Union, there tends to be much more collegiality, because they are having such a rough time too. Let’s continue to focus on the economic side. Was there anybody running around, say from the Finnish Embassy, or Uruguay Embassy saying, “What are you people worried about? They’ve got a big army. You have to have a big army to deal with them. But at the same time, this place is falling apart.”

EVANS: Each section, whether it was economic, political, or press and culture, and, to some extent, consular, had close relationships with its diplomatic counterparts in the Western community. We had, I think, monthly, maybe bimonthly, semimonthly lunches with our economic colleagues from the Western embassies. The French, the Germans, the British, the Dutch, were always very close to us, the Italians, and then others. I would say that, without exception, the Americans were the most well informed about what was going on, and that the other embassies eagerly looked forward to these exchanges, as a way of pumping us for what we knew. Everybody looked up to America because America had signed this trade agreement that put us in a preferred situation. The French and the Germans were sort of jealous of this. They were trying to catch up and tag along, with this opening of détente. We were the lead motor in this Western trade opening and detente. More than that, I would say, without hesitation, that the training, language ability, dedication of the American Embassy officers was way in advance of any other embassy there. Most embassies knew that and admitted it. So, we generally were the ones sought out for both factual information and for interpretations of events. If there was an announcement in the press about a certain thing, inevitably we would get calls from our Western colleagues, asking, “Well what do you think about this?” “What does it mean,” that sort of thing. I don’t remember discussing with other embassies this dichotomy or the contrast between the alleged, official economic achievement, and the obvious failure of the economic system to function. We all would get together and have stories about how decrepit things were. The mainstay of any of these diplomatic encounters, whether they were a luncheon or a dinner party, or an informal get-together, was swapping stories about the most atrocious thing that had happened to people that week. Some of them were funny when you talked about them. But most of them were horrendous at the time. Hideous communications problems. Horrible building problems. Awful telephones. Nothing worked. You were lucky, during the day, if you had a list of, say, 10 things to do on a Saturday, once you got out of the embassy, if you got one of those

done. You felt that it was an accomplishment. We couldn't find things. Suppose you wanted something for your apartment. Forget it. Or maybe there was one shop somebody had heard of, across the town. You got there and it was closed for repairs, or something of that nature.

Q: You mentioned you had sort of a story about provocation, or something of that nature?

EVANS: This was quite a story, yes. This is before the Nixon summit. Naturally, all of us going into Moscow were thoroughly briefed about security concerns, and at that time, prior to the Nixon visit, in the summer of 1971, when I went in, the KGB was very active. We had to be on guard for things. Never travel alone. Very often, for example, some of the new officers were delegated to accompany the military attachés on their trips. I might just mention that, because it was an interesting trip, that I took within a month of getting there. I was told that I was to accompany a Marine major on a trip to Murmansk by train. My cover was that I was to write a report on the Murmansk ship building industry, or something like that. But, the real point was to get to Murmansk because of some Soviet Naval activity going on. So, we got on a very nice train car, with beautiful Oriental carpets and women making tea in the hallway, beautiful wood, polished brass compartments. We settled in and some sort of heavy looking types got on who settled into the next compartment. My military colleague told me who they were. In fact, the two of them knew each other. As soon as Soviet citizens get on a train, they immediately take off their good clothes, hang them up, and change into jogging suits, and then, for the duration of the trip, which I think was three-days and two nights, everybody pads around in these jogging suits. As we were going along, the first day, passing through some woods, the military attaché seated himself, facing forward, and I seated myself facing the other way. He indicated to me that I should not talk about what he was doing, and he produced a camera. He started taking pictures out the window. Each time he did, he would cough very loudly. The first time, I was trying to figure out what he was doing, but he said he was trying to cover the sound of the camera going off. We probably have much more sophisticated cameras now. I realized what sort of thing we were on. Well, we finally got to Murmansk, and, of course, we were noticeably followed by a team of three people, including one woman. I couldn't quite figure out why there was a woman. But, the attaché dragged me on top of a hill, so he could photograph the harbor from there. I remember this woman, who had high heels on, struggling gamely to come up through this rocky way after us. Anyway, we went back to the hotel. I think we only had one night in the hotel, and as we were getting ready to go to bed, my friend produced from his bag an enormous stash of empty Coca Cola cans (I thought he had a rather large suitcase for a one night visit). I looked at this in amazement. He piled them all up in front of the door like a pyramid. He said to me, "If somebody comes in, we'll know it." So, we went through this cat and mouse game. Unlike Poland, where there was access to women and access to people, there really wasn't that much chance of being compromised in the Soviet Union unless there was some really exceptional situation, where you were isolated, and then approached.

After my car was demolished, and before we had a telephone put in, one night, and again, long before the Nixon visit was on the horizon, in the fall of 1971, we showed a movie to some of our Western friends in our apartment. At that time, the embassies behind the Iron Curtain got movies from the military, which we showed at home, for entertainment, since it was almost impossible to go out. We would invite other Westerners over, and they loved it. So, we had these informal parties. On this particular night, I showed a vampire film, called The Return of Count Yorga,

which I heartily recommend. It was really quite scary. One guest actually got so scared, she went and hid behind the sofa, as the film was nearing its conclusion, which had two beautiful girls chomping each other, one of whom, was a very striking blonde. By the time the guests left and we went to bed, it was 2:00 in the morning. We had had a lot to drink, inevitably, at a party like this. I went into a deep sleep. I was woken up by a frantic pounding at the door of our apartment. At this point, no telephone, no car, no milimen, and no blue box outside, no fence around the building. So, the first thing I thought was, "My God, somebody from the embassy is trying to reach us." So, I went to the door, and then, I had a sudden feeling, "Well, maybe it isn't quite right." Something from the movie, some sound of danger from the movie came back, and before I opened the door, I said, "Who's there?" There was sort of this muffled scuffling, and this female voice said that she needed help. So, I called for my wife, because I immediately sensed that this might be a problem. My wife was absolutely, totally out of it. I went back to the bedroom, and I couldn't wake her at all, after the party. So, I went back to the door. I talked, again, through the door. She said, "Help! I need help." So, I opened the door. I was in my bathrobe, bleary-eyed, and now it is 2:15 in the morning. There, standing outside, was probably the most striking blonde I have ever seen, in long blonde hair, she must have been about 5'10", at least, very good looking, probably early twenties with a brand new trench coat on, with all the epaulets and stuff on, which was rather short. It came down above her knees. She had very shiny leather boots on that came right up to the knee. We looked at each other, and I was trying to clear my head. I realized the girl looked identical to the blonde girl in the film. I was determined that I was not going to go out in the hall, which is what she seemed to want me to do. Again, I wasn't going to let her in. First, I thought, maybe this is some sort of Swedish nanny who has gotten lost, because we had a Finnish nanny, but some friends of ours had a Swedish nanny. But, this was no nanny. Then, I realized, and all of this is going through my mind, we were way out in the sticks, how could some girl dressed like this, even get there, get through all the mud and muck at 2:00 in the morning, with no taxi cabs? She obviously was delivered. She didn't seem to want to come in though. The first thing I thought was, "She is going to come in, and try to compromise me. Well, my wife and children are here, that is ridiculous." Then, I noticed, behind her, there was an alcove where the trash shoot was, and a shadow moved. She noticed that I noticed, and she said, "Oh, that is my friend, Irene." Getting more excited, she said, "You come." She tried to get me out into the hall. Well, I realized that "Irene" was probably Boris, or somebody of that nature, so, at that point, I slammed the door in her face. There is no peephole, which was a big fault of the embassy. They should have had a peephole, but I don't know what happened. I slammed the door, double-locked it, and went back to bed. The next morning, I got up and told my wife about it. She looked at me and said, "You've had too much to drink." I said, "Come out in the hall, maybe there is some proof of it." We went out into the hall, and looked around. There was nothing there, no earrings or anything. We had put on our door, as a little indication that this was our place, an antique, lion's head door knocker, belonged to my grandfather, I think, and I was very fond of it. It had been ripped off, the screws had been pulled out, the splintered wood was there. So, somebody was angry, and obviously, the girl had failed in her mission, which I think, was to beat me up, probably, because I had reported the car. This was shortly after I had reported the car. I do think that if I had gone out into the hall that night, I would have been beaten up, possibly kidnaped, I don't know. It was pretty scary, in retrospect. But, what was interesting, and I believe this, that they sent this girl because she looked like the girl in the film. How could they know what the girl in the film looked like? It meant that they had to have surveillance capability of the interior of the apartment. Well, later on, in about a year's time, we

discovered that, in fact, this was what was going on. One of the American businessmen who had come over was in his apartment, and he had dozed off, and woke up at about 5:00 in the afternoon, and he saw this tiny red light, coming out of a hole in the wall. He reported it to our security people. They went over, and tore the wall apart, and found that this was a laser video monitoring system. The Soviets were capable of some very definite scientific achievements. They could monitor the whole interior of the room, day or night. I honestly believed that in some way, this was no coincidence that this was an obvious attempt to try to get me, following the showing of this movie, and that the woman was like the one in the film. An average person would say, "My God, what paranoia." But, that is the sort of thing that you had to deal with there.

Q: Is there anything else that we should cover, do you think? Oh, I can't remember, if in our last time we talked about it, but, did you go to these, I don't know what you call it, "people's lectures" dealing with economic matters? I have talked with other people, Horowitz, and others, who used to go to these lectures.

EVANS: Actually, no. Ed was there, when I was there. He was in the Political Section. With their manpower they were delegated to go to these things. The economic counselor refused, as a matter of principle, to have us do that sort of thing, because he said that we are busy enough. My poor boys and I, are too busy to do that sort of superfluous thing, and so, we did not. I would say, those of us in the Economic Section, were out meeting more real people than the Political Section. These lectures, of course, were all propaganda sort of stuff. Although, they tried to gauge the reaction of the audience . . .

Q: I was told the questions were much more revealing than not.

EVANS: Right. I remember Ed doing that sort of thing, his language was good, and he liked that sort of thing. We went out, on an average of six nights a week, and, generally, at least two events each night. It was extraordinary because of all this commercial stuff and everything. There was a wide range of activities.

Q: Okay, one last question, and then we will finish with the Soviet Union for this time. What about electronic surveillance, microwaves, and this sort of thing, was this an issue when you were there, or not?

EVANS: You mean, of the embassy?

Q: Yes.

EVANS: We didn't know it, but, obviously it was, and I'm very bitter about that. Extremely bitter about that, because the Soviets were bombarding the American embassy with microwaves to try to neutralize our radio collection facilities on the roof of the embassy. But this was kept secret from us. Now, when I arrived at the embassy, in 1971, I noticed that the whole front of the embassy was shuttered up with iron sheeting. When you went into the embassy, it was like going into a submarine, or something. You went down and you didn't see any light. The whole front of the embassy was covered with this metal sheeting. Well, they said this was for security purposes,

so people couldn't take pictures. In retrospect, it was obviously to protect the people working on the front, from these x-rays, as we found out later. The State Department, of course, knew, and the Ambassador knew, and was told not to tell us that this was happening. Now, if this isn't criminal activity, I don't know what is. If a company had done this, they would have been sued to high heaven, and the damages would have been extraordinary. The Economic Section was on the back of the Embassy. The counselor's office actually had a little balcony off of it. Although we realized we could be photographed, we sometimes waved to people. I liked to see the blue sky. I insisted that my window be open. The security people would come around all the time and tell me to close the shutters. I'd do it, then I'd open them again. But, afterwards, when all of this came out, I put two and two together. The Minister Counselor lived on the front. His wife died of cancer a few years after. The Science Attaché's office was on the front. He died a few years later. One of the two Agricultural Attaché's whose office was on the front, died. The General Services Administrative officer died. Coincidence, who knows. But that's not the State Department's finest hour.

Q: Well, we'll pick this up in 1973. Where did you go when you left Moscow?

JACK R. PERRY
Soviet Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1970-1974)

Ambassador Jack R. Perry was born in 1930 and raised in Georgia. He received a bachelor's degree from Mercer University and a master's degree and doctorate from Columbia University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1951-1954. Ambassador Perry's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Moscow, Paris, Prague, and Stockholm, and an ambassadorship to Bulgaria. Ambassador Perry was interviewed by Henry Mattox on July 2, 1992.

Q: After SAIS, you were in the Department?

PERRY: Yes, Soviet Desk.

Q: Were you what was called then, I guess perhaps still is, desk officer, or office director, or what?

PERRY: No, I wasn't that high. I was the head of one part of the Soviet Desk, which was Multilateral Affairs, which means that we dealt with Soviet foreign policy. The Bilateral part of it dealt with U.S.-Soviet relations, and so they got all of the exciting stuff about when somebody was arrested, or when we were going to build a new embassy, or all those bilateral things. Whereas we occupied ourselves with foreign policy.

I was on the Soviet Desk from 1970 to 1972, and my first boss was Spike Dubs (Adolph Dubs), who was later kidnaped and murdered in Afghanistan. Spike was one of the great Foreign Service officers of my time, I think, and, I've always felt, was a martyr. A wonderful man to

work for. I had served briefly with him in Moscow, so I knew him. He was great.

Then Spike left after my first year on the Soviet Desk, and my next boss was Jack Matlock. Jack and I had served together in Moscow, and in fact I took my first major Soviet trip as an embassy officer with Jack, and we went to the Baltic States, to Riga and Tallinn and Vilnius, and that was wonderful. Jack was my boss, then, for a year before I moved on.

So I was very fortunate in my bosses on the Soviet Desk.

Q: And he was later ambassador.

PERRY: He served in Moscow four times and then he was the last ambassador to the Soviet Union. I'm happy to say, Jack is going to come down and speak for me at a conference in November. He's a Duke graduate, you know.

Q: From 1972 to 1974 you were special assistant to the Director of the Council on Environmental Quality.

PERRY: Yes, that was an out-of-service assignment, or whatever you call them, and I think in many ways was the most pleasant assignment I ever had, certainly in the United States. I was never that enamored of Foggy Bottom; I never felt at home in the State Department. This was at the Council on Environmental Quality, which was, and is part of the Executive Office of the President. It was physically located on Lafayette Square, across the street from the White House. My boss, and the chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, was Russell Train, who went on to be head of the Environmental Protection Agency, and then, when he retired from that, became the American head of the World Wildlife Fund -- really sort of Mr. Environment. That was a great assignment. And Russ was a splendid boss.

Q: What on earth was an FSO doing on that council?

PERRY: Well, in the spring of 1972, Richard Nixon went to Moscow and had his first summit with Brezhnev and signed several agreements. One of the many agreements that were signed by Nixon there was an environmental cooperation agreement. I played a small part in helping prepare for that signing, and then Russ Train and the Council were given the job of implementing this agreement, and so I was sent over to help them make this Soviet-American agreement work. I did some other things, too, especially international things, but a lot of what I did the two years I was at the Council had to do with U.S.-Soviet relations. We went on a trip to Moscow in the fall, soon after I joined the Council, and negotiated the agreement that really filled out the umbrella that had been signed by Nixon. We traveled all over the Soviet Union, went out to Lake Baikal and had just a fascinating trip, and then came back and tried to make the thing work. Those were the high tide days both of detente and of the environmental movement.

Q: Were you the only FSO in the office?

PERRY: No, there was one other FSO named Otty Hane, who was also working on international things.

Q: Well, do you know, I think I'm going to call a pause here, because your next three assignments were at a senior level, all overseas again, so I think it's fairly logical point to stop for the moment. The next time we meet, with your permission, we'll go over them, and I'll have some sort of general wrap-up questions I'd like to ask you. Now is there anything that I've forgotten to ask, that you think you would like to speak to on the initial part of this interview?

PERRY: No, you know, old FSO's can always dredge up anecdotes about anything, but I don't have anything special I want to tell you.

MARTIN WENICK
Political Officer
Moscow (1970-1974)

Mr. Wenick was born and raised in New Jersey and educated at Brown University and the University of California at Berkeley. In 1961 he joined the State Department Foreign Service serving several tours in Washington, where he dealt primarily with Eastern and Northern European Affairs. His foreign postings include Kabul, Moscow, Rome and Prague, where he served twice, his second tour, as Deputy Chief of Mission. From 1988 to 1989 Mr. Wenick was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Coordination in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Following retirement in 1989, he joined the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society as its Executive Director, working there until 1998. Mr. Wenick was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Q: So you went to Moscow when?

WENICK: November 1970.

Q: And for how long were you there?

WENICK: I was there three years and three months; I left in January of 1974.

Q: What was your job?

WENICK: - Well I had a dual function. I was in the political section. The Political Section was divided into two parts, and I was in the internal part of the political section. I also served as staff aide to the Ambassador (Jacob Beam). I was still single, so I lived in a very nice apartment in the residence. For about a year, I was one of the officers in the internal political section. Then for the last two years or so, maybe a little bit more, I was the chief of the internal political section of the embassy.

Q: When you got there in 1970 how stood relations with the Soviet Union?

WENICK: They were pretty grim; relations were very distant. There wasn't much going on with Brezhnev in control together with Podgorny and Kosygin. We were involved in Vietnam, and they were supporting the North. And we were still getting over this period of their intervention in Czechoslovakia, that was still hanging over us in terms of the bilateral relationship. The period of détente really didn't start until somewhat later.

Q: So who was the ambassador?

WENICK: The ambassador again was Jacob Beam, with whom I had served in Prague. The DCM (deputy chief of mission) was Boris Klosson and Thomas Buchanan was the Political Counselor.

Q: Well when you're talking about "internal," what- did you have a particular piece of the internal action?

WENICK: Yes, I did have a piece of the internal action. First of all, each member of the Internal Political Section was responsible for following several republics of the USSR. We received newspapers every day, and much of our reporting was based on newspapers. Then I was involved with following the domestic political scene, the dissident scene and the Jewish movement there.

Q: What- Did you have any republics?

WENICK: I recall I had responsibility for republics in the Caucasus and also in Central Asia. The Central Asian area was of some interest to me because of my previous service in Afghanistan.

Q: Well did you, we'll move to more central things but with the republics, with Central-Caucasian republics and the Central Asian republics, were we really very interested in what was going on there or was this sort of an aside?

WENICK: This was more or less an aside. Central Asian republics as well as those in the Caucasus were sort of fiefdoms. We were watching them to see whether there was any leadership changes there in those areas that might impact on leadership in Moscow or vice versa. We watched these areas to see whether Moscow was becoming dissatisfied with leadership or with problems in the areas in which case they might take some they actions. Essentially, we were reading "tea leaves". But most of the action was related, in terms of what the embassy did was related to Moscow and the central government.

Q: Okay. Well you dealt with the Jewish community.

WENICK: Right.

Q: Was there an area where- was the Jewish community in the Soviet Union more or less concentrated in Moscow or Leningrad or were they dispersed or what?

WENICK: There were several distinct Jewish communities in the USSR at that time. There was the Georgian Jewish community which was unique in that it was probably the one that was strongest and best organized. It was probably the most cohesive community in terms of maintaining its religious beliefs. It was a pretty active community.

And you also had a Central Asian Jewish community, particularly in Uzbekistan; it was reasonably active. Within the western areas of the Soviet Union, the Jewish community had pretty well been destroyed, and the authorities tolerated just a nominal presence. The same was true with the other religious groups, even with the Orthodox Church, which was very heavily under control and many of the churches had been closed. The Roman Catholic Church was almost totally destroyed. So religion was under serious attack during this period and reflected itself in the nature of the religious communities in the Soviet Union.

Q: Well we're talking about the religious communities and then there's just plain Jews. I mean, that's almost a different breed of cat, isn't it?

WENICK: That's correct. In some ways this distinguished the Jewish community from others because if you were Russian Orthodox you were a believer, and you went to church. For many members of the Jewish community, religion was a very small part of their identity. Their identity was signified by a line on their internal passport which identified them as a specific ethnic group, i.e., Jewish.

Q: Was your work, I mean that particular part of your work with the people who were identified as being Jewish but not particularly of a religious- I mean, was this also a distinct group as far as- or was this group pretty well inserted into all of Soviet society?

WENICK: For instance in Moscow, where we had our best opportunity to observe it, those who were religious were older, and it was a declining population. At the time there were two functioning synagogues in Moscow. The younger people only knew that they were Jewish because of the so-called "line five" on their passports in which they were identified as Jewish and by that time I arrived in Moscow in the '70s there were numerical obstacles to their entrance to higher education and jobs etc. And so the, let's call them the secular Jews or the younger population, they were beginning, largely after the '67 War in the Middle East to have a Jewish national consciousness and that started the efforts to emigrate from the former Soviet Union. So in large measure much of what we were watching was that pressure from the younger members of the Jewish community to emigrate and the Soviet government's reaction to that.

Q: Well how did it manifest itself?

WENICK: Well it manifested itself in large measure in the younger members of the Jewish community congregating around the main Moscow synagogue on Saturdays, not participating in services but being outside. It was a place for them to meet and to exchange information. It manifested itself in their contacts with the foreign press that was there and letting the press know what was going on, who was being refused or people who were being permitted to emigrate. And at the same time the embassy was watching pretty closely the dissident movement. There was

Samizdat -- self-published, non-official documents -- beginning to appear.

Q: This was self-published-

WENICK: Samizdat being some-

Q: -mimeographed-

WENICK: -mimeographed, typed with carbon copies; Samizdat being self-publication. And we were always interested in getting our hands on Samizdat and the foreign press corps was very good about passing on to us in the Embassy the Samizdat material that fell into their hands. It was much harder for Embassy officers to go out on the streets and accept that type of publication.

Q: Well it was- These could be provocateurs-

WENICK: Absolutely.

Q: -who were trying to slip you stuff, weren't they, and this would lead you open to charges, maybe persona non grata or-

WENICK: Absolutely.

Q: -trying to recruit you into the intelligence service.

WENICK: Absolutely. So that's why we sort of relied on our contacts with the largely the American press corps to get copies of these documents which we could then send back to Washington. One of the major Samizdat documents of the time was the Chronicle of Current Events, which appeared periodically.

Q: What about- What was happening, were the Soviets giving some Jews visas or permission to leave?

WENICK: During the early 1970's it was a very slow movement, very limited. It sort of increased as détente developed and then after the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was passed to a trade bill in Congress in '74, the emigration flow diminished greatly. In response to the pressure they perceived to be from the U.S. Congress. So a large part of our effort was to watch the emigration flow and obviously then you started developing these so-called refuseniks, people who were not being permitted to leave because they had been working in so-called security industries.

Q: One of the things I've talked to people who served in the Soviet Union at various times and found that a good source of kind of what was going on was to go to these educational meetings they used to have. Did you get involved in that; could you describe what this was?

WENICK: Very much so. When I first got to Moscow, the head of the internal affairs section

was, Ed Horowitz. Ed was very much into this type of activity, and he got all of us involved. When we'd be out in the street we looked for posted signs about neighborhood meetings. Ed encouraged us to get some outerwear that made you look a little more Soviet. For instance I bought a typical Soviet style fur hat and a long overcoat. You'd be out on the street taking a walk and you would pass an apartment building and you would see signs up announcing a lecture. The Znaniye Society was the one that was most active in this. The lectures could be on domestic or international themes. And we would go to these lectures and with our Russian looking clothing, try to act inconspicuously. We would generally sit in the back of the lecture hall and listen to what the lecturer was saying. Frequently the more interesting part of the lectures were the questions that you got from the members of the audience who were in attendance. So it was a useful way to try to understand the particular lines of concern that the Soviet regime was trying to propagate at the time.

Q: Well did you find, were the questioners serious people who had serious questions?

WENICK: Yes, I mean, sometimes the questions were inane. For instance, somebody didn't get the apartment that he or she wanted and so therefore they had a particular beef. But frequently there were individuals who had some knowledge of what was going on in the world. Some Soviet citizens did listen to foreign radio broadcasts -- Voice of America, BBC, Radio Liberty -- even though the Soviets tried to jam them in populated areas. Every so often someone would pop a question that you knew that they had gleaned from a foreign radio broadcast. It was interesting to see how the lecturer handled that. The lecturers came from this so-called Znaniye Society, and they were people that were trained propagandists. And so that was frequently very interesting.

Q: Well what about, I mean, in the first place, being able to go to these things and being followed? I mean, the KGB give you personally, harass you or give you a rough time or anything like that?

WENICK: I had a particularly rough time because I was following the Jewish issue and so I was subject to a fair amount of harassment in the course of my tour in Moscow. I had the windshield on my car broken when it was parked downtown. I was actually picking up a member of an American congressional delegation so he sat in the glass, which made a lasting impact on him. So it was an action that backfired in a way for the Soviets. On another occasion, all four of the tires on my car were slashed one day outside of the largest hotel in Moscow. I had my car windows painted green one day. And then there was the standard surveillance that took place. It wasn't every day. We had a reasonably large embassy, and it would have taken massive numbers to follow everybody every day. But you know, when we went to these public lectures, we hoped that we weren't being followed but sometimes we were. Once or twice I can recall a piece of paper was passed up to the lecturer to say that there was an American diplomat in attendance.

Q: Did everybody turn around and look at-?

WENICK: They turned around and tried to figure out who it was. We were helped by the fact we had the Russian style hat and the coat.

But the KGB was pretty active in those days.

Q: Well were there concerns while you were in Moscow about being compromised?

WENICK: Always was. When you're assigned there, when you're assigned to Eastern Europe countries or the Soviet Union you obviously had a session with the folks in security of the Department of State to discuss with you what the issues might be, ways in which the Soviets might try to compromise you. Obviously it's one of the reasons we were very careful about getting documents outside the Embassy. I mean, you just didn't let people come up to you on the street and try to hand documents to you; it was a no-no. Most of the dissident documents that we got, we received on our premises, I mean, in my office. We received very little material directly. I mean, obviously there are people that you met or you dealt with over the years that were provocateurs. In fact, I don't think he was a provocateur at the time, but I can remember being stationed at the American Embassy Rome in '74-'75 period, and somebody came through on his way to the United States. He called me, knew I was at the embassy, and we went for a cup of coffee. He apologized to me because he said that while he was being interrogated by the KGB in Moscow, he had provided to them information about me. So we were aware that this was a possibility, that compromise was a possibility. Perhaps I was a little more of concern to our security people because I was a single officer at the time.

Q: I was going to say, a single officer, I mean, were there blonde young ladies around waiting for you?

WENICK: I don't recall- I don't know. Maybe I wasn't that much of interest to them. I don't recall ever being approached in that sense. So there were disadvantages to being stationed in the USSR as a single person. But, we had a relatively large diplomatic Western diplomatic community so there was a lot of socializing that could go on in that sense and that made it a little less tedious.

My apartment was at the residence of the American Ambassador so the Soviets had pretty good control over who came and went because they had a policeman stationed at the entrance to the residence. I am sure that they had a pretty good idea what I was up to.

Q: It's, yes, when I was in Belgrade I used to- sometimes we'd have a courier run and have it on a sleeper train and all and I vowed that when that beautiful blonde spy came I would certainly keep one knee on the diplomatic pouch and it never happened.

WENICK: Some of the things that you would have thought happened did not happen in that respect. On the other hand a lot of things that the security people warned one about earlier in the security briefing on did occur, and you know keep it in mind.

Q: Were you at the embassy during the, I won't say x-rays but during the, you know what I'm talking about, the omissions on the windows which were considered perhaps to be dangerous and probably were dangerous.

WENICK: Yes, I was, and I have a certificate of exposure to this radiation that was directed at the Embassy. In fact, I did have an office that was on the front side of the building for about two

years of my three plus years there. It was that side of the building that got most of these rays, and the Department subsequently spent a fair amount of money doing some surveys about the dangers and about the health ramifications of this Soviet activity. So yes, I was there during a period when radiation was directed at the Embassy.

Q: Well couldn't they have put the equivalent to metal screens or something or reflect that damn stuff right back down on the Soviets?

WENICK: Well once they realized what was going on from their monitoring, they put screens on the windows that of mitigated the impact of the radiation. During that period, to the best of my knowledge the Embassy staff knew very little about it.

Q: Yes.

WENICK: And it was not- it wasn't an issue that was raised with the staff in any meaningful way.

Q: Were there any demonstrations against the embassy during the time you were there?

WENICK: Yes there were. The Vietnam war was ongoing, so we did have the demonstrations.

Q: Well we were pulling out at that time, weren't we?

WENICK: Well not '70, '71. When I got there, '70, '71 we were still pretty actively engaged in Vietnam. So we had various types of demonstrations, some with the anti-Vietnam themes and then you would get- they would charge up the African students and so, you know, free Africa campaigns, that sort of thing. So there were various types that would occur.

Q: Did you have any real contact with Soviets?

WENICK: That's always a difficult question. Yes, we did. I mean, I did. I knew some of the artists, and I knew some of the Jewish dissidents. So- and I got to know some of the people in the literary world, for instance Andrei Amalrik who wrote "Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?" He was in prison at the time, but his wife lived near me, and I would see her from time to time. I met her through some journalist friends of mine and she would come to the apartment with others to view movies. So you know, there were limited contacts.

Q: Was there much collaboration say with the British, Canadian, French, German embassies regarding information?

WENICK: Yes, that was ongoing. Everybody was desperate for information living in such a restricted environment. As I recall, there was a political officers' group that met periodically; the NATO ambassadors met regularly, and there was a group of us who were following internal affairs. We used to meet I think once a month or once every two weeks. It was also a way to get to know colleagues from the other embassies and then you could develop your own separate relationships with them.

Q: How did we view the politburo at the time? Because we're moving towards the time when it was getting to be really a geriatric outfit. But when you were there, this is a little before that, wasn't it?

WENICK: When I was in Moscow, Brezhnev was clearly first among equals with Kosygin and Podgorny who were also in the leadership. And Brezhnev in those years, I mean he wasn't an intellectual giant by any means, but clearly anybody that gets to the top of the politburo had to be a survivor and had to understand the system. He wasn't facing the health issues that plagued him in the declining last years of his leadership of the Communist Party. What we were more interested in in those days was how the politburo members related to each other and who was in first place and who was in third place and who was in sixth place. You would look to see who was standing next to whom on the reviewing stand on the top of the Lenin tomb on holidays, at pictures that were posted at election time and that sort of thing to try to get a clue who was up and who was down.

Q: Well did you peruse the local papers to pick up bits of, you know, what's going on by getting into sort of the farmer's daily of some province or something like that?

WENICK: Well we did several things. First of all, we read the national press which would have been "Izvestia" and "Pravda" and "Sovetskaya Rossiya," and "Red Star," the military newspaper, and then as I said previously, each day we read more specialized newspapers, and we divided those among the officers in the Internal Political Section. For example, there was an agricultural newspaper, and "Trud," the labor unions' newspaper,, and then each one of us would look at a few regional papers every day to see what they were saying. We were looking to see how they were parroting the national line or whether in fact there would be something that showed a little independence. So reading the newspapers occupied a good portion of our time.

Q: Well I take it at a certain point you developed a certain mindset or whatever focus on being able to look at this turgid prose and pick out items without having to go through all the gobbledygook that communists were prone to print.

WENICK: Obviously first of all it's a foreign language so you had to- it was always obviously a little bit more work than reading in your own language. So you sort of got a feel for how to attack it and usually you would look at the headline and look at the first few paragraphs and if it- the first few paragraphs didn't indicate anything significant you just moved on. Otherwise you would never have finished, and you had other responsibilities than just reading the press.

Q: Were there any significant developments or major visits or anything like that?

WENICK: Well détente was very much developing in those days, and Brezhnev came to the United States, and Nixon came to Moscow during my stay. Kissinger came to Moscow on several occasions. I can remember one of Kissinger's visits; it must have been some time in '72. He came unannounced even to the embassy or to the ambassador, and he was staying at one of the guest houses of the regime up on Lenin Hills. At a certain point the ambassador was called from the Foreign Ministry and said to stand by, that they wanted to see him later in the day. And

this was shortly after the Gulf of Tonkin episode. The ambassador thought he was being called to the Foreign Ministry to receive a protest our activity in the Gulf. So, he asked the political officer who followed Far Eastern Affairs, Stapleton Roy, to stand by to go with him to the Foreign Ministry. Subsequently, he received another telephone call from the Foreign Ministry asking him to come there alone. (Later on in his career in the Foreign Service, Roy became the U.S. Ambassador to China.)

Q: Yes.

WENICK: And so the ambassador went alone and when he got to the foreign ministry they took him to a government guest house on Lenin Hills where he met Kissinger. That is how Ambassador Beam became aware that Kissinger was in town. And the next episode of that event was that we were having a dinner at the residence that night in honor of the widow of Ambassador Thompson.

Q: Llewellyn Thompson.

WENICK: Yes, Llewellyn Thompson. She was in town with a friend and the Ambassador invited her to come to Spaso House for dinner. I was there and the DCM, Boris Klosson, and his wife were also there. At some point during the dinner, the major domo came to me and said there's a telephone call for me. So I excused myself and went to take the phone call. It was a correspondent from the Associated Press, whom I knew, and they had picked up the fact that Kissinger was in Moscow and wanted me to confirm the story. I knew nothing about it so I could neither confirm nor deny it.

So I went back to the table and a few minutes later there was a second call, which I took, and I came back and it was the one time- I had a really excellent relationship with the ambassador- it was the one time that I saw him get agitated. He said just forget about all those phone calls. And I was sitting next to Harriett Klosson, Boris Klosson's wife, and she just grabbed my hand. She realized there was tension at the table. And then the next day we all found out that Kissinger had in fact been in Moscow.

Q: Well I mean, you know, it was almost- he was national security advisor.

WENICK: Yes, he was Nixon's National Security Advisor at the time.

Q: But it was really- This is Henry Kissinger really playing a game. I mean, looking back on it; show I'm powerful, I can do this and really the ambassador counts for nothing. It was really denigrating to the ambassador.

WENICK: Well it was both denigrating to the ambassador not only in the sense of his title and who he was as the head of the embassy but in terms of his relationship with the Soviet officials and how they viewed him. They didn't have to deal with him, and I'm sure as time went on the ambassador felt that because it was not only that particular visit but Kissinger was dealing directly with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin in Washington. So, much of the substance of the relationship was not even in the hands of the Department of State; it was in the hands of

Kissinger.

Q: Well the Secretary of State was William Rogers.

WENICK: And I was just going to say-

Q: Who was probably the least clued in of all secretaries of state of modern times.

WENICK: That's right, and that was very visible when Nixon came to Moscow. He had almost no role, he came with Nixon but he was not included in the more important meetings. I don't recall now all the specific details, but certainly he was the odd man out in terms of participation, and the ambassador was obviously not clued in either. And the ambassador had been specifically chosen by President Nixon for the post in Moscow, as a result of his experience in 1967 when Nixon was trying to rehabilitate himself politically. Nixon had lost the presidential election in 1960 to Kennedy, and I recall that then he ran for governor of California in 1962 and he also lost that race. I think in 1962 or so, he said I'm through with politics. But in 1967, when he was testing the waters for a possible run for the presidency in 1968, he traveled through Eastern Europe. When he came to Prague, Czechoslovakia, Ambassador Beam, ever the gentleman, showed him the respect that someone of Jake Beam's nature would show to someone who had been formerly a vice president of the United States. And Nixon remembered that and so when he was elected president in 1970, he remembered Jake Beam, who was still serving in Prague. Beam was invited to come back to Washington to meet with the newly inaugurated President in February or March of 1969. I can remember picking the Ambassador up at Dulles Airport, and it was during that time that Nixon offered him the ambassadorship in Moscow. So it was somebody that Nixon had chosen specially for the post, and then only to have ambassador's role diminished by the way they acted in the White House was, in my view, a travesty.

Q: And, you know, looking at it this is why, I mean this really, history I think, as a professional diplomat will diminish the role of Kissinger because he's not into these things of playing these games where you had to have the central role.

WENICK: That's right. And by this time once detente started in arms control and our disengagement from Vietnam all coming together at the same time, relations with the USSR was a central foreign policy issue. And it is clear that Kissinger was obviously driving it.

Q: Yes.

WENICK: And he wanted to control it, and he did. And I think he even mentions in his memoirs the fact that the U.S. Ambassador only found out about his visit to Moscow once he was there in Moscow. But Dobrynin knew about it long before.

There were other ways that Kissinger's approach to the Soviets manifested itself. For instance, while not overly significant in the context of the direct policy issues, Kissinger made decisions that were not in the best overall interests of the United States Government. For instance the Soviets got Mount Alto, which is the highest point in Washington, as the site for their new embassy compound. Kissinger made this decision despite opposition from the intelligence

community because of the location of the new embassy compound commanding a dominant position in Washington.

Q: Yes, because of its commanding position for eavesdropping.

WENICK: Absolutely.

Q: Well eavesdropping equipment is- you want to sit on the highest area you have.

WENICK: That was one example. Another example is that we had a really restricted environment in Moscow. Embassy staff travel was limited to 40 kilometers from the center of the city without permission. You had to apply two days in advance. You didn't know until your time of departure whether you were going to get permission or not. The Soviet side never gave you a yes; it was only the no that they gave you. But we did have a dacha; a property that was out probably just within the 40 kilometer range. It was a typical sort of Russian type style compound. There was that one large villa and one small cottage on it, and it was our recreational place. But we had a pretty large embassy so that your chances of getting the big house were probably once in two years. The smaller residence was the so-called ambassador's cottage, and if the ambassador wasn't using it single people could vie for that and that freed up some of the pressure on the bigger house. Well the Soviets wanted to get a place in the Washington area for recreation and they succeeded because Kissinger approved a very nice place for them on the Eastern Shore of Maryland -- far better in terms of location and potential facilities than we had in Moscow. I don't know whether they still have it now; it's was near Centerville, MD on a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The grounds were quite large, and the Soviets brought over small cottages for their people to use. It was the type of thing that wasn't major in the context of bilateral relations, but it reflected the times, and Kissinger didn't want to derail anything in terms of his issues by what he considered extraneous issues.

Q: Well he also made too many compromises on rebuilding out- to put up a new embassy too.

WENICK: That came later.

Q: Rather than- He was going to let the Soviets help build the thing, which they loaded with eavesdropping devices.

WENICK: And it had to be rebuilt.

Q: Rebuilt.

Did you feel, although you're obviously pretty far down on the food chain, did you feel that what you were reporting was getting to the right people or was- or did you feel that the National Security Council with Kissinger and all was completely bypassing the embassy and did you- were you really a player in the game or not?

WENICK: Well we were and we weren't. I mean, Washington, even if the National Security Council and Kissinger, chose to disregard things we were reporting on, the dissidents, problems

with the Jewish community, issues relating to the leadership, there were audiences here in Washington for that material. So you know, I think when you were stationed in Moscow you felt that you were at an embassy whose reporting had a rather wide audience in Washington.

Q: Well then you left there in 1973?

WENICK: The beginning of 1974.

JON DAVID GLASSMAN
Junior Officer
Moscow (1971-1973)

Mr. Glassman graduated from the University of Southern California and Columbia University. He served in numerous posts including Madrid, Moscow, Havana and Kabul. He was named ambassador to Paraguay in 1991. He was interviewed by Peter Moffat in 1997.

Q: You were then transferred to an area of your greater expertise - Moscow - but one that was also under something of a dead hand politically at the time. Did it live up to your expectations when you went in 1971?

GLASSMAN: In those days we all lived in diplomatic apartment buildings. All the foreign diplomats, including Eastern Europeans, lived there. The first year we were out at Leninsky Prospekt 93, which was at the edge of the city. Every morning when we got ready for work we would see eight to 10 Soviets leave the building. They would have live electronic monitoring in those days. When you would leave the building, perhaps to take a walk, they would start telephoning your wife and so forth, and doing all kinds of things. In the first six months we were there, we would get phone call provocations and threats. It was a rather tense time in the States because the Jewish Defense League was persecuting the Soviet diplomats here. So, in retaliation, the Soviet KGB would do things to us and threaten us. They would also follow and surveil us.

We were often followed very closely when we traveled. I visited 17 provincial cities. We would try to engage in conversation with people on those trips but we would try to choose the people with whom we would talk, rather than allowing the KGB to set up our encounters. We would go sometimes to public parks and sit down with people and just try to talk about what was going on in the city. We would also go out and buy books. There was a person - a publications procurement officer - who would buy books from provincial publishing houses. We would go with him on trips and frequently on the trips they were watched very closely. Sometimes there would be sixteen people in different teams of four and several cars that would follow us. When we would go in the bookstores, they would come very close sometimes, really close, and lean up against us to intimidate us. They would also sit down at tables in restaurants with us. Once my wife and I were at a restaurant outside Riga - a place called the Yuras Perla Restaurant. We had made reservations late in the day so they had placed some KGB people at our table. They had not used their English speakers - it was too late in the day. I could, of course, understand everything

they were saying in Russian. They were saying that they had to engage us in conversation and, if it wasn't worthwhile, they would wait for us down at the train station. So we got very nervous of course and quickly departed for the train station with them in hot pursuit. Those kinds of things would happen. Once, I was down at Dushanbe, Tajikistan. I and the other officer in the room were sleeping and then a crack of light appeared at the door. Two people walked in. I yelled in Russian, "Get out of here!" We then walked out to the woman who was the duty officer at the hotel. She said, "It was just a couple of drunks walking in." The Soviets would do things like this. People would go on picnics and Soviet girls would enter their tents. All kinds of provocations would occur. That was the atmosphere of the times - very tight, very suspicious.

Q: Remind us who your Ambassador was at that time?

GLASSMAN: That was Jacob Beam, a 40 year veteran of the Foreign Service. I recall a terrible instance for him. He once called a staff meeting and was almost in tears. "What's wrong, Mr. Ambassador," we asked. He said the most terrible thing had happened to him, Henry Kissinger who was the President's National Security Advisor had come to Moscow but did not inform the Ambassador. Kissinger was engaged in the back channel contacts then.

About that time, the famous Moscow Summit of 1972 was held. Nixon came and there was quite an interesting little scene there. They had divided the American delegation and they put Secretary of State William Rogers in the Hotel Rossiya. Kissinger and Nixon stayed at the Kremlin, which isolated the Secretary of State from this. I was on duty one night at the Rossiya and received calls from the Nixon entourage people like Dwight Chapin who later became famous in Watergate. Chapin brusquely ordered the Secretary of State to go immediately to the Kremlin - it was clear that Roger's status was very much subordinate.

Q: That was a pattern that continued all through the Kissinger years.

GLASSMAN: I'm sure it did. Kissinger came to Moscow several times. I remember meeting him at the airport. He thought we were the Russians, we all wore these fur hats. He said, "Thank you for your hospitality comrades." We said, "We're from the embassy." He turned his head and quickly walked away - he was really quite something.

Q: Were you privy to any of the Nixon Summit doings?

GLASSMAN: Not the substance. As a junior officer, I mainly partook of the wonderful food the Soviets put out during the time of the visit. Notwithstanding the historical significance of this period - the dawn of detente, a number of amusing incidents took place. Nixon wanted to give a present to Brezhnev and so he gave him a Cadillac. Brezhnev was so reckless he broke a windshield, and we were always bringing him spare parts. Another interesting thing happened during the Summit, again sort of revealing. The Soviets would not allow Nixon to use Air Force One for internal flights. When Nixon departed for Kiev, the Soviet leadership put him on an airplane and lined up to see him off. They were standing there on nationwide television and the plane wouldn't start up. So a terrible thing took place. Soviet Minister of Defense Marshal Grechko had to go up on the Aeroflot plane and tell Nixon he had to get off. A replacement plane had to be towed in, oranges and other special items unloaded from the first plane. Of course,

television coverage ceased immediately.

Q: As an excellent Russian speaker, were you able to integrate into any social life, local life, or was it really artificial?

GLASSMAN: We would go around and speak to people in these provincial towns. You would discover very interesting things out there. Once, when we were down in Donetsk in the Southern Ukraine, we were sitting in the park one day chatting and we heard rock and roll music on a transistor radio. I said, "This is amazing, you know, I didn't realize the transistor radios could pick up short wave broadcasts." "That's not short wave. It's a local station," a local resident said. It turns out there were amateur radio operators broadcasting in the Soviet Union. This was the first idea we had that people were starting to generate their own autonomous non-regime cultural activity.

We also, on another occasion, got on a train and were talking to some of the Soviet troops who had just gotten back from Germany - very interesting. We were able to report on popular points of view and also on emerging attitudes in Central Asia. I had my own special hobby, collecting Soviet Military books, not only current ones but also old ones. Every weekend, I would have a regular routine - I would go to the Military book store and to used bookstores. I accumulated a superb collection. I had almost every Soviet military book published from the 1920s onward which I subsequently gave away to Harriet Fast Scott who was sort of an expert on those things. No one in the embassy, believe it or not, was reporting on arms control in those days. So, even as a humble consular officer, I was able to start calling at the USA Institute and at IMEMO (the Institute of Economy and International Relations). I spoke with their arms control people, many of whom were retired Soviet military people. This worked out very well - it was the beginning of the so-called Mutual Balance Force Reduction (MBFR) talks. Subsequently, the State Department established a permanent arms control position reporting at Embassy Moscow.

YALE RICHMOND
Deputy Director, Soviet Union and Eastern Europe
Washington, DC (1971-1978)

Yale Richmond was born in Massachusetts in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree in 1943 from Boston College, thereafter he joined the Army from 1943-1946. He then receives a master's degree from Syracuse. His career included positions in Germany, Austria, Russia, Poland, and Laos. Mr. Richmond was interviewed in June 2003 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

RICHMOND: They sent me back to USIA as policy officer for Europe. I had that for a year. As policy officer, you go to meetings at the State Department with the policy people. There's a meeting at the State Department every morning, or there used to be, before the spokesman goes on the air. Then you'll discuss what the issues of the day are and how you want to handle it. I would go to those meetings and I would go to a corresponding meeting in Europe earlier that morning and then bring the policy back. "Here's the party line." After a year of doing that, Dick

Davies, ambassador to Poland - he should have been ambassador to the Soviet Union, but he got bumped by somebody - Davies was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, called me up and asked if I wanted to come back to the State Department and work on the Soviet exchanges. I said, "I sure do, if you can get me out from under Frank Shakespeare." So, I went to the State Department and was there 2 years as Deputy Director of the Office of Soviet Exchanges. Then when somebody else moved out of the CU office of Soviet Exchanges, I went into that for 4 years. I ran exchanges with the Soviet Union for 4 years.

Q: So this was in the State Department?

RICHMOND: Yes.

Q: Wasn't this because Senator Fulbright didn't want USIA to have exchanges?

RICHMOND: I don't know about that.

Q: When you came back, what were you picking up about Frank Shakespeare? Was he having...

RICHMOND: He was having problems with the State Department continually. He was a far right winger.

Q: On the exchange program, what were we doing? You were doing this from when to when?

RICHMOND: From '71 to '78 until CU came into USIA and then I went back with it to USIA. They created a special position for me. When CU was transferred back to USIA, the whole Soviet program came with it. Charlie Bray had a meeting with Bill Hitchcock, the first deputy assistant in CU, as to how to handle the exchange program. Hitchcock told him, "You can't run it without Yale Richmond." So, I went back to USIA and they created a special position for me as Deputy Assistant Director.

Q: So you continued this until when?

RICHMOND: Until I retired in January of 1980.

Q: Let's talk about this 9 years with the exchange programs. In '71, where did things stand?

RICHMOND: In '71, Kissinger was National Security Advisor. Kissinger was formulating his opening to China policy, his opening to the Soviet Union. The idea was cooperation instead of confrontation. Exchanges boomed. Not only did we have the official exchange, the cultural exchange program, the numbers were increasing, the numbers in all categories, but we had these 11 cooperative agreements that I spoke about which moved thousands of Russians and Americans back and forth. Also the private sector got very much involved. Most exchanges have traditionally been the prerogative of the private sector in this country. Now that the White House was giving its go-ahead and having all kinds of exchanges with the Soviet Union, the private sector got involved. We had all kinds of organizations calling up. I spent a lot of time on the phone with people calling up, "How do I invite a Soviet to my conference next month?" What I

remember best was from the Texas Bar Association. Someone called up and said, "We want to invite a Soviet lawyer to our annual meeting?" I said, "Whom do you want to invite?" He said, "Anyone. We don't care. Just as long as he's a Russian." I told him how to do it.

Q: This must have been quite a strain. Somebody had to identify people. It would end up being the embassy or your office.

RICHMOND: Well, the more people who traveled, the more names they brought back. The more Americans who went, the more they suddenly became overnight experts on the Soviet Union. They had been there and traveled around and met people. So the word of mouth was very important.

Q: Did you have a feeling that the KGB was beginning to lose control of the system?

RICHMOND: They were very much in control, but they were relaxed because the official policy from Brezhnev on down was that exchanges are good and should be encouraged. So, the KGB screening of people was not as thorough as it formerly had been. Nobody came without KGB clearance.

Q: Were families coming with them?

RICHMOND: Yes. Families started... The Atomic Energy Commission had an exchange agreement with the corresponding Soviet agency for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy that was annexed to the cultural agreement. Under that agreement, we started to get Soviets coming with their wives for the first time because they were considered in work so highly sensitive that the Russians did not want them to come without their wives, thinking they would be entrapped. The first Soviet came with his wife to Chicago to the nuclear laboratory there at the University of Chicago, Argonne National Laboratory, and that opened it up to others.

Q: Was your slice of the pie strictly Eastern Europe/Soviet Union?

RICHMOND: Yes. The China program was separate. A program developed with China in those years... I had gotten tired of working in Soviet exchange. I went over to see Pickering, who was Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary. I heard they were building up a big exchange program and I went over and asked him if he would take me into his office to run the China program. He listened. I knew him because he was a neighbor of mine out in Virginia. He didn't want me there. He wanted to make a clean break with the Soviet controlled system. That's how the Chinese program developed without the system of controls that we had over the Soviets.

Q: It turned out to be a huge program. It had significant repercussions within China.

RICHMOND: It did. You had a lot of Chinese professors who had studied in the United States before the war and already had the contacts with their American colleagues. We didn't have that with Russia. With China you had it and they could recommend students to people they had gone to school with in the United States who were now professors.

Q: We used to have Yale in China and others. There is still a lot.

Did things change within Eastern Europe? How were these exchanges run during this time?

RICHMOND: Things relaxed considerably. Exchanges with Hungary expanded greatly, even with Czechoslovakia, which was still under Party leaders. Bulgaria expanded. They took their cue from Moscow. If the Soviets were having exchanges with the United States, the Eastern Europeans wanted them to. The only country that was never brought in was Albania. That was a class by itself.

Q: Sort of like North Korea.

RICHMOND: Right. IREX started into East Germany, too. IREX, which was running programs with the Soviet Union, also was running programs with East Germany.

Q: This was a time when we recognized East Germany in the '70s. We established an embassy. It became part of Eastern Europe.

RICHMOND: Yes. I made a visit to Berlin in those years. Sol Polansky was our man in Berlin. He gave a lunch and he invited the East German guy who was responsible for cultural exchanges. I made my pitch that we should have cultural exchanges with East Germany. He was non-committal. I pointed out that we had it with the Soviet Union. We had it with all the other East European countries. Why not with East Germany? I told him what we were doing in each of these countries and he listened very carefully but he didn't bite. They were still cautious.

Q: By the time you left, had they moved into it?

RICHMOND: IREX, but not any of the other official programs.

Q: Were we still running cultural teams going in?

RICHMOND: Exchanges with the Soviet Union under the cultural agreement continued until the late 1980s. At the Reagan-Gorbachev summit meeting in '85, a new cultural agreement was signed considerably relaxing the controls on both sides and opening it up. The cultural agreement gradually faded away. By about 1988, we were no longer doing things strictly under the cultural agreement. We were just going ahead and doing them.

Q: Were there any real cultural exchanges that you particularly enjoyed or felt made an impact?

RICHMOND: The biggest effect was in places like Poland and Hungary. Soviets had difficulty getting out to visit the United States or Western Europe, but it was very easy for a Soviet scholar or scientist to go to Warsaw or Budapest. That was within the Soviet Bloc. So, all of the exchanges we had with Poland and Hungary and later with Romania and Bulgaria had a ripple effect in the Soviet Union. Soviets could then go to Poland and Hungary and find out what people in their field were doing in the West. Poland has traditionally been Russia's window on the West. That was true in the czarist era and it was true under the communists also.

Q: What about things like publications? Every field has a series of publications where they pass on information. Was that part of the cultural exchange?

RICHMOND: No, it was not, but the Soviet think tanks like their USA Institute and another one whose initials were IMEMO, they subscribed to all the Western publications. Also, in those years, the 1970s, there was a big exchange between Soviet and American university libraries. The Library of Congress has had an exchange with the Soviet Union for many years going way back to the 1920s. That expanded. But universities which had Russian study programs like Indiana, Illinois, Harvard, Columbia, often had a counterpart library in the Soviet Union with which they exchanged publications. That was not part of the cultural agreement. Those books were put on the shelves. They were not just read by the cognicenti.

Q: Did you see a change in the society in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

RICHMOND: Oh, sure, you saw all kinds of changes. You saw the globalization of American culture. You saw it with the Soviets starting to wear jeans and leisure clothes. You saw it with the opening of McDonald's in Russia. You saw it with the sale of Western publications, with family reunification moves, immigration to Israel. The Soviet Union was opening up. All this was happening in the 1980s under Gorbachev, who himself was in a way of product of these exchanges. Gorbachev's father of glasnost was Alexander Yakovlev. Alexander Yakovlev was in the first group of Soviet students to come to the United States under the exchange agreement. He studied a year at Columbia University and then went back and became rather high up in various organizations and then was ambassador to Canada for 10 years. He has told someone that the one year he spent at Columbia University was more important to him than the years he spent in Canada because he read all kinds of books that he couldn't read in the Soviet Union. It was due to Alexander Yakovlev that Gorbachev pushed through his perestroika restructuring and glasnost (openness), but there is another twist to this. Gorbachev when he was a law student in Moscow was in the same class with a young Czech law student. They were in the same class for 5 years. They lived in the same dormitory. They got married on the same day. And this Czech was Gorbachev's first contact with the West because he was a communist and he rose up to a very high position in the Czech Party, became involved in the Prague Spring, and was booted out but maintained his friendship with Gorbachev through all of those years. This guy was a very sophisticated westerner, as the Czechs are, and Gorbachev was undoubtedly influenced by this guy.

Q: I'm still talking about the '71-'80 period. Did you find that the tenets of communism, the teaching of Marxism, were you getting that this had pretty well run its course and it really didn't have much bite within the Soviet empire anymore?

RICHMOND: Yes, very few people believed in it anymore. They realized it wasn't working for them, that there had to be changes. And the KGB was a leader in the movement for change because the KGB, its foreign part of it, had been exposed to the West and they saw how the West was progressing economically and socially and the Soviet Union was lagging behind. So, there were very few diehard ideologists by the end of the 1980s.

Q: Did that change what we were doing at all?

RICHMOND: It made it easier to do things, send groups that we could not send before.

Q: What type of groups... What were the groups that you enjoyed sending most?

RICHMOND: This may sound strange, but the university bands because the State Department had a very small budget for cultural exchanges - I think it was 5 million for the whole world and half of that went to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe - we were always looking for things that didn't cost us much money. One thing was the university symphonic band. The idea of a symphonic band was new to Russia. It was just inconceivable that a symphonic band of brass and woodwinds could play symphony music, but they did. So, we sent the University of Michigan band, the Minnesota band, the Eastman Philharmonic, some jazz groups, and all we had to do was buy them a blazer with a university emblem and pay their per diem and travel and they didn't require an honorarium, whereas if we sent a major symphony orchestra, that was several hundred thousand dollars out of our budget. And the Soviets at first didn't like this. They said, "You're equating your student groups with our professionals." But then they learned that many of these academic units were really professional, on a par with professionals.

Q: You retired in 1980?

RICHMOND: January 1980.

ARTHUR MEAD
Foreign Agricultural Service
Washington, DC (1972-1975)

Arthur Mead was born and raised in Wisconsin and educated at the University of Wisconsin and American University. After service in the US Army in World War II, he joined the US Department of Agriculture and was involved in its overseas relief and grain storage operations, including the administration of Title I, Public Law 480. During his career Mr. Mead dealt with many overseas programs, including those concerning India and Vietnam. Mr. Mead was interviewed by Ray Ioanes in 1994.

Q: Well, 1972-73 was the time of the huge Soviet purchases from everywhere, not just the United States.

MEAD: Yes. India declared itself self-sufficient at the end of the sixties. They were out of the Title I program for a few years, but came back in 1975 and for a brief time thereafter. As I recall, India was not very happy to get back into food aid after having being able to say it was self-sufficient. They came to see Secretary Butz several times, but were reluctant to make a request for the assistance. The Secretary and I would do a lot of listening and it became a bit awkward. But we had the rule of needing a request and we were not innovative enough to develop a way to

offer them a program without acknowledgment of a request. My recollection was that they had something less than one million tons in mind for Title I. After they got over the problem of making a request they then asked that the agreement be negotiated in Washington. That was not what USDA wanted to do, given the history of New Delhi negotiations which could get prolonged and complicated; I can remember, for a particular agreement, sending a curt cable to the agricultural attaché to get the agreement signed and I'm sure he showed it to the Indians to get things moving.

State pressed strongly for the request of the Indians and we had to negotiate in Washington. We did this regularly with the Israelis but their negotiations were very informal, and obviously Israel was a special case. The negotiations with India in 1975 were formal; I was the Head of the U.S. delegation and we had other U.S. agencies represented and India had its several representatives. India wanted to make changes in the format of the agreement to emphasize that this was a dollar deal, which it was on a long term, low interest basis. But they wanted to make it look like a harder deal. We indicated that they could be a bit imaginative in the way they handled their announcement as long as they didn't go overboard, but we had to keep our agreements intact. They were not in a hurry to sign the agreement since they were buying wheat from us commercially and keeping their ships busy.

One tough issue dealt with was the fact that India had earlier borrowed wheat from Russia to be repaid in kind. We did not want them to repay wheat to Russia while they were importing concessional (soft sale) Title I wheat from us. After a lot of haggling back and forth, there was an unpublished side note developed that said that the issue would not arise. And the issue did not arise. Noting the commercial purchases of wheat by India, there was a specific UMR provided for in the agreement as one of the conditions for fulfilling the agreement. It may have been the first time in this final agreement but I am not positive about that point. It was not an issue with them as they had already taken the position that there would be times when commercial imports would be necessary. There were times, also, when they would export some wheat and I suspect this came when they had accumulated substantial stocks and were not in a position, in their view, to utilize such stocks for domestic consumption.

In any event, we were not more successful than New Delhi in crafting a prompt negotiation. In this case we could not send a cable to ourselves telling ourselves to get going.

DAVID NALLE
Cultural Attaché, USIS
Moscow (1972-1975)

Mr. Nalle was born in Philadelphia and graduated from Princeton. He entered the predecessor of USIA in 1951. He served in a number of posts including Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Jordan and Moscow. He was interviewed by Dorothy Robins-Mowry in 1990.

Q: Yes. Did Moscow follow after--

NALLE: Yes. Frank Shakespeare, by that time, was director of the Agency. I think he'd just come in about the time I got named as area director. I don't think he was ever terribly comfortable with that, because I assume he knew I was not a Republican and perhaps didn't think the way he thought. In any case, after he and I had been in proximity for a year, I guess, he as director and I as area director of Near East, he said one day that he had a new policy. He announced this to the staff, that anybody who wanted to aspire to top-level positions in the Agency--and I quote directly--"had to feel the red menace in his gut." [Laughter] And he said, "To start my implementation of this policy, I am going to send Dave Nalle to Moscow as the cultural attaché."

To me it was very much of a briertpatch situation, because I was fascinated with the idea of going to Moscow. It never occurred to me that we might go there, because I didn't know the language. I had only the normal American familiarity with the place and the culture. Frank seemed to feel that if not exactly a punishment, this was a very severe task that he was placing on me. But I thought it was a great idea. Since he and the deputy director, Henry Loomis, felt that I was making this great sacrifice, I, more clever than I usually am, said to them, "Okay." (I'm not sure I put it exactly this way.) "I want to make one condition, however, that you have to teach both me and my wife the language." They said, "Okay." I said, "As a real student. She has to be a recognized student."

Q: This was in the early days for wives going into language training.

NALLE: I believe Peggy was the first USIA wife ever, as a full-fledged, enrolled student.

Q: That's been a real breakthrough, I think.

NALLE: Yes. The interesting sidelight was that Henry Loomis said, "Okay, you go and find a place that will take both of you as students, and we'll send you there." So I went to FSI, and they said, "We'll take you, but your wife will have to come on a space-available basis." I said, "No good." Monterey was the same thing.

So I went back to Henry Loomis. He said, "Anywhere in the world. You go find it." [Laughter] That was the kind of gesture Henry liked to make, I think.

So I went to London and found a suitable school. Of course, paying money, they would take us both. So we spent that year of 1971-72, the academic year, studying Russian at the Polytechnic of Central London. That was nice for us, though it was terribly hard work. We worked all the time, because we were by then in our forties, and that's late for learning Russian, particularly.

Q: Especially a hard language.

NALLE: Yes, which Russian is. We worked all day every day, all night. We did homework every night.

Q: At least there were both of you at it, so that's a great help.

NALLE: Yes. It was harrowing, and it wasn't as good as if we had studied in Monterey or FSI, because it was not designed for our kind of work, but we worked hard and became at least competent in Russian.

We went to Moscow in 1972, which was the beginning of detente and a relatively pleasant time to be there. Pleasant in the sense that you could actually do some things, which had not been possible before.

Q: Who was the PAO then in Moscow?

NALLE: Andy Falkiewicz. He left after I'd been there about three or four months, and I was promoted to PAO. They don't call it PAO; they call it counselor for press and cultural affairs.

Q: Who was ambassador then?

NALLE: Jacob Beam. There was a long hiatus when Spike Dubs was chargé d'affaires. Spike Dubs was later killed in the Afghan situation.

Q: Yes.

NALLE: The ambassador who came after him was Walter Stoessel, who died last year.

Q: You said this was a period of detente, so it made things a little bit different. How long were you in Moscow?

NALLE: Three years.

Q: From 1972 to '75?

NALLE: We were there two years and then Jim Keogh asked us if we'd like to stay for another year. By that time we were getting much better in Russian and were enthusiastic about it. I must say it was really too long, at least for the Russia of those days, because even though it was detente, it was still a very pressured situation, as I said earlier. Leaving and going to Helsinki, you felt just a wonderful lifting of oppression.

Q: How often did you get out?

NALLE: We should have gotten out more, but we got out, I guess, once a year.

Q: That's all?

NALLE: Yes. Well, to Helsinki, more often. But really out; we went to Greece one year.

Q: What kinds of things did you do in Moscow at that time? Not you particularly, but what was going on by way of USIS programs?

NALLE: Of course, there was no facility, no center that people could come into, because people can't come in--couldn't at that time, certainly. There's now talk of starting one, reciprocally. But the real challenge was to communicate, how to communicate with this public that wasn't allowed to come in to you to get information, a public that was being communicated with by the Voice of America, and a public that couldn't communicate with you comfortably on the political level, but could on a cultural level.

I set up what I thought--what I still think--was the necessary route to go, and it involved a couple of things. One, it seemed to me that we couldn't contact a lot of people directly, but we did know who some of the people were and what their jobs were and why we wanted to contact them. We could get those names and we could meet them officially, but seldom ever, at the beginning at least, socially.

So I established a contact management system with great difficulty, because the Agency was not yet into it. I finally got a "key-sort" system. I don't know whether you know that, but it's like a primitive computer which functions with cards, with holes around the edges, and you knock out some of those holes. You put a spear into the system and turn it upside down, and the cards you want will all drop down. But it's just like a computer. Of course, now you have, I assume, computerized contact management systems. But we set that up, and I brought in a succession of Americans' wives to be the "contact management operators," let's say.

We began to fill up our cards, and you could then write right on the card, which was very satisfying: "We gave So and So such and such on April 14th. On May 14, he came to the embassy for such and such a movie." You got a whole picture of your contact with these people, even though you seldom saw them face to face, except maybe in an audience or, as you saw them on the list, as a recipient of Amerika magazine. We also started a Russian edition of Dialogue magazine, which at that time was a serious intellectual publication. Wonderful Juri Jelagin, back here, translated and edited it, and was very enthusiastic about the whole process. That was, I suppose, typical of our best efforts, because here was a magazine at a high cultural level, which was the appropriate level for the Soviet elite, the intelligentsia. We would send it out specifically to them by name--the fact registered, of course, on their key-sort cards.

I also tried to start a program of targeted presentation of books. We did this successfully, I think, on one level. We needed to remodel our USIS premises in the embassy, and I got the Agency to agree to send in an architect. We got an architect named Hans Hohlein from Vienna, who is now world-class; John Jacobs helped us with that. I'm afraid our project wasn't world class. But he came and designed the "USIS" premises. It's actually called "P&C," the press and cultural section. So that each of the officers had his own section and was surrounded by bookcases with books related to his particular field, and tapes and records and the whole thing. We had a very small--about the size of this room--viewing room for showing films and videotapes. The architect was necessary because you had to get all this into a very small space.

Q: Because you were part of that embassy building. Everybody's all together.

NALLE: Right. But it was really very attractive. When you had a good officer sitting in the right desk, and he knew that he was to contact people on education, for example, and he had the materials to do it, and if he was energetic and whatever, in my mind it focused his attention on what he was supposed to be doing, and he had the equipment to do it, the tools to do it. That, put together with the contact management system, I think resulted in greatly improved communication, much of which was never face to face. It couldn't be.

Q: Did you get any feedback?

NALLE: As I started to say, then I encouraged those individuals and myself to find exceptionally worthwhile people to cultivate more closely, if possible. For example, I got to know one of the leading literary critics in Moscow, and I said to him, "Look. I know you can't get books. I can get you the books you want if you tell me what they are."

His reaction was, "Oh, you mean you'll send me propaganda?" I said, "No. I'll send you book reviews. You tell me what it is you need, and I will get the Agency to send it out." And I was able to do that for about half a year. Then the Agency lost interest and it took more work back here than they were willing to put into this sort of thing.

I wrote to them and asked, "What is more important to you and to us than to communicate with the elite intelligentsia of the Soviet Union?" But the Agency was not geared up to worry specifically about a post in this way.

Q: Not even Moscow? That seems funny to me.

NALLE: Because the person who knew the books wasn't the person in the desk job. So that meant, I assume, that somebody, like the area director or the deputy area director, had to be behind this whole thing.

Q: The desk has to push.

NALLE: Then the desk officer had to push the ICS person, or whatever it's called, who would choose the books. Someone had to know what books to choose, what a Russian member of the intelligentsia would want to read and would find worth reading. It just took too much work, apparently.

Q: Was it all right for them to receive all these books, or were they about to get into trouble because of that?

NALLE: It had become all right by then. It was culture, so it was all right. I wasn't trying to send him books on democracy versus communism. No doubt he got questioned, because our apartment was bugged. We set it up at a cocktail party in our apartment. But he could say, "These are cultural books. See them? There's nothing subversive about them." To me, that was the way you had to communicate.

The only real kind of cultural center program that we could do was at the ambassador's residence, where we did put on films. You get so frustrated when you're out at the end of the line. We pleaded with the Agency to send us new films that we could show, or send us old films that we could show. They said they could send us new films, but we couldn't show them. So we finally got them to send recent films that we could show. That was a tremendous success, because the Soviets, as we know, are film crazy. At that time their own good films were still suppressed. We would do films or we'd do other things at the ambassador's residence that would bring in elites.

Q: They could go to the residence, I take it, safely?

NALLE: Yes. Yes.

Q: More or less safely?

NALLE: Yes. Things had let up to the extent that they could. Even dissidents could go there. Dissidents went anywhere, practically anywhere, but dissidents could be included in a party there, and non-dissidents, mainstream intellectuals, of which there were some very good ones. The fact that they were mainstream didn't mean they were uninteresting.

I think the most fun we had was putting on--the Department got a collection of paintings from the Metropolitan and other museums to hang around the residence, really good stuff, and much of it contemporary or recent. We put on a real happening for that, with Tom Freudenheim, who was then, I think, curator of the Baltimore Art Museum. Anyway, he's now deputy secretary or assistant secretary of the Smithsonian [Institution]. He came over with his wife, and we opened the exhibit. It was a two-week long happening, with videotapes about contemporary American art, with tea and drinks and the whole works. It was a wonderful ambiance. Tom would lead tours around the rooms, explaining the paintings and so forth. It was just a lovely atmosphere to be in. I went a number of times on his tours. We got all sorts of good contacts in that the embassy hadn't seen ever before, who could come into this thing because, again, it was a cultural activity. The basic invitation list dropped down from our key-sort system.

Q: There is all this discussion, and even some letters to the editor, about the role of books and libraries in developing a sense of the importance of democracy and democracy as the real, the right way to go, in Eastern Europe, as a motivator of the current events that have gone on in the last six months in Eastern Europe. Given your experience in Moscow and the fact that you say you could deal with these people culturally, but not politically, to what extent do you think this kind of impact from the United States is really a part of this discussion of democracy and resurgence of democratic ideas in Eastern Europe?

NALLE: To what extent do I think the resurgence of those ideas is the result of--

Q: That's right. There's been letters to the editor that USIA contributed to this because all over Eastern Europe--now, you were in Moscow, of course, but in Eastern Europe there were these various programs and also, of course, in Moscow, which has led to the recognition of the importance of democracy and a preference for democracy over what they've been having.

NALLE: Short answer, obviously. I think that a successful USIA program overseas must necessarily communicate with the intelligentsia, the elite of a country, and to do that, the content of your communication must be up to their level. If you are funded and if you're intellectually able to do that, if you know what books to choose or what films to show or whatever, then you can have successful communication, and it follows, I think, that you will have an impact of the kind that you're talking about. I think, undoubtedly, the distribution of things we distributed in the Soviet Union had that kind of impact on some people. Whether it's the people we now see in the vanguard of the Soviet Union, I don't know. But you had to try to do it, and you had to try to reach them if you were going to communicate successfully with the society, because they process it and communicate it to the rest of society, obviously.

I think the pamphlet series I did in Jordan, modest though it was, did that kind of thing. And I think that's what we should concentrate on. Sometimes, as I think I probably have, wittingly or not, suggested, your communication may be oblique. You may communicate through a very good recorded concert for somebody who is deprived of music, and that puts him in--how to put it? That is the only kind of communication perhaps that your relationship with him can tolerate. But it will create a bond between you and him--not personally, necessarily, but in the abstract. "Here's American culture. I have had some access to the best of American culture. The other aspects of American culture may be of a similar quality."

If he's also a politician or a teacher or whatever, then he may, as a result, have a more open mind towards those other aspects of America.

Q: And you're opening up a new world of ideas, emotions, cultural emotions, and so forth, for which they've had no other kind of opportunity to gain access. Therefore, the suggested freedom, I suppose.

NALLE: In the Soviet Union, it was as if the people were on an island and they were deprived of all normal communication with the rest of the cultural world. The paradox, of course, is that nowhere was the Voice of America more popular than in the Soviet Union. Now, I guess, the Voice of America is becoming less interesting, less popular to the Soviets, because other things are coming in. People in the rest of the world, India--what is the motivation to listen to the Voice of America? Very little. But in the Soviet Union, there was a tremendous motivation. Off and on, I think the VOA lived up to it. Perhaps it didn't do as well as the BBC, because the BBC had somewhat less and fewer constraints.

Q: You obviously said some fascinating things about the programs you developed in your three years in Moscow. Do you have any kind of overall comment to make about your time there? Was it, in personal terms, very difficult? I mean for you and for Peggy. What did Peggy have to do in order to function? She had already been through a lot by this time with some of those posts. Did you travel to Leningrad?

NALLE: You reveal the natural bias against the Middle East. Most of those posts were ideal places to live, as far as the climate and comforts. And Peggy was very much involved in the kind of programming I'm talking about, which was absorbing and, I believe, rewarding for her, too.

Q: Part of that was in listening to Tom Tuch talk about this. He talked about some of the problems of importing food. I didn't know to what extent you imported food in some of your posts in the Middle East. He talked about this for his family time in Moscow.

Did you travel around? Did you get to Leningrad on and off? Did you get into the central Soviet Union?

NALLE: Yes. Sure, as much as we could. A lot of the area was off-limits. That wasn't exactly the question you posed earlier.

Q: I've really got two things going that have to do with the personal hazards of functioning day to day.

NALLE: Very difficult. That's why I think I mentioned, or started to talk about the third year. The third year became really quite debilitating. It's too long to spend in the kind of pressure situation that that was at that time, still, even though it was detente. There was a listening device, I'm quite sure, a beeper attached to our car, so that it was never unknown to the authorities where our car was. That was symbolic of the kind of awareness you had of being watched all the time.

It was six months after I left the Soviet Union before I could sit down in front of a coffee table and say anything I felt like saying, because in the Soviet Union, I knew that our coffee table, or something like it, had the bug in it. You always thought first before you spoke or said anything, even to your kids. Our two children were with us, at the beginning, at least, in Moscow, and it was very hard for them, because they couldn't mix with the population. They did have their Canadian-American school, but it was a very artificial life.

Peggy, already knowing Russian, did get to meet particularly some of the unofficial art community, which was interesting for her and interesting for them. It was a good relationship. But still, it's a very restrictive life. It takes a toll on your nerves and your disposition and just about everything. So you do have to get out and you do have to recover if you've been there a while.

The food, you know, gets boring. It was better then, 15 years ago, than it is now, the food supply and market in Moscow. But there were enough alternatives. It wasn't really a hardship, because you could order from Stockman's in Helsinki or Denmark supply houses, or you could go to the dollar gastronomie, as it's called. You could put together enough food, and you had a servant provided by the state, a Soviet, who could do the cooking for you if you wanted that. So from that point of view, I don't think life was hard, but life was hard psychologically and physically. It was enervating.

I remember just noticing that we had been out every night for six weeks at one time, mostly receptions at Spaso House or some other kind of a thing the foreign community was doing or whatever--theater or something like that. But being out every night for six weeks, that's enough.
[Laughter]

Q: You want to stay home, don't you? [Laughter] What about traveling around outside of Moscow?

NALLE: It was always difficult, but it could be rewarding if you could get permission. I tried to go to Central Asia as often as I could because of my particular interests there. I was given permission about 50 percent of the time I asked. That's one of the characteristics of Soviet society that it has been totally arbitrary in the way things happen. They'll just say, "No." Or they'll say, "For reasons of a temporary nature, no." And you expected it and you asked again later.

When we got the Soviet permission, we got, of course, to Leningrad, where eventually we had a branch office, and to places in the Caucasus--Tbilisi, for example.

Q: You went out to the Caucasus primarily as tourists?

NALLE: No, primarily in connection with visiting cultural attractions, and we had some great ones. As soon as detente opened things up, we had the New York City Ballet, the San Francisco Symphony, Arena Stage, things like that, which everybody had to be involved in. And the big exhibits, traveling exhibits, which went to various cities. We went to a city you've probably never heard of, called Ufa. Ufa is the capital of the Bashkir autonomous republic, and it's right in the middle of the Russian republic out there. I'm not sure where it is. They're Tartars. We went there because the exhibit went there. We opened the exhibit, gave a little talk. And you had these wonderful kids who were the guides. So whenever we could, we took that excuse to go.

Q: You think those exhibits, which took a lot of doing to put them together and it cost a lot of money, were very worthwhile?

NALLE: Yes, if they're well done. At the beginning of the three years, we had more trouble than later, because detente was just beginning to take hold. There was a lot of provocation. A lot of provocations worked against the guides. They'd be entrapped in various ways, and one fellow had to be sent home because he got entrapped. But that fell off markedly in the second or third year.

One thing I instituted at that time, I persuaded the Agency to send out a regular Agency officer to be, in effect, the cultural attaché at the exhibit. The first one was Jack Harrod. Do you know Jack?

Q: Yes.

NALLE: I think he was a little skeptical of the whole thing, but he was very good. He was just what I wanted, because he was intelligent, he spoke Russian, and he was active. His job, as far as I was concerned, was to go out and just be the American representative who didn't have to work all day at the stand, but could get to know the community. What I hoped was that he would feed back to us names of the intellectual leaders of each city, so we could stick it into our card machine and then communicate with those people subsequently. That did work out to a certain extent, and I believe they've done that ever since. You know, there's a coda to all this: Peggy and I have signed up to go to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, with the exhibit that's going there in the fall, to

be the reports officers, Peggy speaking Russian and me speaking, in this case, Persian to the Tajiks, which is their native language.

Q: How wonderful! This proves the very good life one can have after the Agency.

Now let's see. We're in the mid-1970s. You came home after Moscow.

JOHN TODD STEWART
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1973-1974)

Commercial Officer
Moscow (1974-1977)

Ambassador Stewart was born in New Jersey and raised in New York City and San Francisco. He attended Stanford University and the Fletcher School and entered the Foreign Service in 1962. His first post in Munich was followed by posts in Venezuela, Geneva, Moscow, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Canada, and an ambassadorship to the Republic of Moldova. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: This might be a good place to stop. In '73 you left Geneva and whither?

STEWART: In '73 I went back to Washington into Russian language training.

Q: What brought this about?

STEWART: I wanted to go to Eastern Europe. One of the courses I had taken when I was at Fletcher concerned the economics of central planning. I thought that a tour in one of the communist countries would be quite interesting. I was originally assigned to Hungary, but due to one of those chains of events in personnel - somebody got into a car accident and couldn't do this, which means somebody else had to do that - my assignment went by the boards, and I was penciled into a slot in the commercial office we were establishing in Moscow, via 10 months of Russian language training.

Q: Okay, so we will pick this up in '73 when you are going to Russian language training. We'll talk a little bit about Russian language training and then on to Moscow.

Today is the 2nd of December, 1999. Todd, let's talk about language training. How old were you when you started this?

STEWART: That would have been 1973 so I would have been 33 years old.

Q: How did you find the language?

STEWART: I found the language learning process for Russian to be tedious. It was far and away the worst designed language curriculum that I had encountered up to that point at FSI. There was really no good instructional material beyond a model village of Moscow. That was clever, but we exhausted its possibilities after the first month or so, and the material after that was nowhere near as good.

Q: Sometimes when you take a language, one of the big things that you learn is about the country from your instructors. They've been there, and you are on pretty intimate terms with them, sitting in a classroom six hours a day. Were you picking up much about the Soviet Union at that time?

STEWART: Not about the Soviet Union since all of these instructors came out of the émigré community. They had either been born in the West or had left Russia as very small children. Certainly one of the most amusing things about the program was that there were no dialogues dealing with the telephone since none of them had really talked on the telephone in a Russian-speaking city.

Q: What job were you going to?

STEWART: I was going to a new position in the Commercial Office in Moscow, which had just been established. Tom Niles, who had served in Moscow before, was named director of the office and commercial attaché. Jim Blow from the Commerce Department was the deputy director, and then there were two commercial officers, Sam Fromowitz and myself. We were both assigned from the State Department as first secretaries and commercial officers.

Q: A commercial officer in Moscow in the '70s sounds almost like an oxymoron.

STEWART: No, it was actually a very good time indeed. Detente was in flower and American corporations, particularly the very big ones, were anxious to do business there. Consequently, we had close contact with many captains of U.S. industry.

Q: When you got there, and I assume you got there in '74, can you describe who the Ambassador was, how he operated, and how the Embassy operated from your sort of "new boy" perspective?

STEWART: Walter Stoessel was the Ambassador, and he had been there for about a year or so. Jack Matlock, who subsequently became Ambassador to the USSR, was DCM. The staff had expanded greatly in the year or so before my arrival. Because of detente we had more positions, and people were coming out of language training to fill those positions. Certainly one of the clearest reflections of the new detente relationship was the new Commercial Office, which was not located in the old chancery but a block down the street in a storefront area in the first floor of an apartment house. And the Commerce Department, which had financed the interior decoration of the place, spared no expense in making it attractive. Indeed, it was some of the best, if not the best, office space in Moscow. We had not only our offices there but an exhibit area and a seminar room. One of the things that we pioneered was the so-called exhibit-seminar, for which we would

bring in six, seven, or eight American firms to put on very small exhibits in that space and then hold seminar presentations tightly focused on some particular subject like water pollution, drip irrigation or ferrous metallurgy. All of those were seminar-exhibit topics when I was in Moscow. We exhibited a lot of electronic measurement equipment for medical or biological research, and very frequently the manufacturers would show some apparatus that they would sell right off the floor to a Soviet buyer.

Q: How did you, I mean you personally, find relations with the Soviets?

STEWART: We were pioneers in a sense, for up to that time all the relationships in the commercial area were with the Ministry of Foreign Trade, which in the end had to sign the purchase contract. But thanks to détente, we were able to develop direct relationships with the ministries that would be the end users of the products purchased, and of course they were the ones that in the end told the Ministry of Foreign Trade to place the orders. The Ministry of Foreign Trade was simply an intermediary. These relationships were extraordinarily interesting because everything was new. Officials in the end-user ministries hadn't dealt very extensively with foreigners before, and we were feeling our way also. So we would put on an exhibit-seminar for the Ministry of Electronic Industry, for example, and then would take the material from that seminar over to say the Ministry of Ferrous Metallurgy and say, "Hey, we did this with your colleagues over at the other ministry. Now here is what we would like to do with you," and pull out the materials and talk about the kind of program that we wanted to have. There was a good deal of contact in this way. It wasn't a smooth process by any stretch of the imagination, but we made genuine progress at that time and there was as a result a good amount of both commercial interchange and personal interchange. A lot of Soviets went to the U.S. to inspect machinery as it was being assembled and tested, and a lot of Americans went to the various parts of the U.S.S.R. to help install the machinery. It was this kind of increased contact, I believe, that was one of the main reasons why communism started to totter. More and more Soviets understood that the system was not working well compared to our market economy.

Q: Did you feel that everything was sort of a one-way street, going from the U.S. to the Soviet Union? Was there much going to other way?

STEWART: There were some exports to the U.S., particularly in area of raw materials, precious stones, for example. Furs were a traditional Russian export. In a sense the two systems were beautifully matched to each other because in a capitalist economy firms love to export, and in a centrally planned economy the government loves to import. It was a marriage made in heaven until Afghanistan came along, but that was after my time.

Q: You were there from '74 to...?

STEWART: '77.

Q: Can you talk about sort of a typical day there, what would you be doing?

STEWART: I lived on the north side of the city in an apartment house which was set aside for foreigners. That was certainly one of the strange aspects of diplomatic life in the Soviet Union,

the fact that the Soviets had us foreigners cordoned off. It had nothing to do with ideology or politics. In my apartment house lived a number of North Vietnamese, and other Embassy people lived next to Eastern Europeans of one variety or another. The line was drawn between Soviets and the foreigners, whatever their political coloration, in living arrangements.

So I would get up in my apartment - I was single at that point - and breakfast on orange juice, cereal and milk which were imported from Helsinki by the commissary we had at the Embassy. However, I would buy my bread across the street at the state bread store. It was a basic truth about Soviet Russia that the bread, tea and caviar were almost always good. My bread was invariably excellent, in fact, and consequently I would always cut myself a nice slice to have with my Finnish imports.

I would drive into the center of the city and encounter very little traffic. It took 15 or 20 minutes to get down to the Embassy. Parking was no problem. There were normally places to park on the street, and in the case of heavy snow we could park on the sidewalk. If I had opera tickets in the evening, there was usually a parking space right in front of the Bolshoi.

In the Commercial Office we had a wonderful ambiance as the appointments were very bright and cheerful, quite unlike the gloom outside in a Russian winter. Winter was hard, for Moscow is so far north that it was pitch black when we went to work and it was pitch black when we drove home. It was tricky navigating the streets of Moscow under those circumstances as pedestrians had the rather disturbing habit of walking halfway across the street and standing in the middle. As everybody was wearing a dark coat and a dark fur hat, they were almost invisible.

Q: Were there many accidents?

STEWART: Surprisingly few. I had one with a bunch of foreign students who were backing up a car as I was going forward. During my tour there were no fatal accidents although there had been one in the months preceding, when a member of the Embassy community was killed driving to Leningrad.

Q: What about your contacts? Were they with the Ministry of Foreign Trade?

STEWART: And the end-user ministries too. Each end-user ministry had a so-called foreign relations department whose officials were authorized by the security folks to deal with us. So we would try to make arrangements to talk to them on a regular basis and establish some sort of relationship. It was extraordinarily difficult to have any sort of relationship that could be described as a friendship. But I dealt, of course, with official Soviets, and we did have people on the staff who dealt with the unofficial community. The twain really didn't meet, and you couldn't work both sides of the street if you were in Moscow. Joe Presel had the dissident beat at the time, and he had a hell of an existence. He suffered all sorts of harassment by the KGB. However, I never had any problems at all. That was because of the kind of work I did, which was something Soviet officialdom was quite interested in fostering.

Q: Did you make any trips around the area?

STEWART: I traveled a great deal. Some trips were business-related, and others were essentially tourism. The Embassy encouraged us to get out just as much as we could in order to get some feeling of what was going on outside Moscow. This made all sorts of sense because once you got outside of Moscow, the atmosphere was generally more relaxed, and you could have interesting conversations.

I recall, for example, a trip to Donetsk, in what is now Ukraine, the center of a coal mining region. I'd flown down there for a trade show. I was having lunch at a local restaurant, nothing very fancy, and in the USSR you were seated anywhere there was an empty chair. There was no such thing as one party per table. And it was definitely acceptable to start talking to the people that you were seated with. So the fellow at my table struck up a conversation. Soon he knew I wasn't Russian, but he assumed that I was from one of the Baltic republics. This would be a logical assumption because my Russian clearly was not native, and the idea of finding somebody from the West would be weird. But I explained I was from the U.S., and immediately he started asking me questions--how much my father received as a pensioner, that kind of thing. So I asked him one too. I said, "Donetsk is very beautiful"--which it was. It had all sorts of green parks and even the median strip on the road coming in from airport was planted with grass and neatly mowed, which was virtually unheard of in the USSR. I asked, "What's the reason for all this greenery?" He laughed and said, "That's our party first secretary--he likes grass."

And that's the kind of story that you got when you were traveling. We periodically compiled and sent to the Department what we called a vignette-gram with stories that happened to us or that we heard from Soviets. They were all true but not reportable in traditional messages. But they probably gave a truer flavor of what Soviet life was like than anything else we sent to Washington.

Q: What were your impressions of Soviet industry, particularly when you got away from Moscow and out in the field?

STEWART: It depended where you were going and what you were looking at. First of all, you were not going to be shown a plant that was a disaster. You had to bear this in mind, but we saw a number of plants which were really quite decent.

I remember one week I spent in Ukraine with somebody from the U.S. Bureau of Mines visiting iron mines and beneficiation plants. A beneficiation plant is a facility that takes iron ore from an open pit mine, which is lower grade, and raises its iron content to the point that it can be put into blast furnaces. The mines and beneficiation plants were not especially impressive--in fact, the Soviets were actively interested in acquiring U.S. technology to improve the latter. However, we also visited a sintering plant, an installation that accretes iron dust resulting from other processes into pellets large enough for use in blast furnaces. My colleague from the Bureau of Mines said that most of these plants in the U.S. were dirty places with high levels of dust in the air. However, the Soviet plant had installed an efficient dust collection system that worked so well we could walk through the plant in suits. My colleague found that very impressive, and that was a judgment from a specialist who knew the industry backwards and forwards.

I also remember a visit we made on that trip to a manganese mine in Ukraine. Manganese is

generally found on land at a certain depth in a fairly narrow seam because it was deposited on the ocean floor eons ago before the ocean receded and other material was deposited above it. So you have to go down more than a hundred meters to reach a seam that is only a couple of meters thick. But it's valuable stuff so it's worth it. The catch was that this deposit, which was on the bottom of what had been a larger version of the Black Sea, was located under some of the best farmland in the U.S.S.R. What to do to save the topsoil? What they did was to set up a series of conveyor belts which removed the overburden from one side of the excavation, carried it all the way around to the other side, and redeposited it at the same depth. So what you had when this gigantic series of conveyor belts was working was a gigantic hole which moved very, very slowly across the landscape. It was one of the darndest things I've ever seen.

There were some fascinating innovations like that, but as I say, what we got to see was by and large the best that there was to see. Soviet gigantomania was quite apparent, too. One of the places where a lot of U.S. firms were installing equipment was the big Kamaz truck plant at Naberezhniye Chelny, which was way too big for efficient production. When they finally got it up and running, the trucks they were turning out were obsolete. It was kind of a crazy project, and it was the last project financed with U.S. government money before the Jackson-Vanik amendment became law.

Q: Did you get to look at agricultural things? Were we involved in sales of agricultural equipment and that sort of thing?

STEWART: We certainly had people trying to sell agricultural equipment. John Deere was active in Soviet Union at that time, and we were working with some irrigation equipment companies that were trying to make a sale. But nobody really was very successful. And that struck me as odd, and rather a strange mistake for central planners to make, because in the U.S.S.R. at that time capital investment in agriculture would have paid big dividends. For example, a very high percentage of the grain crop was rotted, simply because there weren't sufficient storage facilities. We were talking to Soviet officials about getting Harvester or another silo manufacturer to set up a factory to turn out storage bins on a mass-produced basis. They never developed any interest although the losses were very large and the central planners had to import grain to make up for them.

Q: Was there a concern that the Soviets might be getting things that were of a critical strategic nature, but even more than that, that we might be helping to make their system work?

STEWART: I don't think there was all that much concern about either. There were all sorts of export controls that we and our allies had to make sure that the Soviets didn't import super-computers and other equipment that had strategic value. Despite the criticisms that were leveled in the U.S. press, I never felt that the Soviets were much more likely to make things work with our help than they were without it. The flip side of this is that in exchange for whatever economic or technological advantage they got, they had to subject their system to more and more openness and that in the end turned out to be quite fatal for the system. It was a good thing for the Soviet peoples, of course, but not for the system.

I think one of the best stories about the Soviet attitude toward collaboration with the West was a conversation I had with the deputy director of the Foreign Relations Department at the Ministry of

Non-Ferrous Metallurgy. Mr. Davydov was a delightful man, and if the system had been different, I am certain he would have become a friend. He had been the Moscow tennis champion in his younger days and had a good sense of humor. He called me over to his office one day and said, "Mr. Stewart, we'd be most grateful if you could contact the XYZ corporation and see if they would be interested in licensing to us some flotation cells. (A flotation cell is used for separating minerals from the ore.) I replied, "Well, sure, I'd be happy to do it." And we got talking and he said, "You know, we could develop these ourselves, but our situation reminds me of the story of little Ivan, who was late to school one day in his village. The teacher said, "Little Ivan, you are late." And Ivan answered, "Yes, teacher, but I had to take the cow to the bull." The teacher asked, "Yes, Ivan, but couldn't your father do it?" And little Ivan thought a moment and replied, "Well, yes, teacher, but the bull could do it better."

Q: Was there sort of a market for gadgets. In other words, I can see the head of an enterprise being particularly interested in whatever were our gadgets of the time, which probably wasn't a major need, but still, what the hell, they are fun to have.

STEWART: There was some of that undoubtedly, but I think a better story in this area was about a California firm that manufactured electronic devices for the blind. They had, for example, a calculator with a Braille keyboard and an oral readout. Another gadget allowed a blind person to read a text by rolling a scanner over it and feeling the shape of the letters with his fingertips on an electrically charged screen. All very innovative things. The firm was founded by a Stanford professor with a blind child and did not make a profit beyond a return necessary to provide capital for further research and development. The firm's representatives were invited to Moscow, and indeed they did make some sales. We had no information about who the end users were, but sure as shooting some member of the Central Committee had a blind relative.

Q: Were you able to look at some of the wheat or cotton growing areas? The Soviets were often portrayed as pushing the limits of the way you could grow these crops. For example, cotton production is reportedly destroying the Aral Sea area. Were you able to get a feel for any of this?

STEWART: I didn't do so personally. We had a pretty sizable Agricultural Attaché Office, and the people there traveled a good deal. They would set off from Moscow in a heavy-duty station wagon, an early-day SUV, loaded with as many spare tires and spare wheels as they could get into their cargo space. And it was just a question of how far they could get before their last wheel went, for the roads were pretty horrible.

One piece of agricultural equipment that did sell well was something called a vacuvator. This was a kind of giant vacuum cleaner that went into the hold of a grain ship and sucked out the grain. The Soviets needed them for unloading the ships from the U.S., Canada and other grain producers. I sent a message back to whoever in the intelligence community was doing the estimates of Soviet import plans saying, "You really ought to count how many vacuvators they are buying and estimate the life-span of a vacuvator. Then you could get a pretty good idea of how much grain they are planning to import."

Q: Were you ever subjected to harassment on these trips?

STEWART: First of all, we always traveled in pairs. I told my parents we were like nuns. The only form of harassment I recall was getting an occasional call late at night from some woman down in the lobby wondering if I were lonely, and even that was pretty rare.

When our trip included a weekend, the hotel where we were staying--we tried to stay at the best one, which was generally none too good--would generally have a band and dancing. When we would go down for dinner, it was perfectly legit under the Soviet social rules to invite any woman in the place to dance. And we certainly held up our end. When we'd start dancing, we would introduce ourselves as being from the U.S. Embassy. The ladies would either swoon away in our arms or just start asking questions about what life was like in the U.S.

Q: Did you have much contact with the rest of the Embassy officers, or were you off to one side?

STEWART: We were perhaps more isolated than anybody else. But the community there was so closely knit that there was a great deal of interchange. Our office reported to the Economic-Commercial Counselor at the time.

Q: Who was that?

STEWART: It was Noble Mellencamp. We would go up to the Economic Section before the Commercial Office opened in the morning to read the traffic since we couldn't have anything classified in the Commercial Office. If we were writing any classified messages, we would draft them at that time too. We also collaborated a fair amount with the Science and Technology Section because so much of what we did had technological overtones and with USIA to a certain degree because we were both in the exhibit business. Obviously we had friends in one place or another, and those relationships expanded our range of contacts. A great meeting place for the American community at that time was the snack bar. The snack bar, I always thought, was a scene straight from Hades because you'd walk in on a dark winter day and encounter an interior decor in black and red. In addition, the defective ventilation system would allow steam and smoke to bellow out of the kitchen as the hamburgers were prepared. We had an Italian chef who was rumored to be a millionaire five times over as he supposedly dealt in caviar on the side. It was the meeting place for the entire American community - Embassy staffers, family members with kids, etc. - so everyone got to know each other.

Q: What were you getting from the Embassy officers who were involved in traditional diplomatic work about how the relations were going at the time? What was the Embassy thinking about the Brezhnev regime at the time, '74-'77?

STEWART: This was the end of the Ford Administration and the start of the Carter Administration. Under Ford, Kissinger was Secretary of the State, and there was a tremendous amount of official interchange involving Henry. I believe the Embassy was fully hooked into what he was up to.

Q: He was not doing his normal by-pass?

STEWART: No, not like the days when he was National Security Adviser and Rogers was Secretary. When Henry was running the Department and the Foreign Service, we were all hands

the Kissinger plantation and quite involved in his activities.

We had a large number of congressional visits at that point, too. I think the biggest group was a delegation of some 25 senators, the most senior being Hubert Humphrey, who had been to Moscow many times. This group was wined and dined like a collective head of state. We had a control officer for every senator and, of course, the Soviets did too, all KGB types. After a gala dinner one evening, every senator got into his own limo with his own Soviet escort and was taken back to the Rossiya Hotel, which was down near Red Square. I was there at the Rossiya, which was my post for the evening, watching the senators get out of their vehicles. It was naturally assumed that they would go into the hotel and go to bed. As a result, the KGB escorts all started to congregate together to have a smoke and discuss the day's events. However, the senators didn't go straight in but formed a little group themselves. It appeared at that point that Humphrey said, "You guys haven't been on the subway yet? Hey, I'll show you." And all 25 senators disappeared down an escalator into the subway system, where all the signs are in Cyrillic. We turned and looked at the KGB types, and I've never seen such looks of naked horror. Every one of them could see his transfer orders to Yakutsk when the U.S. press reported that 25 senators had been lost in the Moscow subway system. I've never seen so many people run so fast, throwing their cigarettes in every direction and charging down that escalator.

Q: You can picture yourself in the shoes of a KGB agent trying to ride herd on a bunch of foreigners, and that would not be fun.

STEWART: A lot of my KGB associates were certainly not bad personally, and if the system had not been what it was, there were several that I would have been friends with. I remember having lunch with one KGB officer who was older than I was, somewhere in his 40s. He had spent a good deal of time in the West, his English was very good, but he always had trouble getting U.S. visas because he had been involved at one point in industrial espionage. He knew the western system well enough, and he mused to me, "You know, if I were in Chicago or in London, I could be a corporate CEO or maybe a number two, but I can't have that kind of responsibility here at my age." He was right.

Q: It's not that hard today.

STEWART: Yes, times have changed. I wonder what some of my erstwhile associates are doing, now that you no longer have to wait until somebody dies before you can move up a notch in the bureaucracy.

Q: Speaking of which, looking at the top, what were you getting, particularly from your colleagues who were following the Central Committee, about Brezhnev and those immediately around him, because we knew at that period that the top guys were beginning to totter. Was there a lot of talk about who's really calling the shots?

STEWART: It wasn't so much talk about who was calling the shots at that point. Brezhnev was still perfectly ambulatory and was meeting people. I certainly never met him, but he would greet Kissinger and people at that level. I'll tell you one thing that we did discuss a lot, and I should explain the context, which is probably kind of interesting too. Mike Lemon, who is now

Ambassador to Armenia, was the Ambassador's aide at that point in the Embassy. With that job came an apartment of sorts in Spaso House, which was actually the old billiard room. Mike had adequate space and was centrally located so he came to host regular Friday night parties for single people. We drank more than was good for us, I'm sure, talked shop and sometimes got to discussing deeper issues. I remember one of the things that used to come up was the generation gap in the Soviet Union. Old war horses like Brezhnev were running the Soviet Union at that time, but we hypothesized quite correctly - it didn't take much genius - that they were going to start dying off and the successor generation was none too numerous because many were killed in the war. And so it was pretty obvious that what you were going to see was the leadership skip a generation from the Brezhnev group to much younger people who were too young to fight in World War II. That is, of course, exactly what happened. When Chernenko finally went to join Marx, the mantle fell to...

Q: To Gorbachev.

STEWART: Who was too young to have been in the war. We did not have the faintest idea what these young people were going to be like, but we had every reason to think that their advent was going to be an opening for change and indeed it was.

Q: Did you have any feel about the acceptance of Marxism? Did people believe in it, or were they just token Marxists for careerist motives?

STEWART: I don't think we ever met anybody who believed a word of it.

Q: I was talking to somebody about this time in Poland, and he said there were probably maybe at most three dedicated Marxists in the whole country.

STEWART: It was pretty slim pickins.

Q: A tremendous effort was going into this façade, but even the people maintaining the façade didn't believe the lectures, the publications, the turgid prose, and all that?

STEWART: I don't think that anyone in the older generation wanted to confront reality. You know, if you are in your late 60s or 70s and you have been doing something for that many years, it is not easy to confront the habits of a lifetime. The other factor was, and this can't be overstated, that there were a lot of people who really did owe something to the system. And I mean this in a very positive way. I knew all sorts of people who had come out of a village someplace and were given educational opportunities that they would not have had in a million years under the old regime. They got an education, they got started in the hierarchy, and they worked their way up. When I knew them, they had a dacha outside of Moscow, a car and a driver, and all those things which made them, in Soviet terms, at least upper middle class. In comparison with living among the pigs in a little town out in the countryside, they'd come a long way. There was gratitude for what the system had done for them, and if it had meant reciting all this hogwash periodically, why not? I think that was an important psychological factor as far as many people were concerned.

Q: Life in the village must have been tough. From what I've heard and what I experienced when I spent my five years in Yugoslavia, when you leave a major city, you'd go back four or five centuries practically. Oxen were the major form of transport.

STEWART: Yes, it was a very, very primitive sort of existence. The possibility of escaping that life was quite important.

One other thing that I was going to say in this regard was about Soviet perks, which were interesting because they all came with the job. This was a powerful disincentive to retire if you were in the top echelon of the government or party. Your lifestyle would take a real battering if you left, and consequently, people didn't. The only person of any note who really did hang it up, apparently willingly, and keep his perks was Anastas Mikoyan, the old Minister of Foreign Trade. He was still around during my day and would be invited to Kremlin receptions and so forth--and that was rare for a retired member of the Politburo. We hypothesized that the reason he could keep his perks was that he had no-holds-barred memoirs stashed with lawyers in Zurich to guarantee the good behavior of his colleagues.

Q: Did we perceive the Soviet Union as an aggressive country at that time, which was, of course, pre-Afghanistan but post-Czechoslovakia in 1968?

STEWART: I don't think so. George Kennan said at one point, referring to Brezhnev and his cronies, who were his contemporaries, that when you get to his age about the last thing you want to do is conquer the world. And I think he had that right, but little paranoias would still crop up in the U.S. One of them was a theory in the right-wing press that the Soviets were building a massive system of nuclear fallout shelters. We were under standing instructions to report any evidence of this. Satellites would go over the USSR and spot a suspicious half-buried installation, and someone from the Defense Attaché's office would go out and take a look. Generally, the installation would have "Men" on one door and "Women" on the other. I guarantee nobody would want to spend very much time there. In all the plants that we visited, I don't think I ever heard of one that had instructions posted as to what to do if an air raid siren sounded. Best of all, some right-wing analyst said that evidence for the existence of this supposedly massive program could be found in the number of general officers that had been assigned to the civil defense command. We thought this was hilarious because this guy had apparently never heard of a turkey farm.

Q: You have to explain for somebody who doesn't understand what we are talking about.

STEWART: A turkey farm is a bureaucratic division where you put your least desirable people if you can't discharge them for one reason or another.

Q: In our bureaucratic terminology, a turkey is an employee that you can't place.

Were you seeing or considering that the ethnic divisions in the Soviet Union would really become divisive or did you think that the USSR was going to stick together?

STEWART: Certainly we saw no evidence, no direct evidence, of severe ethnic tensions. There was no Chechen Freedom Movement or Uzbek Liberation Army. However, one fact that was

perfectly clear at that time was that the growth rates of the populations in Central Asia were much greater than those in the Slavic parts in the Soviet Union, and we thought that fact was going to have consequences. But no, I am not aware of any political manifestation that we could monitor at that point. I think that aside from the Baltics, when the Soviet Union fell apart, it was not because of any great desire to seek national liberation on the part of the various constituent republics. In the Baltics you did find continuing resentment against Soviet rule, and I recall one story that a friend in the Consulate in Leningrad told me. He and a colleague were in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, and went out for dinner. When they neared the restaurant, they became separated, and one reached the head of a long line before the other did. The first person there simply asked in Russian, "Is it possible to get a table?" and the answer was "Nyet." Then the second came up and said in English, "We're Americans. Can we get a table?" and the doorman replied, "Oh, sure."

Q: What role did the economy play in the downfall of the Soviet system? It just wasn't up to par, compared to what was happening in Asia and Japan and in the West. Were you seeing the economy as the Achilles heel of the USSR, or was there a feeling that the centrally planned economy could muddle through?

STEWART: It was perfectly clear to us when we were there that the system wasn't functioning very well. My own theory is that central planning will work as long as growth comes from increasing the output of raw and semi-processed materials. Because there, if you are making up an economic plan, you can impose objective norms. You can tell whoever is running a beneficiation plant that he has to turn out so many tons of beneficiated iron ore with no less than 85% iron content. You can measure the result pretty easily by sending your inspectors around to sample a few nodules on an irregular basis and make a measurement. If the plant manager does well, he fulfills his quota and gets a pat on the head. It's much harder when you deal with end products, especially consumer goods, where questions of taste become dominant. Heaven only knows how you establish norms for taste other than through the market, the antithesis of central planning. And if you are in a fast changing industry, God help you. By the time you get a norm established for a computer, the computer will be obsolete. You'd be mandating obsolescence.

Q: Were you looking at things such as infrastructure? You were talking about the inability to preserve grain, and also the abysmal highways. Flying over Russia is so different than flying over the U.S. You really can't see roads there while the U.S. is checkered with roads, even in the countryside. Did you regard the infrastructure as being extremely poor?

STEWART: That certainly is true. You have to remember, though, that there was very little travel by car compared with the U.S. If you were going somewhere, you would fly or go by train. In addition, rail transport was far more important than truck transport.

Q: What about helicopter factories in Kyrgyzstan that used inputs from Poland?

STEWART: Tom Niles said that the experience which epitomized Soviet central planning for him came during a picnic with his wife and two kids in the countryside outside Moscow. It was late summer, the harvest was underway, and as they sat on a blanket under a tree, they watched with bemusement as one truck loaded with melons passed another truck loaded with melons going in the opposite direction on the road in front of them.

Central planning also involved siting factories for political reasons. We suffered the consequences of such a decision when I was in Moldova, where a steel scrap mill, a so-called mini-mill, had been built in the 1980s for, as far as I could tell, purely political reasons. A similar mill was built at the same time near the Pacific. Both locations were bizarre because there was no close source of scrap, no transport other than the rail, no close market, and no immediate source of power as the electricity was produced from gas imported from Siberia.

Q: Of course, steel factories were often like that, even some in the West. When I was in Italy close to this time, you had steel factories down at the boot of Italy, at the lower end, that had no market, but by God they employed a lot of people. You couldn't very well shut them down, or you'd have political consequences that were tough.

STEWART: Another odd thing about the Moldovan plant was that it was located in a place where there weren't very many people so they had to import workers too. I already mentioned Kamaz, the truck plant in the Naberezhniye Chelny. The town had been a village on the Kama River, where it was decided for reasons best known to Moscow to put this humongous complex. When I visited there on one occasion, I talked to a young Soviet woman who called herself an economist, but I guess production planner would be our term. She was Russian but from some place in Central Asia, and she said, frankly, that the reason she was there was that she had a good chance of getting an apartment. She didn't rate one where she was from, and the only slight catch was that she had to live in a so-called dormitory until the apartment houses were built.

Q: When you left there in '77, what did you think about the future of the Soviet Union?

STEWART: I certainly wasn't predicting a collapse in 1991. I mentioned before that we didn't know what was going to happen when the generation gap manifested itself. We knew that the system wasn't working very well. But to predict that people would start questioning the basis of the system once the last of Brezhnev's generation died out, that was something well beyond my predictive powers. But in the case of *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?*, written by a dissident historian, the title was intended to be provocative, but my Lord, the man only missed by seven years.

Q: Were we a bit, do you think, hung up on our own sense that the USSR was a dangerous place, that it was strong, that it would be very dangerous to underestimate the Soviet Union?

STEWART: No, we were all pretty convinced that the economy didn't work and that the system wasn't worth a damn. I don't think there was any significant degree of ill will toward individual Soviets, but some aspects of the system were abhorrent. I recall one particular case. We had a science attaché, not a career person but someone we picked up from Hewlett Packard. He was a European Jew who had been in Auschwitz, survived, and reached the U.S. This gentleman began receiving telephone calls late at night with obscene anti-Semitic content. Finally, Jack Matlock went into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, described the calls, and said, "Don't you have any sense of shame whatsoever?" And the calls ended.

NAOMI F. COLLINS
Spouse of Foreign Service Officer
Moscow (1973-1975)

Mrs. Collins was born and raised in New York City and educated at Queen College, City University of New York; Indiana University; Harvard University; and Moscow State University. Married to American Foreign Service Officer, James Collins, she accompanied him on a number of his assignments in the United States and abroad, including Izmir and Moscow, where her husband served as United States Ambassador from 1997 to 2001. Throughout this time Mrs. Collins continued her separate career, primarily in the fields of International Education, Humanities, and Political Development, notably Russian, authoring numerous publications on these and other subjects. She is currently an Independent Education Consultant in Bethesda, Maryland. Mrs. Collins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012

Q: Were you having any contact with people in the Foreign Service at that time?

COLLINS: No, at that point I was just out there on my own. My relatives thought Jim had left me; they assumed that's why my parents were housing the two toddlers and me. They had that look, "Sure he's coming back..." But, no, no contact with the Foreign Service for me. I assume Jim was in regular contact. And then they sent orders for Jim in the spring of 1973 to go to Moscow.

Q: This was a full time position in Moscow.

COLLINS: Yes. He was to serve in the political section. By that time, baby Jonathan had almost figured out who Jim was and no longer cried when Jim "babysat" him. But as we prepared to rent out our house and ship out, another shock occurred. Jim was diagnosed with cancer. Two weeks later he had surgery, followed by six weeks of radiation every morning. Cobalt they said it was. It was a grim and scary period, dwarfing other concerns. We were both 30-something and the kids were too young to understand. Although the surgery was not difficult, the radiation sickened him. Daily I drove him to the treatment at Sibley with the two little ones bouncing around in the back seat of our used VW Beetle.

But Jim was determined to continue working, and went from radiation treatment to bus stop to State Department until he could no longer stand up the last two weeks or so...in bed being sick all day long. As you can imagine, the State Department didn't want to give him medical clearance to go to Moscow and I could not fault them for that. But he fought it and won. He argued that the conditions in Moscow would be no different from those in Washington regarding the recurrence of cancer.

On the face of it, it made sense. That was before we knew about the microwave radiation trained on the Embassy. If somebody in the State Department had known this in 1973, they sure didn't tell us. They let Jim go anyway, rather than factor in this possible threat. The rest is history. We

went. Jim had an exemption that required him to return to Washington after one year for a medical checkup. I thought he needed more frequent sophisticated checkups, but could not complain about a visit home during the summer of 1974.

Q: From when to when were you there?

COLLINS: We went out in August 1973 and returned in August of 1975.

Q: What kind of quarters did you have?

COLLINS: We had excellent housing. It was in a new building at the outskirts of Moscow, about eight miles from the Embassy. They had merged two Russian apartments to create a three-bedroom flat with two bathrooms. Very comfortable. Of course we didn't yet know that we would be without hot water during much of two cold summers.

Q: Where was this?

COLLINS: Moscow was then built out with high-rise buildings from Khrushchev's era, massive ugly housing projects growing from the center to periphery for about eight miles. Just beyond that you suddenly found old villages with small huts, village pump, muddy dirt roads, chimneys spewing smoke in winter. We were in the last of the buildings before the fields began. These were new buildings, built for foreigners, fenced, gated, and guarded. There was – as far as we could tell – only one other American family (with children) in the three-building complex. Others were from all over the world.

Q: Who was the Ambassador at that time, and how was the spirit?

COLLINS: When we arrived, there was a chargé, Spike Dubs. Then Walter Stoessel became Ambassador. The morale of the Embassy in Moscow has always seemed to me to have been poor during the periods I've known it. Some people say that in the Foreign Service people become like the place they're in. In a city that was gray, dilapidated, and monotonous; topped by the Cold War suspicions and surveillance, there wasn't much to cheer. And daily frustrations. Nothing functioned. People were rough, in survival mode since the war, at least in the 1960s and 1970s. It made New York seem gentle and civil.

The embassy was large and bureaucratic as you can expect. Many people were complaining about something. Most things were in short supply, so if people wanted a washer or needed a crib, they couldn't get them easily or quickly. I became one of the grippers when the embassy seized the crib from under two-year-old Jonathan, who loved it, to give it to another child because they didn't have another crib. Jonathan was unhappy and insecure in a bed, so he chose to sleep on the floor instead, sometimes under the bed. Small things can get to you when you're living in a taxing and vexing environment, both inside and outside the embassy. That said, of course, there were wives who enjoyed living in Russia during the Soviet times. I admired them. It wasn't a good fit for me.

Q: Did you have a servant?

COLLINS: The State Department did not pay for any hired help in Moscow, even though we were expected to entertain. Other countries' embassies we knew of did supply help for their officers in Moscow both for entertaining and for the hardship shopping there. And we couldn't just go out on the market for a teenage babysitter. So with my working, the kids needing some babysitting, and the need to entertain, we were forced to pay out-of-pocket for a housekeeper, for Olga, something we would never have considered doing at home on our salary.

Q: Was Olga part of the system in which the Soviet government would essentially assign somebody?

COLLINS: Absolutely. You couldn't hire anyone without going through, UPDK, the diplomatic services department (Administration for the Diplomatic Corps.) They could ask the prices they wanted and collect the pay in "hard currency," dollars not rubles. And they would send whomever they wanted. One giveaway was that the people they sent to clean house seemed a tad "overqualified": they usually spoke English well, were educated, and- in the case of Olga – refined.

Q: Everybody felt this was part of the KGB apparatus.

COLLINS: Yes, for good reason. There was evidence they reported back to the "authorities" about us. We had nothing to hide, yet the invasion of privacy went with living there, and made me uncomfortable. But I did need help babysitting during the times between the end of nursery school and my arrival home from work; and of course welcomed the cleaning and even some preparation for meals.

I think I may have mentioned that I did get a job with the embassy after a number of months seeking professional work there. I worked for a wonderful Public Affairs Officer (PAO), David Nalle, and worked in the "library" slot. I replaced Ann Odom, who was peerless, General Bill Odom's wife. Unfortunately, they are no longer living. My job was to maintain contacts with influential Russians in organizations in the arts, culture, and education, helping to determine whom to invite to embassy events, or who might enjoy having a particular book we had available as a gift. David taught me a lot.

Q: How would you say your relations were with Russians then: were you being shunned or could you meet people?

COLLINS: It was possible for most of us to meet only those Russians who were cleared to associate with foreigners. There were people at the embassy whose job it was to know dissidents, minorities, and nonconformists. They did befriend and socialize with people "on the outs." We chose not to because it seemed, overall, that many Russians had enough risks in their life without associating with suspect foreigners. We felt it was the right thing for them not to have us enter their lives.

At the time, we knew a Russian pianist, Lev Vlasenko, whom Jim had met when he came to Harvard in 1960. As soon as we arrived in Moscow, we looked up his performances at the

Conservatory. When we attended one and went backstage to see him, he hugged Jim with tears in his eyes. I guess we said something about getting together, and he looked into our eyes, and simply said, "I hope you will understand." And that was it. We could greet him after performances, which we did. But it would have been selfish to impose our well-intentioned hospitality on him. He had occasional clearance to travel outside Russia. When he did, he'd send Jim a postcard. But we didn't want to jeopardize his career or travels, or his wife's career.

Now to jump ahead from the 1970s to the late 1990s concerning Lev: when we returned to Russia after it opened up, we walked on our first day to the Conservatory. Outside was posted a notice of a concert to be performed the next day-- at his memorial service. The soloist was his daughter. Jim had managed a brief visit with him in the early '90s, but how inhuman it was that we couldn't maintain a friendship during most his adult lifetime.

As for other Russians, we would meet and talk in casual relationships, parks, restaurants, trains. Like Americans, Russians talk to "strangers." And they were curious. But developing deeper relationships was dicey, other than with those sanctioned to know you. This didn't mean that everyone at the embassy felt or acted the same way: this is what we chose.

Q: What about daily living: did you have to stand in line for things? How good were you?

COLLINS: How good was I? Well patience has never been my forte, so I wasn't good at the standing-in-line thing. But I had learned in the 1960s the multiple-line-dance of procuring something to eat. Also ate up a lot of time – and kept consumer demand down. Life was easier at the embassy than it had been as students, because we had a car and we could shop at the "diplomats store" using dollars rather than rubles. The embassy basement housed a very small commissary – a very small room. It had some canned and packaged American items at random. Breakfast cereals and tuna fish were among the more popular. And the appearance of Oreos could really get a rush of people. Several of the goods were rationed. I bought things at the Russian stores of course, as I had when we were students. Prepared foods. Fresh bread. That was not too difficult. But it was hard to find specialty items, like cream for cooking. Fresh milk and eggs. What I truly missed – as did our little sons- were fresh fruits and vegetables. That said, we were way above deprivation or hunger. So I was "good enough," I suppose: I shopped and cooked daily while working ... did the things that had to be done.

Q: Well did you find there was a grouping of a "wives mafia" or something like that?

COLLINS: Probably several little groups. I did make some wonderful friends of wives who were there, friendships that have lasted to today. There were several, unfortunately, whose marriages didn't survive Moscow, women with advanced degrees and professional experience that they were not allowed to use there, and so they went home. They did well in the long run.

Q: The Foreign Service has been particularly rough on marriages, especially in eastern European assignment. I know when I was in Yugoslavia, Jim Lowenstein, Larry Eagleburger, David Anderson, all of them when we served in Serbia together ended up divorced.

COLLINS: Yes, some hung in and remained married. Some wives left but didn't divorce.

Q: Spike Dubs didn't remain married.

COLLINS: Spike Dubs, the DCM at the time, got divorced.

Q: What's the problem? Why would this happen?

COLLINS: That is a good question. First, we would have to ascertain whether the incidence of divorce was indeed higher among this group than among those who served in other regions or worked in D.C. I don't know. I'm also not sure if it's higher than it is in comparable professions, although it appeared to be higher than that among military officers. If it is indeed higher, it's probably because of the strain put on families: difficult and challenging setting, few cheering sides to life, and of course officers working seven days a week, evenings, weekends, and holidays, leaving families on their own in an unappealing setting. Constant surveillance even in the "home." So few outlets. In the few spare hours, professional "entertaining" and attending events is virtually required. As for cause and effect: hard to know if East Europe drives people to greater divorce, or if officers who select that area are already less concerned with family life than, let's say, those who choose Latin America. I'd love to see longitudinal studies...but I do agree that divorce rates appear to be high.

Q: I know times change, so I wonder whether there was an effort at that time to send out any marriage counselors or the equivalent? Or was anything else being done?

COLLINS: They did have a chaplain, but I don't know whether he was trained in counseling. I know that when his wife was killed in an auto accident in which he was driving, he stayed at the post in denial as if nothing had happened. There was one American MD there, but I don't believe he was trained in counseling either. I think there may later on have been an occasional visiting psychiatrist on circuit, but I think he was there more to assess people with issues and decide if they should be sent home rather than to counsel them during his short, intermittent visits. If there was help available, I doubt people could avail themselves of it in that fishbowl setting and believing it could not help their "efficiency" report.

Q: I was wondering if there were any efforts by senior wives to encourage junior wives to go and speak with Jane Doe who seems to be experiencing some difficulties, and maybe you can help here....

COLLINS: I didn't see that, but it may have been occurring. It didn't seem as strong as the military wives' community efforts.

Q: And a senior wife, like Jane Dubs?

COLLINS: She did take her role as a senior Foreign Service wife very seriously in the formal and social sense of the word. She asked me to tea and when I said I was working at the embassy she said I would just have to come anyway (remember the theme: "my husband is higher than your husband.") I was young and felt in a bind. So I asked David, my boss, what to do. Of course he said, "Just go." I felt bad about "skipping work."

I do think that the wives overall were very good at helping one another, reaching out and supporting each other, especially at times of need (like illness). But when marriages unraveled, women left. Interestingly, several of them might have stayed and worked things out had they been able to use their professional expertise in a paid position. One with top of the line Russian, one Ph.D. economist, one accountant, budget and fiscal specialists – all were frustrated at being unable to use their experience there. And many others with great talents – writing, teaching, nursing, social work, administration – stayed and did what they had to do to support their husbands.

Q: Were you aware of the radiation in the embassy at all?

COLLINS: Not at all at that time. Jim learned of it after we completed our two years living there. I first read of this in the New York Times. Jim went out there with the assumption that he would be no more subject to recurrence of cancer there than at home; we left our children in the embassy basement nursery school; we worked in the building near windows– we had no idea the possible risk. But we all knew the considerable number of people who contracted cancer then or in the years following, numbers greater than we knew in comparable populations in our neighborhoods or other offices. One telling story – and it’s in my book – is of a high level officer’s experience. He later told us that he knew there was something afoot when he came into his embassy office one day to discover that the fluorescent light bulbs he had left on the floor – unplugged – were lit up on their own.

Q, I am not an expert on this, but understand there was a building across the way that was irradiating the embassy. There may have been the idea that somehow this radiation could feed microphones or pick up signals or relay conversations. But the real concern was of course the question of what was happening to the people who were being fried by this radiation.

COLLINS: I have no idea why the Russians did it, what they thought they were getting from it. One assumption was that somehow they were gathering intelligence that way. Whether it was from microphones planted in the walls, or from electric typewriters, or from radio frequencies and cables , or something else completely – not sure anyone still knows. But what we do know is that the measurable level of microwave radiation at the embassy was higher than what the Russians themselves considered to be a safe and acceptable level for human exposure.

Q: I wonder if there were policy reasons that prevented doing something about it, like saying, “stop that or we’re pulling out,” which we could have done.

COLLINS: I think there were things that could have been done. They later added special screening to cover the windows, which they could have done sooner. Perhaps they could also have arranged desks away from direct line with windows, against walls instead.

And whether the medical department at State knew about this and made decisions about sending or not sending people accordingly, we never knew. Or whether attempts were made simply to say: “enough already,” as you suggested. That we can’t subject Americans to this. What most of us at the embassy at that time observed then and later, beside the number of cases of cancer, was

those among younger people. In the couple who had our apartment before us, both of them – in their 30s – contracted cancer, and one survived (a good thing, with their young child to bring up). There were few couples in which at least one didn't get cancer, although, happily, many have survived it. The scientific study that the State Department commissioned from the Johns Hopkins University Department of Public Health was, to my mind, faulty. When the surveyors called to question me, I asked whether they had spoken to individuals A, B, and C. – all of whom had contracted cancer. The interviewer told me they had not been given those names. Nor did they follow up a few years later, either, with the additional cases that sprouted. So I think they missed many key people and cases that might have shown a higher incidence, in keeping with what most of us observed.

Q: I think what we are talking about here is something that many of us in the Foreign Service are concerned about, and that is that there are many instances in which it's best not to make waves, not to mention it if it might create waves. There's a strong suspicion that policy had priority over health.

COLLINS: Over people, human life.

Q: Over people.

COLLINS: I think there was a culture of secrecy and lack of candidness that pervaded the Service. You obviously didn't want people breaching security, saying things harmful to American interests. Yet under that cover not enough distinction was made between things that did or didn't have to be secret. Policy issues, relations with Russia, security issues were one thing; the health and welfare of families, of children, that is another. Another example of not knowing enough – beside radiation – were intestinal parasites.

Q: Now things have reached such a state that our Embassy in Beijing gives a daily report on air pollution, which the Chinese government does not. So people in China are checking what the American Embassy is saying because they don't trust their own government.

COLLINS: Now that is a good one! Moscow, of course, had foul air in summer's heat when the peat bogs burned in July or August, filling the city with the acrid smell and smoke of burning peat. We were supposed to suck it up. But you're right that the Embassy did nothing to warn people or suggest what they might do to avoid asthma and bronchitis. One American wife and mother died of it while we were there. Perhaps they do things differently today. When I talk to younger people today, they're apt to say, "Why would you put up with this?" Or, "We'd never put up with that." The discomforts, secrecy, and disregard. They feel entitled to more respect and better treatment, professionally and personally.

Q: I think there have been so many suits in court, some things may have changed. But the government is not a benevolent mother to its employees.

COLLINS: No signs of benevolence, no. It was a battle all the time. It's probably true of many bureaucracies, places where employees don't necessarily feel it's in their interest to serve those they're paid to support, those who were filling the State Department's mission in the field, those

who do diplomacy, economic and commercial reporting, consular work for U.S. citizens, and such. There seemed to be little or no accountability for performance. On a bad day, I would picture callous people leaving their office at 6:00 p.m. to drive to their comfortable suburban homes around D.C., with electricity, hot and cold running water, washing machines, air conditioners – even a crib!

Q: You did get this job for the cultural affairs officer. You mentioned it was probably the only professional level job for a spouse. What were you up to?

COLLINS: Technically, this was a “librarian” slot because it was in the American library. It later became an Officer’s slot. These embassy libraries, as you know, are opened to the people in the host country to learn more about America. But in Russia it was impossible in most cases for a Russian to breach the walls and enter past the Russian guards outside. It had a nice little collection of literature by American authors, as well as books that were designed to be given as gifts to Russians to provide them greater understanding of American life. So the goal was to promote American culture.

David Nalle, the PAO I mentioned, had me engaged as a “contact management system officer,” the title it was given when it became a regular USIA (United States Information Agency) Officer’s position. Nowadays I’m sure it’s done on computers. The notes and records I developed, and systems for sorting these, were designed to help us know which Russians in the arts and culture might be interested in and invited to which events at the Embassy. Whether it was the university rector or the head of the Bolshoi Ballet or dancers, artists, educators, or others, it was about maintaining these relationships. I also got to help determine which books to give to which Russian officials. I attended events, met people, and noted later those who attended and who didn’t, to see interest level. In large groups, it wasn’t always easy. We would try to do a head-count. Simplest way was to set out, let’s say, 200 coat hangers on racks, and count the empty hangers – or extra coats! I mentioned that David was wonderful to work for, and I learned a great deal. He and his wife Peggy are still good friends of ours.

Q: Were you able to keep up with world events at that time?

COLLINS: It was very difficult to keep up with world events, a great frustration for me, feeling uninformed. Those at the Embassy had the wire services. With Internet today people cannot imagine how isolated one can feel abroad without fresh news. By the time Newsweek arrived, or the shared copy of the Tribune, the events had long passed. Sometimes Jim could bring home the ticker tapes, but I couldn’t count on that. We could sometimes tune into the soporific sounds of the “Voice of America” (VOA); and on a good day, hear the BBC World Service. The Soviets tried to jam all those stations. Even today there are holes in my knowledge of these years.

Q: Was Jim trying to keep up with the Middle East?

COLLINS: Yes, his job entailed working on Russian relations with the Middle East. Of course he’ll tell you more about this, but he was always interested in Russian foreign relations.

Q: What sense did you have from your two stays in Russia about the Soviet government's efficiency, popularity, and other things?

COLLINS: In our student days I found the Russian graduate students disinterested in ideology, both bored and irritated. But somehow I did not then project ahead to what would happen when these 20-somethings became 50-somethings, and in good positions in government, education, and the professions. We knew that they felt the restraints of a hermetically sealed and isolated country; fears of the uncertain hand of "Authority;" and backwardness of development. It's almost impossible today to imagine such a totalitarian state, or a place so cut off from world news, now that we have Internet. During those years, people's gait and carriage were different from what they are today: they tended to look down at their feet or straight ahead, not wanting to see too much, I always thought. The popularity of the Soviet state, system, and regime did not run high among its educated subjects. As for efficiency, outside the military, it didn't abound. Many sights we saw looked like the proverbial (and of course stereotypical) "Polish jokes."

Q: Avoiding eye contact, you say.

COLLINS: Yes, avoiding eye contact, avoiding looking too much to one side or the other, avoiding looking up from the ground. "I am minding my own business." That made me feel a sense of fear, uncertainty, closedness. People were careful to avoid appearing to know anything that might bring knocks on their doors in the middle of the night to question them.

Q: This is interesting because I am told that some of the old timers look with nostalgia at the Brezhnev era because of the stability; it lacked the turmoil of elections.

COLLINS: No chaos, for sure. Stability.

Q: Everything was pretty well ordered and so there wasn't much of a challenge.

COLLINS: That's right. And this was especially true if you were privileged, a party member who was part of the elite. So if you can look back to this "special status" life, perhaps it looks pretty good in retrospect! Even in this country, many people look back in nostalgia to what they see as easier and better days, forgetting the bad parts, the discrimination and lack of equity, especially if that didn't affect them.

In Russia if you managed to get yourself into the higher levels of the party or had a good job to go with that, you had a life of relative comfort and ease. The advantages came with "station." This was not yet a monetized society, so some people were rewarded with special benefits. Two main ones were housing and access to rare goods. So those at the top had large enough flats not to have to share kitchens and bathrooms, and for couples to have their own bedroom. Through special stores they could acquire appliances like a refrigerator or washing machine. A coupon book came with their paycheck. These coupons allowed them to shop in stores that might have boots from Eastern Europe, nicer things. We knew those shops because we could shop there with our U.S. dollars.

Several people we knew were members of the “Academies,” the National Academies of Sciences. (The Russian “Academies,” unlike the American ones, included history and other fields we do not include in “sciences.” “*Wissenschaften*” is a better word for it.) They not only had secure positions, but support staffs and the benefits anyone covets in that kind of research environment. There were not a lot of women in these positions compared to the number of men, especially at the top. So you can see that there was a lot for some people to be nostalgic about, to remember fondly because the system worked so well for them. Some people in this country now call that “entitlement.”

Q: Being of Jewish background means that you're likely to be more sensitive to Anti-Semitism. Were you sensing that in conversation?

COLLINS: I was not so likely to hear that because we dealt mainly with “official” Russians. So their conversation was constrained, restrained, careful, narrow, and limited. They were not apt to wax eloquently on any subject. But I know you don't have to scratch deeply below the surface to find anti-Jewish sentiment in Russia. And many Russian Jews who lived there encountered prejudice in university admissions and/or a “glass ceiling” in their profession. There was reason to believe this was true. Some did not appear to notice or encounter it, or at least to find it an issue. But if most Russians were careful to avoid raising doubts of their loyalty to the Party, Jews may have been even more so (e.g., by avoiding visiting with foreigners). There were some Jews who did rise to higher positions, served as military officers, were active in the Communist party, and may or may not have believed what they professed, like others.

Q: Well the dissidents of course.

COLLINS: Yes, many but certainly not all dissidents were Jews; but most Jews were not active dissidents. All dissidents were “anti-system.” They lived in a sort of limbo.

Q: I know that Communism was taught throughout the eastern bloc. People told me at our embassy in Warsaw that in Warsaw there must be at least three dedicated Communists in the country.

COLLINS: Yes, they taught courses in Communism, Marxism, theory at the university and at lower levels. These were required courses.

Q: Did you think when you were there that Communism had lost its luster? Was too far removed to be meaningful to people?

COLLINS: I think even in the 1960s and 1970s there was a lack of “gung ho” spirit for the whole idea. The ideology, theory, ceremonies, phrases, banners and buntings all seemed so stale and uninspiring. The exhortations on posters, so anachronistic.

Q: Striving toward a greater future....

COLLINS: Yes, and the visuals. The graphics were so retro. They harkened back to a period before I was born. They looked like the older photographs and movies I saw in my childhood,

images from the 1930s. I had the sense that the Brooklyn I knew in the 1940s as a small child was more “modern” than the Russia of the 1960s and 1970s. Stale and static. And almost nothing had changed over the decades we lived there; when we returned in 1973 from having departed in 1966, everything looked frighteningly the same, right down to the location of the ladies with their ice cream carts on street corners. I wasn’t sure whether they were the same ladies or not. But it was so incredibly stagnant, unprogressive. It was like a still picture frozen in time. Should have been in sepia tones...but was actually gray.

Q: Well it is like the ballet. They do wonderful ballet of the Tsarist times but modern dance, fancy free, has moved way ahead of them.

COLLINS: Yes, modern dance in America dates back to before I was born. Martha Graham and company. And later, Twyla Tharp, Merce Cunningham, Alvin Ailey. It was part of the orthodoxy of Russia and the Communists that you could not have a female dancer who was not *en pointe*, on her toes. Any dance with soft shoes or flat foot on the ground was not “kosher” and was not going to happen. New choreography was as unlikely as abstract art. In the 1970s it struck me was that they had achieved fantastic technique in the arts, but lacked create spirit, at least in the public venues. There wasn’t the freshness and originality that you get from new interpretation.

I understand this was true in music as well as in dance and visual arts. In theater you had greater and richer range because you could do more with acting, tone, and the selection of traditional material interpreted in ways that could seem current. Subtle, sometimes. You could do *The Brothers Karamazov* with shifting emphases. Puppet shows also allowed greater candor. But I found that the stasis of the times extended to the arts. I think some people who saw one performance of *Swan Lake*, for example, might swoon in awe. But by the 16th performance it would lose its luster, without the fresh interpretation or uniqueness of each performance. That said: performance arts were of the highest quality, amazingly proficient and professional. And sometimes truly awesome.

Q: Well the talent was there and nobody was tapping it.

COLLINS: Right. And the talented artists and performers, and film and theater directors, knew just how far they could go. They had some very good films too, as you know, but they also knew the range of subject matter and the range of attitude that you could express in any of these. I had always thought then that if they hadn’t stalled in the 1920s and could pick up from there (with Malevich and Kandinsky and all) – amazing art could emerge. And today they are picking up in literature, modern dance, and graphic arts with new interpretation. So with free reign, I think the arts can again flower in Russia. Of course without confidence in the safety of free expression, the arts can whither again...or burrow back underground for safety...or just not flourish.

Q: Well, any of us who have had liberal arts education were brought up with Russian 19th century authors and composers. They dominated – and still dominate – those fields. Then, “thump,” it stopped.

COLLINS: It was with a “thump” – a bang not a whimper – that it stopped, but before all of us were born. Lenin, Stalin, the 1920s and on. Why risk your life for the arts? Of course many people did and many didn’t survive that bet.

Q: Did you feel that you were living in a conflicted world?

COLLINS: For me, personally, and I assume for other Americans living there, we were living in two worlds at once. But I’m not sure if the Russians really felt they were living in a conflicted world. They may have felt a need to “compromise.” Perhaps some of those in higher education, arts, sciences, academic fields, did sense limits and uncertainties, calibrating their choices. We felt that people in professions wanted to know more and do more than they were able to in their setting. And the more sensitive people knew there was more and were aware of parameters. Of course for us, living between two worlds was living at the intersection of being foreigners in Russia and being the enemy living in their midst and listening to their propaganda, being under surveillance 24/7 (as we now say).

Q: Did you have any problems with surveillance?

COLLINS: I had a real problem living with it. And I had a problem with the concept. I found it very disturbing, intrusive, and discomfoting. I didn’t take it very well. It made me edgy even though I had nothing to hide. I don’t think Jim and some others necessarily felt the same way because he and they were less bothered by it. Knowing our bedroom was bugged bothered me a lot. Knowing my movements were monitored... like a mouse in a maze. They kept close tabs on us, close scrutiny. It’s inhumane. I like to talk candidly, as you’ve probably figured out, but I couldn’t do that in Moscow for fear that my grievances, annoyances, and ideas might be used against me – or more likely, against Jim. He tends to be far more careful in what he says, controlled, and good at secrets. Living with that pall made me more cautious, careful, and less opened: I didn’t like what it did to me.

Q: How did you talk?

COLLINS: Well, we didn’t really. We didn’t talk candidly when we were indoors, ever. Conversation was very limited. When we had something that was really important that had to be shared, we had to discuss it outdoors in the open air in any season, sometimes freezing. Sometimes if there was enough background noise from a crowd of people in the apartment or the music up loud, it might be possible to speak and not be overheard. Perhaps this brings us back to the high divorce rate we were discussing earlier. A marriage can survive temporary travel for a few weeks, but over months and years, this kind of constrained living takes its toll. Couldn’t even talk about one’s own children or their issues, let alone exchange or share concerns of daily life. Openness, privacy, luxuries that could not be afforded during all those years living in Russia.

Q: Did you find there were wives who couldn’t take it at all?

COLLINS: Well, the stresses were hard on everybody. I would be surprised if anybody thought all this was fine, fun, comfortable, easy, or joyous. And if the pressure of Russian surveillance

weren't hard enough on families and marriages, then there were the incredible and endless working hours of the Embassy--weekends, holidays, and evenings all considered normal working hours. When people in Washington have those schedules, at least there are outlets for their families: movies, playgrounds, restaurants, children's events, a beach or pool or mall. There wasn't even one good working playground for children in the whole city. No place for the slides and swings and climbing for a little child.

Q: Well, Russians love their children and I would think there would be children's parks.

COLLINS: There were parks, but without equipment. So kids could run around and make up stories and that's fine, too. And little play spaces with broken swings and bars, rusted metal and splintered wood. But the Russian kids would play in the building courtyards with granny, and mostly dig in the earth with their little shovels... fill their pails, dump their pails. And so we did that, too. I took the children to those places to play with the kids and the earth and shovels and pails. And the Russian kids and ours also had toy trucks they could push around or use to move earth and such. And that was fine for the little kids although I think for larger children it would have been a challenge, finding what to do. The grandmothers would talk to me and ask questions, such as why my toddlers were not wearing more clothes than they were. Why they didn't have more scarves and more hats and more mittens.

One time I was walking down the street with Jonathan in the stroller and Robert walking along and somebody stopped me and said "Why is he in a stroller?" I was thinking he is in a stroller so we can carry our stuff, so he doesn't escape, so we can cross the dangerous streets, so I can keep track of two kids -- all these complicated things going through my mind that seemed natural for a two-year-old or three-year-old in a big city in the States. The woman declared, "But he can walk, can't he?" (Insensitive question, in case he couldn't actually.) "Yes, I said, he can walk." "Then why are you pushing him in a stroller if he can walk?" I stumbled over ways to describe the many reasons I found wheels a better idea, but was mainly thinking, "mind your own business." No one had any qualms about butting into your life. So much intrusiveness. Culturally acceptable there, but irritating to me. I know I should have been more tolerant of it and I admire those who were. I did, however, always remain polite and courteous.

Q: We had this experience, too. Our first child was born in Germany. People would keep stopping us and tucking the blankets in and then looking at us with our German shepherd puppy as well, and wondering why we had a child and a puppy at the same time. So we were getting instructions on the street all the time about what we should be doing.

COLLINS: Well we did too! We certainly got instruction about the kids. If we let them climb or do anything active, we were warned to be careful or not let them do it. The big difference -- and I find this culturally significant -- is that they kept their children under very tight control from an early age. In retrospect, I think part of the reason was that it was grandmothers rather than mothers caring for the kids: now that I'm a grandmother I see that I keep closer and tighter watch on my grandchildren than I did on my children. They held their hands tightly all the time. The Russian kids actually did not run loose. They did let them play in these little courtyards or play areas, while they sat on the bench chatting with the other grannies, keeping close watch not just on their own child, but on all children.

One day, when I was walking in Gorky Park with Robert and Jonathan running loose, I heard my name called by a Russian we had known when we were students almost a decade earlier. (God knows how he found me right then and there, but....) He walked with me for a while, and then observed, "Your boys, they are so free." I said, "What do you mean so free?" He replied, "Well they are just running around by themselves. You're not holding their hands." They were probably at that time three and six. He said he always held his children's hands, and wondered if all Americans let their kids walk on their own in parks. I said once they were this age, sure. They weren't infants or toddlers any more. He added, "That is not true with Russian children. We hold very tight by the hand and not so free." Then he thought about it for a while, because he always had a very free spirit, and had been a risk-taker. He thought to wonder whether this difference might be significant. I thought it was.

Q: You hear studies about Soviet children and swaddling clothes, and how they're all bound up when they are very young.

COLLINS: They are. But that wasn't unique to Russia. I understand that Greeks and others do this, too. Yet they did bind their babies tightly in wrapped blankets from birth. Perhaps in some cases they did it with a board, too, like the American Indians. Their babies looked like little burritos. I don't recall when they stopped swaddling, but I'd guess it's when babies could hold their own heads up, weren't so floppy any more. They would air babies out year round, including in the dead of winter. Bundled up until they got used to short periods of cold, increasingly longer. But you could hardly see the baby at all for all its wrappings. Now I hear that some Americans have found that it calms babies to swaddle them so they don't flail all about, with their uncontrolled arms and legs. The tight controls continued into nursery schools at which they were treated more strictly than in ours. It seemed they had to give up teddy, bottles, and diapers at a very early age, around one year old, much earlier than we would have done. So I didn't send our kids there, feeling there is enough time to build discipline in later years, but let them enjoy being babies or toddlers.

Q: So you left there in 1975. How did you feel about leaving?

COLLINS: Oh, I was always happy to leave there. When the airplane took off on the way home I always felt exhilaration. Of course we were going to a nice home in Bethesda, to family and friends, and I couldn't wait.

RICHARD M. MILES
Soviet Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1973-1975)

Ambassador Miles was born in Arkansas in 1937. He earned an associate degree from Bakersfield College, Bachelor's degree from University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign service in 1966. His overseas posts include Oslo, Belgrade, Moscow, Leningrad,

Berlin, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia. Ambassador Miles was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

MILES: I went on the Soviet Desk. Yes, '73 to '75.

Q: Who was sort of the head Sovietologist?

MILES: Well, Jack Matlock was head of the Desk. Jack had a distinguished career and later was Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. In fact, I worked for Matlock three times in my career, starting with that assignment to the Soviet desk. Matlock had three outstanding deputies: Bill Luers, later Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Venezuela; Bob Barry, Ambassador to Bulgaria and Indonesia, and Milt Bearden. Milt was with the CIA. Later he was quite involved in Afghanistan matters after the Soviet invasion and has written two really good books about that period. Stape Roy was the head of my section, which was what we called "Multilateral Affairs", and then Stape was later replaced by Ben Zook. I don't know if you knew Ben or not.

Q: No.

MILES: A real character. I loved Ben. Stape Roy went on to become one of our Career Ambassadors and Jack, of course, had his own career as Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

Q: Well, how stood relations, this would be '70-what—'72 to '74?

MILES: What was that then, I'm sorry?

Q: I mean, when you were on the Desk?

MILES: Seventy-three to '75.

Q: Seventy-three to '75. In '73, when you got there, how stood relations with the Soviet Union?

MILES: Well, this was the heyday of détente, you remember, and so relations were good but, of course, that only went so far. You had the beginning of our programs of scientific co-operation. We were doing a fair amount with the Soviets on ecology, putting tags on polar bears, that sort of thing. Soviet scientists could attend conferences in western countries; our scientific people could go to the Soviet Union. There would usually be an annual summit—the Desk would help to prepare for those. But the Russians still had their agenda and we still had ours and they were still considered "the threat". I used to go out and talk to college groups and groups of interested citizens, international affairs councils, that kind of thing, around the United States, to talk up détente, basically, and it was not always an easy sell out there. Oddly enough, in the Midwest there was more understanding than there was in some of the more sophisticated parts of the country, because, you remember, we were starting to sell grain, to sell corn and wheat to the Soviet Union, and the farmers thought that was just jim-dandy. But on arms control issues, the

Americans I talked to, and this was all over the country—the West, the South, wherever—people were uneasy, they were skeptical.

Q: Well, did you have any particular piece of the action?

MILES: No, not on arms control issues. Arms control is a world unto itself and I just never entered that world. That may have been a mistake on my part, but that's the way things worked out for me. In our shop, multilateral affairs, we basically divided up the world geographically. I did Africa, the Middle East, Central and South America and the United Nations. The United Nations portfolio got me into all sorts of other interesting things like direct broadcast satellites—that's what we called them at that time. Of course, there were no such satellites then, but the Soviets and the French in particular really wanted to have very strong national control of whatever TV might eventually be transmitted into their countries or into francophone Africa or the Soviet bloc. What with all the satellite TV that we have now—you can receive satellite TV everywhere from a New York penthouse to some hovel in Bangladesh—it seems strange to recall all those food fights over these issues in various international forums and the like. But that's one of the issues that I followed some thirty years ago.

And then we had someone else in the office who did Asia—Southwest Asia and Asia proper. And then there was a whole different office that did Soviet internal affairs. The bilateral relationship was largely handled by Matlock and the deputies.

Q: Well, how did we view Soviet activity in Africa? Because there was quite a bit at this time.

MILES: There was a lot of concern over the Soviets in Africa and in our own minds we drew them maybe larger than life. We saw that they were spending a lot of money there; we saw the Patrice Lumumba University thing in Moscow, where they would bring people up from Africa or other parts of the third world for full scholarships to study everything from engineering to medicine. The students would study six or seven years to become a doctor or whatever and then go back to their home country. There was a lot of fretting about that. We saw them peddling arms; we saw them cozying up to dictators and strongmen. And we worried over the ideological appeal of all this. There was always this constant argument in the Department about ideology—is there a Soviet ideology, and if there is, how important is it? To what degree do people actually subscribe to it? And with the exception of Cuba, maybe, I don't think the Washington foreign policy establishment ever really paid that much attention to ideology. I was always interested in ideology because I had studied Marxism-Leninism in college and I felt that it was a motivating factor; maybe not the primary motivating factor any more, but still a motivating factor and I thought that it had a certain appeal in the third world, especially to young, idealistic people. But frankly, we never were able to get much traction on the issue of ideology with the Seventh Floor in the Department or over at the White House.

Q: Well, from your own personal viewpoint, did you see the Soviet effort taking hold in Africa?

MILES: Well, they were active certainly and we couldn't tell how effective it was; there was a question mark over it at that time.

Q: This is tape three, side one, with Dick Miles. Yes.

MILES: The Soviets had strong diplomats in Africa, very good people. They were selling some arms; they were providing some economic assistance. They still had a stronghold in Egypt. That was before the switch. They had a stronghold in Somalia, which was on the Red Sea. Well, stronghold in the sense that they had a strong relationship. So yes, we did fret about the Soviets and about the Cubans as well. The Cubans were heavily involved in Africa as well—we believed at Soviet behest. I'm not sure to what degree that was true, but in any case the Cubans were definitely there so there was certainly a hell of a lot of smoke to be seen if not a great amount of actual fire.

Q: What about Latin America? Was there much happening there?

MILES: Well, not a lot at that time. The radicalization of Central America came a bit later. With hindsight, there was probably more going on than we realized, but we on the Soviet Desk didn't pay much attention to Central America at that time, to speak frankly. Cuba was sort of isolated and we were happy enough with that situation. Remember I'm talking about these situations from the standpoint of Soviet policy.

Q: Did you have a Middle East—?

MILES: Yes. And I spent probably most of my time on the Middle East.

Q: What was happening in the Middle East at this time?

MILES: Well, the Soviets were heavily involved with the Egyptians. We were still heavily involved with Saudi Arabia and in Iran, of course. The two pillars of our regional policy, Kissinger said. I remember sitting in when one of the fairly high ranking Soviet diplomats from their embassy in Washington called on the Israeli Desk officer. It was a Friday afternoon, on the eve of the October War, and I sat in from the Soviet Desk. The consensus among all of us was that, despite heightened tension in the region, it was going to be a quiet weekend. We were concerned because the Soviets had withdrawn their dependents from Egypt and we had indications of a military buildup on the Egyptian side but we also had indications that the Israelis were aware of this and had organized a counter-buildup as well, so, practically speaking, we didn't think the situation would deteriorate over the weekend. And that meeting actually calmed us all down a little bit because the Soviet officer indicated that this withdrawal of dependents was just a precautionary measure on the part of the Soviet Ambassador in Cairo and that the Soviet Embassy in Washington thought things would quiet down.

Well, I was called the next morning, Saturday morning, by Jack Matlock who said, "Dick, do you remember our conversation yesterday after your meeting? I'm sorry to say that war has broken out in the Middle East so you may want to come on in." Well, that began a pretty intense period of activity. Of course, Kissinger was extremely busy with all this, but we all did our best to provide him the best information and analysis that we could produce.

I don't remember if Dr. Kissinger was still at the NSC or if he had moved over to the State Department at that point but he was of course vitally interested in what was going on there and the degree to which the Soviets might be involved. And there was a considerable fuss over whether or not some Soviet nuclear weaponry might or might not have been shipped out through the Bosphorus for potential use. It was never clear. It was never settled, really, but, boy, there was a lot of interest in that, let me tell you. So that was a very exciting time, I must say. And of course the United States was doing things like going to a higher DEFCON status which meant that the American military planes were all fueled and ready to go, weapons checked and made ready. So it was a tense time.

Q: Well, if I recall, were not the—some Soviet airborne divisions alerted or something?

MILES: Yes. I think seven divisions were alerted down in the Northern Caucasus and made ready for possible deployment. That, plus the possible movement of Soviet nuclear weaponry, got us pretty excited.

Q: How much information were you getting from the Israelis about what was going on?

MILES: Well, you know, there are layers and layers of intelligence, and at the level at which I was operating at that time I didn't see a lot of that intelligence. And so the stuff that I got through the ordinary communications system was not terribly helpful, frankly.

Q: Was there a feeling at your level that the Soviets might come in?

MILES: I think the general feeling was that they would not, that they were posturing and, of course, we would do that too. We'd send an aircraft carrier just to be there, to demonstrate that we know what's going on, we're uneasy, we are prepared but we don't really intend to use our power. And the Soviets were doing the same thing for the same reason. Anyhow, I think that was the general feeling in the Department and the NSC. But there is always an element of unpredictability in these matters and so there was also genuine concern in Washington over developments.

Q: Well, weren't the Soviets, too, in a sort of peculiar position? Because Sadat had essentially kicked the Soviets out, hadn't he?

MILES: Not yet.

Q: Hadn't kicked them out?

MILES: Oh, no, not at all. I don't remember the exact degree of military involvement that they had at that time, but Egypt possessed mountains of Soviet-supplied military equipment. All of the Egyptian officers had been trained by the Soviets and I'm sure they had strong personal relationships. But I don't think Soviet officers were out in the front area particularly, except for a few military observers. I never had any good information along those lines, but certainly the Soviet officers were still present in Egypt and in large numbers.

Q: Although you weren't dealing with internal things, you were surely aware of the work of Khrushchev? How was he viewed from the desk?

MILES: I don't recall exactly who was in power at that time; I'd have to look at the chronology.

Q: Actually Khrushchev was out by then.

MILES: I think he must have been.

Q: Yes, he must have been out. It was Brezhnev.

MILES: I had studied some of Khrushchev's actions when I was back at Indiana University and I think, with the major exception of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which broke out while I was at the university, I think the general feeling was that Khrushchev was doing some pretty exciting things which were going to change Soviet society but that it would remain Soviet, you know—these things wouldn't bring the Soviet Union down, cause its collapse or whatever, although basically the things that Khrushchev initiated were the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union. We just didn't see it at that time.

Q: Well then, you left the desk in '75?

MILES: Yes.

JOHN NIX
General Services Officer
Moscow, USSR (1973-1975)

John Nix was born in Alabama in 1938. He attended the U.S. Military Academy and served in the U.S. Army from 1960 to 1971 as a major overseas. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1971, his assignments abroad have included Nairobi, Moscow, Nicosia, Athens and Berlin. Mr. Nix was interviewed in 1994 by Raymond Ewing.

NIX: In '73, I came back to Washington, studied Russian, and then went off to Moscow as assistant GSO in the embassy in Moscow.

Q: How much Russian did you study? How many months?

NIX: I was able to get in about three months of Russian, which got me to the 2/2 level.

Q: Had you had some Russian before?

NIX: No, I had never studied it before. But it's a fairly easy language to get up to the 2/2 level in. Making the next step is difficult.

Q: Fluency.

NIX: Complete fluency is very difficult. But it was absolutely necessary to get to the 2/2 level because, in those days in the embassy in Moscow, we had about 300 Russian employees assigned to us by the Russian Foreign Ministry. The interface between those Russian employees and the embassy personnel was with the lower level employees like myself. As the assistant GSO, I supervised the Russians who did the maintenance work in the apartments and office buildings. We also operated our own garage, motor pool, etc. It was absolutely necessary to have at least a 2/2 level in Russian. By the time I left, I had gotten to the 3/3 level in terms of the working vocabulary that I needed to communicate with the Russian workers.

Q: Because the Russian employees that you worked with or supervised mostly did not speak English?

NIX: A few in the front office spoke English. But when I was out on a job working with the crews, no, they did not speak English at all. At least, they didn't admit it.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time that you were there and what was the political situation generally?

NIX: In the beginning, Spike Dubbs, who was later killed by terrorists in Afghanistan, was the chargé. He remained the chargé for about a year, and then Walter Stoessel took over as ambassador. We were in a period of what in those days was considered detente. Nixon, of course, had started this policy toward the Soviet Union. As hallmarks, I can just mention that in the summer of 1974, Nixon made his last trip abroad to Moscow. We traveled with him around the Soviet Union. I helped support his visit to Yalta. He was accompanied on that visit by Henry Kissinger and Al Haig and various other well-known figures. They spent a couple of days in Yalta with Brezhnev. So, we were in a period where we considered relations to be on the upswing, let's say, at least on the national level. For example, on the day I left Moscow in the summer of 1975, we had the Apollo-Soyuz linkup in outer space, which at that time certainly was the high point of our relations for many years. It wasn't long after that that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan took place, which led to reintroduction of the Cold War for a number of years.

Q: I'd be interested in hearing a little bit more about President Nixon's visit to Yalta and the Crimea. That was, what, in the summer?

NIX: The summer of '74, very, very shortly before he resigned.

Q: He also went to the Middle East on that trip, didn't he? Or was that a separate trip?

NIX: I believe he did go to Egypt and Israel.

Q: But the talks with Brezhnev were held in Yalta because that was kind of their summer...?

NIX: Well, there was that, but there was also the idea that in some way President Nixon wanted to undo the results of the Yalta meeting from World War II days. There was a lot of symbolism, but in actual fact, of course, because of Nixon's weakened political situation, to my knowledge, there were no significant agreements reached.

To back up just a moment, in '73, you remember, of course, Henry Kissinger was appointed the Secretary of State and the Mid East war broke out. His first trip abroad as Secretary of State was to Moscow. We had worked closely with Moscow through that period from late '73 to the summer of '74, trying to resolve the Mid East conflict and eventually, of course, did sign the disengagement agreement, which basically is still in effect to this day with Egypt. We're still patrolling the disengagement zone.

Q: Right, and I think there was also at least an understanding reached with Syria about the Golan Heights.

NIX: There probably was at the same time, but I'm just trying to put in context that Nixon's trip came more or less at the end of this period of closely working with Moscow in trying to resolve the Middle East problem. I think most of the discussions probably revolved around that.

Q: What were some of the other main responsibilities, chores, problems that you had while you were in Moscow?

NIX: The biggest thing, of course, was the day to day life. For example, we did open, while I was there a commercial office. It was the first one we had ever had in Moscow. Tom Niles, who is now ambassador to Greece, was our first commercial officer.

Q: Was that in the embassy?

NIX: No, we had to acquire space and prepare it and outfit it so that it could function in a way that would at least be helpful to American businessmen coming to Moscow and trying to set up some kind of business presence there. In those days, it was still very common for a businessman to come to Moscow, check into a hotel, stay there two or three years trying to get a business relationship going and when he left, still be in the same hotel. You just couldn't get facilities. You couldn't get apartments to live in. You couldn't get office space. So, our new commercial office, as we called it, turned out to be their offices. We established rooms and cubicles and so forth with telephones and connections to the outside world.

Q: Where businessmen could actually function.

NIX: Where businessmen could come in and use the facilities to their hearts' content and have access to whatever advice and support we could provide to them. One of my major responsibilities was to set up this office and get it running and then to conduct the interminable negotiations with the Soviet foreign ministry over every minor detail involved in the process. Even to put an air conditioner outside the building, so that we could keep it livable in there in the summer, required months of negotiations.

Q: Did other countries have similar commercial offices in Moscow at that time or were we kind of setting the precedent?

NIX: We were setting the precedent because this was one of those statements emanating from a high level meeting: "We will establish commercial offices in each other's capitals." Then, of course, it boils down to how do we get this done. It took a year to actually get the thing set up and running.

I did get to travel around quite a bit in support of high level visits. For example, Treasury Secretary Simon made a couple of very important visits there and I was assigned to be his advance man in Tashkent. I spent two or three weeks out there preparing the ground for his visit. This experience was very interesting to me travel, since travel outside Moscow and Leningrad by foreign diplomats was severely restricted. You couldn't just book a flight and go somewhere. You had to have a reason and it had to be approved by the Foreign Ministry.

Q: But from the point of view of the Soviet government, they probably were pleased to have the American Secretary of the Treasury or the American President prepare to visit and allowed us, allowed you, to do some things in Tashkent or Yalta or wherever that a political officer of the embassy probably wouldn't have been able to have done at all.

NIX: Possibly. I think that's one interpretation. Usually, it boiled down to the simple question of embassy resources and the fact that instead of sending a team of three or four people to a place, they tried to pick someone who both spoke Russian, had a little bit of knowledge of the country, that basically could handle all of the administrative aspects of the visit. So, you wouldn't have to send two or three people. You could just send one.

Q: To take the example of the Treasury Secretary's visit, you went two or three weeks ahead of time to Tashkent and then you stayed through the visit itself?

NIX: Yes, I stayed through the visit. Administrative support was my primary responsibility.

Q: And then, I suppose, others from the embassy, including perhaps the ambassador, came down for the actual visit?

NIX: They did accompany him on his plane to the actual meetings. He flew from Tashkent directly on to New Delhi. That was another thing that happened that had not been allowed by the Soviets before. They were able to depart from Tashkent directly to another capital rather than going back through Moscow and leaving in that direction.

The entire two years was interesting. As I said, things looked to be on the upswing when I left because of the Apollo-Soyuz linkup, which in itself, of course, was the culmination of a long period of close cooperation in the space program. We had Russian astronauts in Houston training and American astronauts had been in Moscow and out at the Soviet space facilities for two years.

Q: When did you leave? You left in 1975?

NIX: In July of '75.

Q: Which was just prior to the conference in Helsinki that President Ford attended of the Conference of Security, Cooperation in Europe, which was very important.

NIX: That's right. One of Ford's first trips abroad after the Nixon resignation was in 1974 to Vladivostok to meet with Brezhnev. For the Ford administration, that was a key point in its relationship with the Soviet Union.

Q: I think he combined that with some visits elsewhere in the Far East.

NIX: Japan. The interesting thing was, of course, that Brezhnev would agree to go to Vladivostok to meet him, which in itself showed that we had a fairly good relationship.

Q: Of course, it's amazing how large the Soviet Union was in terms of...

NIX: Of course, Vladivostok had been closed to foreigners since the war, let alone a national leader.

Q: At the time you were there, John, was our consulate in Leningrad open?

NIX: Yes, it was. It opened a year before I arrived. I actually studied Russian with Gary Matthews, who went out to be the deputy principal officer up there. Culver Gleysteen was the consulate general at that time. It was open and it represented another major step forward in our relations.

Q: Were you involved in supporting the consulate much?

NIX: To a certain extent. There were several things that we did help them with, but they had their own administrative and communications staff. Of course, they called on us when necessary. There were a lot of things they couldn't procure in Leningrad that we could get for them in Moscow. But on the other hand, they had easier access to Finland and to the outside world, so to speak, then we did, so they were able to get most of the things they needed for themselves.

Q: Helsinki has always been an important outlook, if you will, for St. Petersburg, Leningrad, Moscow. Were you getting a lot of administrative support in those days from Helsinki or from elsewhere in Western Europe?

NIX: We got most of it from Helsinki, although there was still a regularly scheduled military support flight out of Frankfurt. We also got a lot of support from Berlin. We had, for example, a food shipment allowance and most of it came out of the commissary in West Berlin via truck to Moscow. The mission in Berlin had a Moscow support unit. The consulate in Frankfurt had a Moscow support unit and the embassy in Helsinki had a Moscow support unit. We got our mail, our pouches, and so forth, through Helsinki. They came in by train each Friday from Helsinki. The APO was run through Helsinki. We got almost all of our fresh food from Helsinki by train.

Q: How often did the flight come in from Frankfurt?

NIX: It was irregular, basically because each flight required lengthy negotiation with the Russians. There was no such thing as just saying to the Russians, "Can we have a military support flight each month?" Each one was a new ballgame. You went in and started negotiating. I'd say, on the average, probably every three months.

Q: At the time you were there, had we started the construction of the new chancery, the new embassy building?

NIX: No, all I saw was the model. We had done all the preliminary work with the architects. Of course, the site was there right behind the old embassy. We had supported the architects in their evaluation of the site. As I say, they had gotten to the point of making a model showing exactly how the thing was going to be constructed. But then that had to be put in the deep freeze for a while because of a decline of our relations following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Then the well-known history played out.

Q: Part of that history, of course, involved questions about the Foreign Service national employees and to whom were they loyal and whether they were security risks for us and so on. Was that a major concern at the time you were there with the Soviet/Russian employees who you worked with? Were they competent? Were they qualified to do the jobs they were doing for the most part?

NIX: For the most part, they were qualified, responsive and followed orders. They didn't go beyond the minimum, of course. Their colleagues would not have accepted it if they had used their own initiative to do anything. Exactly what they wanted to do, they normally did. We were told that all local employers must be considered intelligence agents for the Soviet intelligence services. At the very least, they would all be required periodically to go back and be debriefed by the Soviet intelligence services on everything they had heard, seen, learned, while they were working for us. I'm morally certain that some penetrations of the embassy occurred over the years which could be traced to the Soviet workers.

Q: You mentioned at the time you were there, John, that American businessmen would come in, often spend two or three years in a hotel because they couldn't get other accommodations or facilities. The American community at the time, was it mostly the business people and generalists and a few students? Was that about it?

NIX: You've just pretty well summed it up. We had a fairly large embassy staff, which, of course, was the center of the American community in Moscow. We had representation from most of the leading newspapers and news organizations. Then a few business people and students. That was it. There were very few American tourists coming to Moscow in those days, very few. Since Russians were very restricted in their travel, to be honest, our consular section had very little to do. They worked a lot on minority affairs. For example, shortly after I left, a family from a Christian sect took refuge in the embassy and actually lived there for a number of years in the basement before the issue was finally resolved. Of course, the Jewish immigration question was always something that was of great concern to the consular section, trying to resolve the

so-called "Refusnik" issues, people who had applied for visas to emigrate to Israel and the exit visas hadn't been granted. (Yes, the Soviet Union required exit visas for all its citizens.) But there was not a lot of intercourse with American tourists, nor with Russians and tourists traveling to the United States.

Q: Is there anything else about your tour in Moscow that was memorable that you want to mention at this point?

NIX: I remember an embassy under great psychological pressure. Living conditions were tense and difficult. It was by far the most unpleasant working experience that I've ever gone through in the Foreign Service because the people in the American community were on edge and under pressure. For example, during the time I was there, we had the infamous incident of microwave radiation being directed against the embassy by the Soviets. Of course, this led to galloping paranoia among everyone. We did, coincidentally, have a large number of deaths from cancer and several birth defects.

Q: After people had left?

NIX: During and after. We had at least three instances of birth defects in children born to people who were serving at the embassy in that period. Some of this happened during the time we were there. This built up into a climate of near-hysteria. Employee town meetings in Moscow were not easy things to get through.

Q: As I recall, the microwave incident, with the rays allegedly directed at the embassy, that became a public matter in the American press probably after you left Moscow.

NIX: It became public after, I believe, in 1975 or 1976.

Q: But you were quite aware of it at the time you were there?

NIX: Certainly the rumor mill was active. Of course, that was even worse than having it become well-known and officially acknowledged. I believe the Department made a huge mistake in not just coming clean with the employees up front, perhaps by asking them to sign a statement of awareness that in Moscow they were going to be subject to microwave radiation. The Department did, in fact, keep it secret from the employees for as long as it could, until the subject broke in the newspaper. That was an unenlightened personnel policy that would not be repeated in today's climate.

Q: Against everything you've just said about the difficulties of service in Moscow from the period of 1973 to '75, how would you describe the morale overall of the Embassy?

NIX: It was terrible, just terrible. The worst morale I've ever seen. The divorce rate among employees in Moscow was unbelievable. I do believe it had something to do with service in Moscow. I don't think it was the sole reason, but I think in a lot of cases, the service there just forced people inward upon themselves and led to a lot of family and personality problems that surfaced in this way.

Q: What sort of living accommodations did you have?

NIX: Living accommodations were not bad. I had a nice large apartment in the embassy, in the north wing, three bedrooms, fairly large living room/dining room combination, decent kitchen, quite a bit of storage space. The accommodations were good. The support facilities were always suspect. I mean, your electricity would go off and your hot water would go off and so forth. But you can find those kind of conditions in any third world country. We considered it a third world country as far as basic living conditions were concerned. The facilities just weren't there. Moscow had seven million people and not one functioning garage where a person could take a car to be fixed. It's hard for people to believe that such conditions could exist who've never experienced them, but they did. It didn't appear to bother the Russians. They were accustomed to this. But foreigners had a hard time adjusting.

Q: Many years after you left Moscow, the Soviet Union collapsed and the various republics that constituted the Soviet Union became independent nations, independent states. You described some of the problems of living in Moscow and the difficulties that were prevalent, very apparent at the time. Could you have anticipated that it was going to come to that within two decades of the time you left?

NIX: No, absolutely not. I could never have predicted that it would happen so quickly. If you look at it from the standpoint of the Soviet Union alone, it's still hard to believe. Even today, I'm sure there are a great number of former Soviet citizens who would like to return to the days when they had a fairly secure, well-ordered, predictable life. As we all know, they're having a great deal of difficulty adjusting right now. The Eastern European satellites, of course, we always knew were a weak point in the so-called "Soviet Empire." Even during the years when I was in the military and during my subsequent career in the reserve forces, one of the major estimates, if you will, was that the Eastern European satellites would not be reliable allies for the Soviet Union in the case of a crisis. Some people in those days who were experts on the Soviet Union went further to say that the nationalities within the Soviet Union would not be reliable and I think that's been proven to be valid.

But to your original question, I couldn't have foreseen it. I never thought the Soviet system made sense in individual terms or in national terms, but they seemed to have things tightly controlled. Even now, though I was stationed in Berlin just after the wall fell, it's still hard to believe that the system crumbled so rapidly.

Q: Let me come back to something that isn't directly related to your service in Moscow. You said you were in the Army Reserve after you left active duty. I assume that when you were in Nairobi and Moscow, you really didn't have any Reserve obligation, or did you?

NIX: I didn't technically have an obligation, but I was able normally to do my two weeks training every year. I took correspondence courses. I completed the Army Command and General Staff College and the Army War College by correspondence. I kept as active as I could. In my period back here in Washington between '75 and '80, I stayed very active and held several positions in Reserve units in the Washington area.

WILLIS J. SUTTER
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Moscow (1973-1975)

Willis J. Sutter was born in New Jersey in 1936. He received a bachelor's degree from St. Joseph's College and a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1954-1957. Mr. Sutter entered the Foreign Service in 1966. His career included positions in Thailand, the Soviet Union, Laos, Zaire, and Mauritania. Mr. Sutter was interviewed by Jack O'Brien in 1988.

SUTTER: The other assignment that really stands out in my memory is the two year period I spent as an assistant cultural affairs officer in Moscow, from 1973 to the summer of 1975.

Q: Did you go there with or without any language preparation?

SUTTER: I had ten months of Russian. The full load. It is impossible to go there without Russian -- or it is useless to go there without Russian. Not just because you could not do your work, but also because you really could not experience the Soviet Union unless you could speak Russian. Some Soviets speak English. There are some that do, but not that many.

Q: So, what year did you go to Moscow?

SUTTER: I went in 1973. June of 1973. Just as the ice was breaking. This was at the height of detente basically. I think President Nixon had been there in 1972 to sign whatever agreements it was that he signed with the Soviets. That made a great difference in the working atmosphere in Moscow. My predecessor had a very difficult time getting into see the Soviet officials. I had almost no trouble whatsoever in getting to talk with them. The difference was not our personalities. The difference was the Soviets had been told that things were relaxed and that they ought to work a little more closely with us.

I was in charge of the educational exchange program, so I had to go frequently over to the Ministry of Higher Education to talk about details of the exchange. My predecessor had a very hard time getting in to see people. I had no trouble whatsoever. On a couple of occasions, when I had an urgent matter to discuss, and could not reach my contacts on the phone, I would simply go over there personally and just walk in unannounced. That was unheard of earlier, but the atmosphere had so changed that the Russians took this without any particular affront or difficulty. They were not uncomfortable. We always got our work done.

What really stands out in my mind, is President Nixon's visit in June of 1974. This was about two months before he resigned because of Watergate. He had come attempting to refurbish his image. Before that he had gone to Cairo. He had been enthusiastically received by President Sadat. There was that famous train trip from Cairo down to Alexandria. Then he got on the plane

and came to Moscow. For no other reason than to get some good media coverage.

The Russians, really wanted to support Nixon, and were very anxious to keep him in power if they could, because they were used to dealing with him. They understood him. Like everybody else, they do not like surprises or new personalities who they do not know very well. So they went all out to make Nixon feel very welcome.

They gave him a big reception at the St. George's hall -- in the Kremlin. It is a big reception hall with columns inscribed with the names of all the Russians who have been given the -- I think it is called -- the Medal of St. George, a czarist award. They have kept the hall for whatever reasons, and they use it for these ceremonial receptions. It is all gold and white.

I was invited. I attended. I can recall very clearly that President Nixon walked in along with Brezhnev, and Kosygin, who was then the President of the USSR, Gromyko was there, the Foreign Minister, and Henry Kissinger, who was at that time Secretary of State. They all marched in rather formally. They stopped about twelve feet away from where I was, while the band played the Soviet -- first the American and then the Soviet national anthem -- I can remember watching them.

First of all, they all looked like they had come out of a waxworks. They all looked deathly ill for some reason. I am not quite sure what the reason was, particularly the Russians. Although, Nixon was not looking in particularly good shape himself, the Russians looked like they had just stepped out of a waxworks or out of an embalmer's studio. They all looked, as I said, deathly ill.

Off to the side Was Alexander Haig, who was at that time, Nixon's Chief of Staff. He was wearing a gray suit and had a briefcase with him, which he was clutching to his chest with both arms and looking down at the floor, while they played the national anthems, as though he had great, deep, dark secrets on his mind.

Of course, he did. He realized that Nixon was on his last legs -- the Nixon presidency was on its last legs. I can remember very clearly the contrast between the grandeur as the national anthem was playing, and off to the side this grave presence. The evidence grieves Haig who knows all the deep and dark secrets, and "knows" what the real end is probably going to be. That has always stuck with me.

I forget what the term is -- you know, "How fast glory passes." Sic transit gloria. It was a rather sad occasion.

Weeks later a colleague of mine came down, woke me up in my apartment and said that Nixon was on VOA -- this was three o'clock in the morning, Moscow time -- Nixon's on VOA and he is resigning. We all sat up and listened to VOA as Nixon delivered his resignation speech. It was quite a moment.

Q: You spent how many years in Moscow?

SUTTER: I spent two years there.

Q: Did working conditions change after Nixon's resignation?

SUTTER: They changed a lot shortly after I left, because of the worsening of relations between ourselves and the Soviets. Yes, things got worse after Nixon left. That is for sure. I am not sure there is a real close cause and effect relationship there. I recall talking to colleagues after I left and they had much harder times getting in to see their contacts than I had. People were beginning to be harassed again by the KGB. People, that is, who had close contacts with the Soviets.

I was harassed twice myself by the KGB, because I had a very close friend -- not close friend, but a good acquaintance -- who was a well known dissident in Georgia -- Tbilisi. Whenever I went to Tbilisi on business, I would always see this particular person. The KGB did not like that very much. They would come to my hotel room at eight o'clock in the morning and say that the hotel administrator wanted to talk to me.

I knew very well who the hotel administrator was. I went to this little room and there would be this "administrator" sitting up at a little dais, almost as though he were a judge. He was flanked by people on his left and right. There would be one chair in front of his desk. He would ask me to sit down. In this particular occasion, I had spent all night out with my Georgian friend. He said, "We noticed you were not in your room last night. Where were you?" He said, "We know you speak Russian." I said, in Russian, "I do." They had a translator there, because I knew the person who was the translator. I said, "I see you have an English translator here and I would prefer to speak in English." He agreed to that.

Then he said, in Russian, very roughly, "We noticed you were not in your room last night. Where were you?" I said in English, "That is none of your fucking business!" I watched very carefully as the translator translated. He translated what I said exactly. With that, the so called administrator softened his tone.

He said they were very concerned about my welfare, because something could have happened to me and, of course, they were responsible to the authorities in Moscow for my well being while I was in Tbilisi, etc., etc., etc. I said, "I do not know what could have happened to me, because there are no hooligans in Tbilisi, as you know. So what could have possibly have happened to me?" I said, "What happened was, my friend and I were drinking a lot and I know that the laws against drinking and driving are very severe. I insisted that he not drive me back to the hotel that night, but that I stay in his apartment instead. That is what I did." With that, I got up and left.

Q: Did you travel with another American usually or did you go by yourself?

SUTTER: No. On all these trips to Tbilisi, I traveled by myself. That is to say, not with another American from the Embassy. The formal rule was, you were supposed to travel with another American from the Embassy. But, on many occasions, I went down by myself. I was sent down by myself. It was not as though I was sneaking out. Often those rules were honored more in the breach than in the observance.

Q: Tell us, Will, a little bit about the housekeeping side of working in Moscow. To begin with,

where you lived.

SUTTER: We lived in Leninsky Prospect which is on one of the major thoroughfares. It was, as I recall, on the southeastern side of Moscow. It was out near where Moscow University is located. It was a big block of apartment buildings that were dedicated to diplomats. On my particular stairwell, I think there were almost all Americans. But, in other stairwells, we had East Germans, Czech's, French, Romanians. As I recall, there were Cambodians there. Yes, there were Cambodians there -- not Cambodians, I am sorry, South Vietnamese. Because, when Saigon fell, I was in Moscow. I can remember the South Vietnamese diplomats leaving their apartments, packing up their goods and taking off, after the government had changed in Saigon.

Our apartment block was watched very closely. We had a KGB guard downstairs. He checked over everybody who came and went. No Soviet could come in to see us without first passing this guard. When we gave parties and invited some of our Soviet contacts, we would have to go downstairs and inform the KGB guard that Soviets were coming, to visit us. We would give him their names. When they came, they would show him the invitation that I had sent, and then he would permit them to proceed. But, no unauthorized Soviets could come into see us.

Q: In the office, did you have a Russian assistant, or more than one?

SUTTER: We had a Russian assistant in the cultural section in which I was, yes. Her name was Asaya, a very attractive Soviet woman, with a rather tragic personal history, as I recall. But, the common belief around the compound in the Embassy, was that Asaya was the KGB colonel in the compound. It could well have been so. She was a bright, able woman. I can recall once, somebody caught her literally with her ear to the keyhole, listening to a conversation in there. They could be very clumsy at times.

We always assumed that every Soviet in the compound was reporting on us, and we acted accordingly. Sometimes it was useful, because we could sometimes pass messages back to the Soviets by using these people, you know, by dropping a comment in front of them, that you knew would get reported back -- that you wanted to get reported back, particularly when we were in negotiations concerning visiting artistic groups from the United States, like the San Francisco Symphony, for example. If we were really frosted off by the attitude of the hotels, we would sometimes say that in front of our Soviet colleagues. They would pass it back, sometimes it was helpful.

Q: Did you listen to the Voice of America regularly?

SUTTER: We listened to the Voice of America all the time. When I was there, it was not being jammed. At least it was not being jammed as much as it had been. They did jam occasionally. The jamming station, as I recall, was about two blocks away from the Embassy. I can recall one of my first impressions of my tour there, was being taken by the assistant information officer to a window in the Embassy and he pointed to a tower, two or three blocks away, and he said that's where they jam VOA -- or at least one of the sites. There are, of course, many in Moscow.

Q: How about cooperation, if any, with allied countries? For example, in your area, the

exchanges program? Did you compare notes with, say the British, or others on that subject?

SUTTER: We compared notes with the British from time to time, because they had a similar exchange to ours. We had the Fulbright exchange. We sent over, I think it was, about thirty graduate students a year. Most of them were doing their Ph.D.'s dissertations and needed to research the Soviet archives there. We would receive thirty graduate students from the Soviet Union, most of whom were in the sciences -- the hard sciences.

The British had a similar exchange. So, yes, we would get together with them and compare notes about attitudes and the Ministry of Higher Education, problems and so forth. Not so much with the other countries for, I guess, a variety of reasons. They did not have the same kind of exchange with the Soviets that we did. The British did.

Q: Did you leave Moscow wishing to stay longer or was two years enough?

SUTTER: When I left, I felt two years was enough. I had three unpleasant incidents with the KGB, within, I guess, two or three months of my departure. I felt that was enough.

The working conditions in the Embassy were not particularly salubrious and that tended to wear you out. The work itself was rather demanding, although exhilarating, too. When I left -- two years -- I figured I had enough of it. I would go back, if I could go back under the same conditions that prevailed in 1973. This is to say, ease of contact with both officials and private Soviets. But, things had tightened up shortly after I left and I would not want to work in Moscow under those conditions.

Q: Anything more on your Moscow tour you would like to discuss, Will?

SUTTER: Well, nothing professional. I had this interesting contact with this Georgian dissident who, several months after my departure, was arrested and tried publicly by the Soviets. His trial was televised throughout the Soviet Union, as I understand it. He was jailed. He was a Georgian Nationalist essentially. He was the son of a very prominent Georgian writer. He disliked the Russians simply because he thought they were attempting to destroy Georgian culture. He used to use me as a conduit for sending things out of the country to a variety of places, including Amnesty International in London.

Q: Did you have to check with your superiors before doing that?

SUTTER: Yes. They were always aware of what I was doing. I checked with them, with the security people and, of course, the people in the political section of the Embassy. I always kept them informed of what I was doing.

SOL POLANSKY
Soviet Affairs: Exchange Program Officer
Washington, DC (1973-1976)

Ambassador Polansky was born in New Jersey and raised in New Jersey and California. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Russian Institute, New York City. After service in the U.S. Navy, he joined the Department of State in 1952 and was commissioned Foreign Service Officer in 1957. A Russian specialist, he served in Poznan, East and West Berlin, Moscow, Vienna and Sofia, Bulgaria, where he served as United States Ambassador from 1987 to 1990. In his tours at the State Department in Washington, D.C. he dealt primarily with East Europe Affairs. Ambassador Polansky was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: Then you got back into Soviet Affairs from 1973 until 1976.

POLANSKY: It wasn't necessarily what I wanted to do. At that point I didn't really want to go back into the Exchanges program, which is what actually did happen. It was the first time I really tried to get out of thing out of things in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, without success. I thought it would be worthwhile to have an assignment in Latin America, but never having an assignment there, and not having Spanish, there was no place for me. By default, the only thing that was open was on the Exchanges staff, and that is where I was assigned.

Q: Was this under Soviet Affairs?

POLANSKY: It was a separate office and covered both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. As a result of one the reorganizations in the Department--trying to cut out positions--the office itself was divided up, with part of it going to SOV as a separate unit, and part of it going to EUR as a separate unit. I wound up being in charge of that part of SOV that dealt with exchanges with the Soviet Union and worked with people on IREX issues. That part of the office worked on a whole range of bilateral exchange agreements that various agencies had with the Soviet Union. I had to work with agencies in terms of implementation.

Q: One has the impression that we were really trying to get a reasonable exchange of people; the idea that the more we could reach into influential in another society, the more they will be favorably inclined towards us. At the same time, one gets the impression that the Soviets looked upon this as a way of getting agents into the United States....

POLANSKY:or gain technical information. There is a constant battle between us and the Soviets in terms of how the overall exchange agreement was written; we tried to insist on reciprocity. There was also a battle within the U.S. government and within the academic community--how this is carried out. Many of the agencies, from our perspective, perfectly willing to agree to things with the Russians that didn't provide for reciprocity or didn't give us the opportunity to try to get access to certain institutions in the Soviet Union and to bring over Russians without a comparable number of Americans going in the other direction. In a sense our allies turned out to be the FBI and the CIA against other parts of the Executive Branch and also with respect to the academic programs that were going on. It was not an either or situation, but a fluid one.

Q: What was your impression of the value of this exchange program at the time?

POLANSKY: I thought by and large if we could get a fair degree of reciprocity, it was worthwhile engaging in. I still think that was the case. I always had the feeling that when the Russians came over this way, they were better prepared for what they wanted to find or learn than we were in going to the Soviet Union. I think in a lot of cases, the people who were involved on our side simply were much more opened with what they wanted to do and less concerned about the reciprocity angle. From my perspective, that was always a problem.

Q: You ended up as being the heavy bureaucrat.

POLANSKY: I'm sure that was the case, not only within the Executive Branch, but also with respect to different parts of the academic community.

Q: The feeling was I assume, that if you hadn't, it would have ended up being completely a one-sided thing.

POLANSKY: Yes, that was our feeling. Maybe that's true. But when you see what's happened to the Soviet Union, you sort of wonder, would it have made any difference if we hadn't insisted on reciprocity. It's hard to know.

GARY L. MATTHEWS
Deputy Principal Officer
Leningrad (1973-1976)

Deputy Director, Soviet Affairs
Washington, DC (1977-1981)

Gary L. Matthews was born in Missouri in 1938. He received a bachelor's degree from Drury College in 1960, a master's degree from Oklahoma State University in 1961, Columbia University in 1969, and a master's degree in international affairs. He served in the U.S. Army from 1955-1958 and joined the Foreign Service in 1961. His career included positions in Germany, Poland, Vietnam, Malta, and Washington, DC. Mr. Matthews was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Then you're off to Leningrad, and you're there from when to when?

MATTHEWS: I was in Leningrad for three full years as it turned out. I got there in late July of 1973, and stayed until July of 1976. I think on paper my initial assignment was for two years, and then I put in a request which was quickly granted, to extend on for a third year.

Q: This was the end of the Kissinger and what there was of the Ford administration essentially.

MATTHEWS: That's correct. In fact, I arrived just as the consulate general, the first ever in the Soviet Union, was officially opened. So my whole tenure there was both consolidating the physical plant of our building in beautiful downtown Leningrad, as well as opening up the contacts both in Leningrad and in the very wide far-reaching rich consular district that comprised the Leningrad consulate general's jurisdiction.

Q: Your position was?

MATTHEWS: I was the deputy principal officer, and also the political-economic reporting officer.

Q: Who was the principal officer?

MATTHEWS: When I first arrived it was Culver Gleysteen, whom I had known back in the Department years before in my earlier stint in Soviet affairs. And then after one year he finished his tour because he had been there earlier with the advance party, and my final two years were with a marvelous person, the late Joe Neubert.

Q: What was the Leningrad consular district?

MATTHEWS: It was indescribably diverse...I shouldn't say indescribably because I will describe it, broad and diverse. In the first instance it included the capital cities of the Baltic republics, Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius, and as a practical matter, of course we were very careful about the non-recognition policy of the Baltic nations. I say as a practical matter because we were the contact point for dissidents, people who had been refused exit visas, and the like, and I made quite frequent visits to those areas, usually to the capitals, but on occasion to other areas within the republics.

Up north, you might say way north, we had Murmansk, Archangel, and that was the furthestmost area that we had as part of the consular district. Then we had all of Karelia, Petrozavodsk being the main city there. Then we had Pskov and Norgorod, that's up towards Moscow way. So it was very, very wide and rich.

Q: This is the opening of Nixon and Kissinger putting a great stress on relations with the Soviet Union, not necessarily friendly, but proper relations at that time. How were you received in Leningrad, and how did you deal with the Leningrad authorities?

MATTHEWS: The Leningrad authorities were very proper. I mean, officially they were welcoming in the sense that the reason we had opened a consulate general there, and the Soviet Union had opened its consulate correspondingly in San Francisco, was indeed the result of one of the summit meetings, Nixon-Brezhnev, I believe the summit of 1972. So officially, in the sense that this had been agreed at the highest level, the officials concerned with us were, shall we say, proper. The many other entities that made up Soviet officialdom, first and foremost including the KGB, were less pleased to have a fairly substantial American presence there. So the surveillance and the constant attempts by the KGB to get a handle on what we were doing, marked my entire three years there. The KGB was very active, and as I subsequently heard from someone, they

considered it a point of pride that they could have their controls, their monitoring, of the Americans in particular and other resident foreigners, not that there were too many at that time, they could exercise that to a far greater degree than their colleagues in Moscow where, of course, there were many more missions and many more foreigners. So in that sense we had the darker side of the Soviet Union.

Q: Speaking of the KGB, in earlier times the KGB was always trying to trap people, either homosexual, ladies and various things. Was this part of a different era? Did you feel, not just you but the officers there had to really watch entrapment?

MATTHEWS: Oh we did, definitely. The earlier era still very much prevailed, and this was well before any relaxation on the part of the security organs, as they called themselves. So we did indeed have to be quite attentive. There were, by the way, about ten other foreign consulates in Leningrad, most of which were very, very small. A couple of exceptions to that: one, which was very active and extremely helpful to us, the Finns, the Finnish consulate general which was located not far from where our consulate was and is. They were very helpful because they were already there when we arrived, helpful in getting us logistically plugged in. In fact, over some time, I crafted a series of arrangements so that we got, especially in the winter, fresh fruit and vegetables from a little town across the border in Finland called Hamina. We had a monthly run with a van up there. The Germans were there, both East and West Germans, and we enjoyed particularly close relationships with the West Germans, the Federal Republic of Germany. The Finns I mentioned. We had similar very congenial relations with the Swedes who had a very active consulate general there, small but active. And similarly with the French, and to some extent the Japanese which was a very tiny operation. There were not very many resident foreigners, there were no resident foreign media.

Q: What about dealing with the citizens of Leningrad? One always hears that they take a different view than the Muscovites. Did you find this?

MATTHEWS: There was, and I believe today is, a pride that they are different. They were Leningraders, today they're St. Petersburgers. There was a saying, in Russian, meaning sure, Moscow is the capital but Leningrad is not the second city. So there was a pride, being descendants of Peter the Great, etc. And that was evidenced both by officials and I felt usually by people we came in contact with. We had to be fairly careful with at least contacts that we might initiate with a purely private person, because with heavy KGB surveillance and interest in us, there were instances when this would happen inadvertently. We would make some contact and we would later hear that person was called in for questioning.

Q: What did you see as your main task?

MATTHEWS: I felt, and I believe my colleagues did, first and foremost we had the horrendous job of getting the operations of the consulate general up and going. And this was a humongous undertaking because we had to finish off the consulate building, building and equipping portions of it which Soviet workers had not completed for good reason. And we also needed to establish the pattern of contacts, and find out who is who, who is where. Along with that, I would say, our big job there was information gathering. What do people think about this and that, the Soviet

Union? How do they view such and such policies, what's going on here, and that extended to the very heavy defense industry, and nuclear submarine ship building, and other activities in the port area. So we had quite an active operation there.

Q: Could you talk a bit about finishing off the building? Because a great scandal around this time was the new embassy building in Moscow which turned out to be absolutely riddled with listening devices.

MATTHEWS: Well the new embassy building was starting then, the scandal came ten or more years later.

Q: How about what you were...

MATTHEWS: There were never any illusions about the situation in Leningrad because we were on an old street, and ours was a townhouse abutted on both sides by other buildings. There was never any doubt that both wired systems, as well as electronic systems, were at play in terms of intelligence gathering. You were very, very conscious of that at all times.

Q: How does one work in that environment?

MATTHEWS: It's not at all difficult. There are excellent ways to handle that sort of thing.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia and we had the plastic room, and unfortunately the ambassador smoked cigars which didn't help.

MATTHEWS: No, no, I should think not. My remark when I say we had ways of handling that, I didn't mean by any means the so-called plastic room. But in terms of being very careful about what we said, and didn't say, what instruments we would use to write on. Our transmission inscription capabilities, I believe that all went very well. In fact, there are some very simple methods to communicate. If you had something truly that must remain totally quiet to anyone who is listening, there are simple but very effective ways to do that.

Q: I think it's interesting to understand the environment. Did you feel that listening devices were just about anywhere, including the bedroom and everything else?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes, and they were. There's no doubt about that. I satisfied myself on several occasions until it proved there was no further purpose served in trying to find just where things might be, because they were there. There were ways to check to see if things were there. But I don't want to paint a picture of unrelenting grimness here. For one thing, I was used to this way of life from two years in Poland where these things were not unknown, although there was no comparison with the intensity of how this was brought to bear in Leningrad. We were very busy and I think that was a great thing. For one thing, in addition to all the activities connected with consolidating the post physical and political-economic operations, we had a pretty heavy pattern of travel that I was responsible for setting up, and conducted a lot of it myself. It had me out with someone else somewhere usually once a month.

The third big area of activity was the one that was given us usually every weekend: to wit, all the American delegations, of which there were a lot, going primarily first and foremost to Moscow would be sent up to us on the weekends, very happily so from the standpoint of the people in Moscow. That is, both Soviet officials as well as the officials in the American embassy because we would show them Leningrad. We had, of course, the Hermitage, the Winter Palace, the outlying palaces...you know, Leningrad is a glorious city, St. Petersburg is a glorious city. So there was never a dull moment in terms of visiting congressmen, senators, governors, state officials, scientific groups. you name it.

Q: How were these groups treated?

MATTHEWS: Generally the groups were treated beautifully. And if it was a high level group like a group of members of congress, governors where there was a corresponding official exchange with the Soviet Union, they were given the highest possible reception, including the Leningrad equivalent of a state dinner at the official guest house out on Stone Island. It was all very la-dee-da. Those of us at the consulate general used to laugh about how once we said farewell at the airport to our departing US delegation, it was back to more realistic times. But they were treated very well.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet economy?

MATTHEWS: It was pretty bad. I probably arrived in the Soviet Union with Poland somewhat in my mind's eye. There were a lot of provisions in Poland, but by and large, the Poles being the wonderful folks they are, they made things work even under that terrible system. Well, I arrived in the Soviet Union, and there was nothing there. It was a total economy of scarcity. There was bread, and there was greasy soup, some basics, etc., but I remember being continually impressed throughout my whole three years there by the lines, lines for everything, including lines that people just joined on the speculation that there would be something at the end of those lines. Sometimes there wasn't anything at the end of the line. And in that sense, particularly given what's happened as we look back in 1996, here was the spectacle of the great Soviet Union, this eminent superpower, which it certainly was in the sense of having extremely modern, capable intercontinental ballistic missiles, and sophisticated nuclear warheads on them which could be sent our way, tanks and artillery, and all of those indicators of brute military strength. But at the social level, at the basic human needs coping level, it was a mess, a total mess. And one of the things we did, as they did in Moscow at the embassy, was to report quite extensively and often on the nature of the economic deprivation there.

Q: I would hear this from people who served, I'd never served in the Soviet Union, I'd served in Yugoslavia, and I just figured this is a rather primitive Balkan country. But from people who had served elsewhere, it was a paradise. The Soviet Union was continually played up as being this great power. Not only with its brute military force, but there was something about it that was almost irresistible, which was very handy in political terms in the United States, also for our military. How did we feel? I mean, you get all these delegations coming in, and we're pointing out the lack of clothes on the emperor or not?

MATTHEWS: I would do that, but going back to what I said about the delegations coming in,

who were given the best possible treatment by Soviet officials, it was, if you will, the 1970s equivalent of Potemkin villages. They would come in, they would be greeted with flowers, whisked off to the best hotels at the time. Our old saying was, when traveling in the Soviet Union first class is always none too good, some expression like that we had. They were bused from event to event, and an official lunch, an official dinner, to the Kirov Ballet. They would often leave, if they didn't hear anything from us, thinking this is really a fantastic place. But they were seeing just that tiny little slice on their official program. I strived mightily during my time to impress upon people that this was not the real Soviet Union they were seeing.

Q: This is the very beginning of one of the factors during this time that eventually helped undermine the Soviet Union, and that was the CSCE's conference.

MATTHEWS: That's right, Security and Security Cooperation in Europe.

Q: ...Helsinki Accords. Were these having any reverberations yet that might allow for dissent within the Soviet Union?

MATTHEWS: It was just starting, and is one of the things I will always think back on as being the most fascinating part of my three years there. I arrived just after the conclusion of the final act of CSCE and, in fact, Walter Stoessel, who was then the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, had just been at the consulate general in Leningrad a few weeks before I arrived with my family in the summer of '73 to be part of the official ribbon-cutting that opened the consulate general. The reason he was there was that he had been attending that conference in Helsinki. And as we recall, one of the big provisions of CSCE was basket three which concerned human rights, and human contacts. It was very clear, as Soviet officials were never loath to tell us, that this was just a minor thing in their view, and that the really important stuff was recognizing boundaries, legitimizing, in their view, the existence of the socialist camp, etc. But as I say, one of the fascinating things for me is to think back how the seeds of that basket three, the whole human rights area and what have you, began to grow into mighty bushes. I had already begun citing the provisions on free immigration, lack of discrimination, respect for human rights, etc., when I would go in with approaches to Soviet officials in Leningrad, usually the office of visas and registration, on behalf of a given Jewish refusenik -- usually most of the people who had been turned down for exit visas were Jews from the Leningrad and Baltic areas, as well as some other dissidents, and little heed at the time was, at least in their response the Soviet officials responses to me, little heed was paid on their part to this Helsinki thing. I would always leave them a copy of the relevant portion. But, you're right, that was the genesis, and later on, of course, it grew into I think the biggest part...it was the tail that not only wagged that Soviet dog, but caused that dog to collapse.

Q: Were you ever able to have what amounted to a really professional discussion with Soviet foreign affairs officials about the state in the Soviet Union, and why the Soviet Union was sort of lagging in a lot of things. Or was this just not...

MATTHEWS: No, I had that conversation, and you got one of several reactions. One was that the Soviet officials were always very afraid of showing up on those taped transcripts of conversations monitored by the KGB. They were very careful about what they said, and what

they wouldn't say. And a couple of them acknowledged to me, very quietly, that's why what they were responding to me sounded so stock...

When talking with Soviet officials, and plant managers, it would not have to be necessarily ministry officials, they could be managers...well, everybody in effect worked for the state because there were no private enterprises. But either they would be extremely careful to the point of being non-committal totally in responding because they would be afraid they were being overheard, or they felt they had to observe some Soviet communist party ideal, and claim ludicrously, of course, that everything was just great. Even though, God knows, they knew it wasn't. Or third, and I will say I ran into this particularly in Leningrad, you can understand why, they would acknowledge the degree of the problems of the deficiencies, whether in housing, or foodstuffs, you name it, and say, you must remember Mr. Matthews, Gospodin Matthews, that we had to endure the horrible 900 day siege of World War II, the great patriotic war, etc.

I should perhaps mention at this point one of the things that I did throughout my three years very, very regularly and it was a good thing I was young at the time because I wouldn't have the energy for it now. There was an official propaganda organization throughout the whole Soviet Union which had an extremely active chapter in Leningrad, called the Znaniye Society, Znaniye being the Russian word for knowledge. It came under the propaganda section of the authorities. And this took several forms. But the one that I was very involved in, is that several times during the week this society, whether it was at the main hall which was right in the center of Leningrad in the old...it was in the Red Army Club as a matter of fact, whether in that or in some outlying districts' smaller halls, they would have speakers come in, officials, military officers, you name it, professors, to talk about all manner of subjects in Soviet society. Sometimes international issues, but usually just what's happening here, what's our food chain like, why can't people buy cars. It was basic stuff. So several times a week I would go quietly, and sit in the back of those halls, and take all that in, take notes, go back and write it up, and send it to Washington.

Q: What would you be getting out of this? You got a very clear sense of what the Russians were saying to their fellow Russians, what the Soviets were saying to their fellow Soviets. In other words, these people had no way of knowing that there was a foreigner in their midst, moreover one who was going to fire it back to Washington the next day in a telegram.

MATTHEWS: I don't want to sound immodest, but I was told repeatedly throughout my tour that these reports had quite a wide readership back here, in terms of providing insights into that.

Q: I've talked to others, Ed Horowitz who said also, one of the most interesting things were the questions that came up. But the questions would be...I mean, these were just people who said this was on their mind, and they had a chance, and they were going to ask the question.

MATTHEWS: Exactly. We lived for those moments. Ed, my old friend and colleague, was one of the very best. He had done this I think years ago during his first tour.

Q: Yes. I'm doing an oral history with him this morning.

MATTHEWS: And my immediate predecessor, who had been there in the advance party for

Leningrad, Bob Barry, had done it. I think I probably did it more frequently, mostly because we were official then and I had a good excuse if approached as to why I was at such a gathering.

Q: Obviously the KGB would be following you. So would you see somebody whisper to the speaker.

MATTHEWS: I know of at least half a dozen instances where, because of someone I knew in the chain of things, my presence was made known to the speaker. I believe these were mostly military speakers as opposed to people speaking on domestic matters. And a bug was put in their ear that there was a foreign agent or some such, in the audience. But since I really was going mostly to these events just to hear what they were saying about ordinary life, I don't think they bothered to warn those kinds of speakers. That was where I got my jewels, and as you just noted, the real pearls came from those questions.

Q: When you say that, could you give an example of the type of thing that you would get?

MATTHEWS: Well, I well remember one instance...it sounded horribly boring, and in fact I'm sure the canned presentation was horribly boring. It was on the state of Soviet agriculture, and the speaker...I forget after all these years who it was, but the person was in the know. This wasn't just some old guy who had gotten out of his rocking chair to come in and rattle on about not much of anything. So I went. I remember asking myself, why am I doing this? I'm tired, it's 8:00 at night, why don't I just go to home? But I went, and the canned presentation was indeed horribly boring. But it was a time, as so often in Leningrad, when there were acute shortages of basic foodstuffs. That was the winter of '74, I believe, and a saying, which was very popular around Leningrad at the time, was what is the most valuable present you can bring to a Leningrader if you're coming as a visitor? Answer: a cabbage wrapped in toilet paper. And, alas, this was all too true, not just cabbages, but any other food. Toilet paper, God knows, always in short supply, probably now as then. But there ensued a ferocious series of questions on the part of the audience. And most of the audience was comprised of elderly pensioners. Who else would go to such a presentation? And I was there, of course. And so this one person stood up and said, how do you explain we've had this series of totally miserable disastrous grain crops? How could this be? We used the army, we used millions of volunteers, collective farm people, how can this happen? So the speaker was somewhat rocked back, and started quoting some statistics. So he gets pushed again by another hard question. So then he comes back with a specific. I've never forgotten this but I had it written up in some detail. And then a fourth person stands up and said, that's all fine and good, but just what is the grain crop going to be this year? This happened by coincidence to be just after the harvest was pretty much gathered...and this guy knew the figure. And CIA and everybody had been dying to get their hands on what this might be, and I recall that it was around 165 million metric tons. He shot it right out, without any ifs, ands, or buts. I reported this back and it got indeed quite some notoriety, because the Department of Agriculture, and as I say the CIA, and everybody else was really keen to know what the Soviet grain crop was going to be that year. So there were some other instances like that where it was something that doesn't sound too earth shaking now.

Q: No, but still that in particularly in a country such as the Soviet Union is very important. Where they're going to go, what they're going to buy. What about your going to the Baltic

states? You say we did not recognize the Soviet occupation of those states, but at the same time how did you cover them?

MATTHEWS: Well, it was a very careful minuet. There had been very protracted difficult negotiations leading up to the defining, the agreement on the consular district jurisdictions for Consulate General Leningrad, and Culver Gleysteen had participated in those negotiations, and the embassy in Moscow of course had worked for months on this. This is long before we opened officially, long before I got there. And that formula that they worked out provided that we would not by any means -- it explicitly said that nothing in the agreement affects the US non-recognition of the annexation, or the illegal annexation, of the Baltic republics. But, however, and I forget how this was phrased, for the purpose of rendering consular services to -- however that was phrased -- the capital cities of Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, will be part of the Leningrad consular district. It left unsaid, or left half said, that anything else affecting American, US interests that happened there would have been something to be handled by the embassy in Moscow, again within the constraints of the non-recognition policies. As a practical matter, I would let it be known through the dissident channels that I was constantly in contact with in Leningrad when I was getting ready to go to one of the three Baltic capitals. They would get the word out to those Refuseniks and others who were outside the capital, and they would come in if they wished, to see me at the hotel, or wherever. These were people who had been refused and felt they had nothing to lose, so they did not mind being seen with me and my KGB army behind me. Their position was they couldn't possibly be delayed any further by such an action and it might help. I think by and large their logic proved to be correct.

Once, because I was with some US scientific delegation, I accompanied them to Vilnius, Lithuania, because they were just private, it wasn't a government delegation. The host, a civilian said, would you like to visit our such and such facility in the city of Kaunas. And, of course, the Americans in the group said, oh, certainly. I just sort of tagged along. I was one of the first US officials to get to Kaunas.

Q: That being what?

MATTHEWS: That being a very old and historic city in Lithuania which was quite unusual in that it was virtually untouched during World War II in terms of any fighting and damage, etc. In fact, a number of the Jewish Refuseniks came from the historic Jewish community of Kaunas, so it was particularly interesting to be able to go there.

Q: Was it technically off-limits?

MATTHEWS: Technically it was a closed area for US officials, which I should have mentioned. The coup, such as it was, came in my being able to tuck in and go to such an area. In Estonia, which is very small, that was the one Baltic country that we could drive to. I think I only did so once because it took so much time, the road was so terrible. But you could actually drive from Leningrad along a very bad road up by the big lake, through Narva, and hence to Tallinn. I usually flew to the other Baltic capitals. I think I took the train a couple of times, but basically flew there.

Q: What about Archangel and Murmansk?

MATTHEWS: At that time it was the odd bit that you had to fly to Arkhangelsk, you could not take the train. Yet you could only take the train, and you could not fly to Murmansk. There was no rhyme or reason to this.

Q: What were they like?

MATTHEWS: Those were raw frontier settings, old, shabby, sagging wooden buildings for the most part, and lots and lots of mud. I think once I did go to Murmansk in the winter, which was definitely to behold. Life was at its outer most difficult I would say in terms of cold, dealing with the elements, and not having much in the way of creature comforts.

Q: In the Leningrad area, I wonder if you could contrast it to Moscow. I'm told in Moscow that all you have to do is go 20 kilometers outside of Moscow and you're back in the 14th century.

MATTHEWS: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Was this also true in the Leningrad district?

MATTHEWS: It was. You did not have to go...I would say probably, especially if you were going up along the Gulf of Finland, that it was more sophisticated by far than what you would have run into outside of Moscow. I well recall on the main road, such as it was, between Leningrad and Moscow, you did not have to go very many miles at all, and women were out thrashing their clothes against rocks in cold streams. That was the washing machine, that was the laundry. And I dare say probably a lot of that goes on to this very day.

Q: What about the area that was taken, the Karelia Peninsula, that was taken away from Finland during the winter war? Was that off-limits, or could you...

MATTHEWS: They were careful about that. I went up there a couple of times by train. You could only see so much by train. I doubt that I was seeing much. I would have seen a huge amount more had I actually done it by car. I think we could only go by train, to Petrozavodsk which is the capital there. And we did not seem to have many Refuseniks from that area. There wasn't much up there. I think that's probably because there wasn't much of a Jewish community up that way.

Q: Most of the people who were refused at that time were ones by immigration were basically Jewish?

MATTHEWS: That's correct. There were some non-Jews, but 90 plus percent were Jewish.

Q: What was the reading on why during this time in the mid-70s the Jewish Soviets wanted to get out?

MATTHEWS: Well, there was tremendous discrimination. I mean, workplace, education, etc.

They felt this. I mean, there had been times when it had been perhaps less so. One of the big reasons for being refused, whether it was in fact, or contrived, was that either they or their spouse, or a relative had worked for a factory that came under a regime, which is to say, did classified work. So that would be cited as the most frequent reason for turn-down, and for a second turn-down, and for a third turn-down. Even though in many cases the individual being turned down himself, or herself, had not worked directly for one of these enterprises. To be Jewish and resident of Leningrad in the early '70s was not a recipe for getting ahead in government, business, or commerce.

Q: Was this an official attitude? Or was this reflecting the way the average Soviet citizen would feel?

MATTHEWS: It was definitely official. I would say it's not an either or thing. I mean, going back many years a strain of anti-Semitism exists in Russian society. We had a child born there. My wife went out to Helsinki to have the baby, our daughter Sarah...by that time we were using the occasional services of a woman, a tank-like figure of a woman who had fought in World War II against the Germans in part of the great siege. She was quite a figure. I well recall, my wife came home from Finland with the new baby Sarah...of course, the lady said, oh, what a wonderful baby, etc., and then she said, tell me, why have you given the child a Jewish name? She wasn't being nasty, it was just part of her make-up. Why would you want to name a child Sarah? As I say, the official treatment of Jews was very poor at that time. That had its reflection in terms of popular attitudes.

Q: What were relations like with the embassy?

MATTHEWS: They were certainly very congenial. One of the wonderful things was that Spike Dubs, my dear friend and former boss when he was director of Soviet affairs, was the DCM down in Moscow during my time in Leningrad. In fact, Spike was chargé for a good period there after I just arrived, and then subsequently Spike left, and Jack Matlock came in as DCM, also a good friend. Then in due course, Walt Stoessel came in as the ambassador. So I tried to get to Moscow periodically, although especially in my third year, I didn't get down as often as I had the first year or two. It was always kind of nice to go down to Moscow, and see my friends at the embassy. We would always invite them to come up and visit us, and some did. My sense was that our embassy officers in Moscow were very busy there...you know, they did travel around the Soviet Union, but they tended not to travel that much to Leningrad.

Q: You were there when Vietnam went down the drain in 1975. How did that hit you?

MATTHEWS: It hit me like a ton of bricks. I was just devastated. Well, first and foremost that the US government, in my view then as now, totally failed to observe any of the promises which we had so boldly made to the Vietnamese back in early '73, because I had personally participated in that. I took it very hard. I would wear occasionally...Soviet functions were always big on people wearing their medals, etc., so occasionally I would slap on my medals from Vietnam, and everyone was always very understanding. Maybe in Moscow they got more reaction, but none of the Soviet officials in Leningrad, that I recall, were throwing this in our face. They knew I'd been there and some were curious as to what I thought about developments.

Q: Were you getting any reflection about how the Soviets felt about the Poles, the East Germans?

MATTHEWS: It was clear to me that the Soviets knew they had an Eastern European problem. God knows with the Poles, and Hungarians. The Germans, they were virtually an occupation force there because of the huge numbers of Soviet Red Army military stationed there. We had pretty good contacts with the Polish consulate general in Leningrad. I'll never forget 1975 there was a big, big celebration orchestrated from Moscow to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the end of the great patriotic war, World War II we would call it. So all over Leningrad, as all over Moscow and every other place big and small in the Soviet Union, were the Roman numerals, XXX. So my Polish colleague, the Polish consul general, would never pass up the opportunity during this time...an X in Polish, they use the Roman alphabet, is pronounced "Ha". So he would point to this and say, Ha, do you know what that means? The significance of 30 years of the end of the great patriotic war. Everybody would always bite, no, what does that mean? He'd say, ha, ha, ha. He was not particularly concerned about being overheard by Soviets.

Q: It also signified 30 years of Soviet occupation.

MATTHEWS: Yes. I've often thought about that, and God only knows what Moscow was told by its viceroys in Warsaw, Budapest and all these other places, how much they may have gilded their reporting, etc. But one has to assume the KGB and others kept dibs on what people there really thought about them, which was that they did not think too highly of them.

Q: Did you get any presidential, vice presidential visits while you were there?

MATTHEWS: There was a presidential visit in '74 just before Nixon's resignation, which was just to Moscow. He didn't come up to us in Leningrad. I believe as part of that trip, Henry Kissinger, who of course had made repeated visits to Moscow, both as part of summits with the president, as well as coming in on his own was to visit us. It is said he sometimes in those days did not inform the American embassy of his arrival. But he himself had never been up to Leningrad, and actually did want to see it. So on that occasion in '74, he was to have come. We made elaborate arrangements with full cooperation from Soviet officials in Leningrad, and at the last minute Kissinger stayed on in Moscow to help negotiate whatever deal was pending there, etc., and Nancy Kissinger came up. She was the closest we got to a Secretary of State or what have you at the time. We had numerous other visitors, as I mentioned earlier, usually on the weekends, come up to visit us.

Q: How was family living there?

MATTHEWS: In a way it was very much what you and I might call the old Foreign Service in the good sense. I mean we lived as a community. There were about 25 to 30 Americans stationed at the consulate general. That included the basic contingent of six Marine security guards, plus with our dependents would be another maybe 60 some, 70 all told. We very much thought of ourselves as a family in this challenging new outpost, a sense of mission, etc. I've always remembered that quite fondly. I'm not sure they always have that same élan and esprit de corps

these days, but that's probably my older head speaking. Things always look better the way we were.

Q: You left there in 1976.

MATTHEWS: I left in '76, that's right, which was a great year to have gone through there because that was our 200th birthday party, and we had all kinds of hoopla surrounding that. It was also the year...well, backing up, 1975 we had the first US Naval ship visit since the end of World War II to Leningrad. The Soviet Union sent one of their navy warships to Boston, as I recall. So that whole year, '75 to '76, was sort of a lot of ceremonial, good stuff here and there. That was also the Apollo-Soyuz, joint space flight between ourselves and the Russians. It was not all grim and bad, etc. I always felt I left at a particular high point.

Q: So you started there in '77.

MATTHEWS: That's correct.

Q: This is the beginning of the Carter administration. What was your impression...a new man on the block, campaign promises. What was the SOV Bureau's view of Carter when he came in?

MATTHEWS: By the time I got there, which was early July of '77, there was a strong sense that the Carter White House was not really very swift in terms of handling international issues in general, and conducting the US-Soviet relationship in particular. A lot of this had to do with what was a very confusing first visit by Secretary of State Vance to Moscow in March of 1977. This is just before I arrived in SOV but the memories were very vivid, plus my whole time was spent playing this out. That first meeting was between Vance and then Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko the famous, if not infamous, long serving Soviet Foreign Minister. There was a White House initiative, dictated by the White House, which Vance put before Gromyko and the Soviet side, a proposal for far ranging arms negotiations across a whole series of issues. In and of itself there was nothing wrong with that, except it was such a big departure from the way things had always been done because previously you were always very careful to prep in advance to say, this is coming. And that wasn't done, and of course Gromyko threw up his hands, and there was great unhappiness and consternation, etc. So Vance came back and everyone regrouped. That's about the time I arrived to actually take up my job there. Interestingly, perhaps even ironically, in the event, everyone did pick themselves up again...and we had a lot of problems with the relationship in those days, defectors, messy this, messy that. Interestingly, most of those arms control working groups, I believe there were eight, actually began, some not very successfully, to get going. I particularly worked in two of those, anti-satellite weapons negotiations, and conventional arms transfers negotiations. We held several sessions with the Soviet negotiating team.

Q: Let's go back, and then we'll move on to this. We'd had this way of appearing before the Soviets, particularly the equivalent to a Foreign Ministers' meeting, let them know what you're going to talk about. And Vance is an experienced hand. It wasn't as though he were the new boy on the block. He'd been dealing at that level for a long time and as a trouble shooter. Normally your feeling is that you don't want to spring surprises because it doesn't get you anywhere.

Everybody has to go back and explore, and essentially one, you can embarrass, and two, you lose time. Why was this done?

MATTHEWS: Well said. As I say, I was told that much of this was dictated by...given to Vance to carry to Moscow at the last minute by the White House. Brzezinski, of course, was the National Security Advisor who obviously would have had a big role in it. In general, as you recall, during that whole Carter administration there were problems, to put it mildly, between the White House and specifically the National Security Council, and the State Department. It was always an uneasy relationship in terms of how the cooperation went between the two bureaucratic entities and the like. That said, it seems to me, given other things going on in the Soviet Union at the time, it's not that we missed any great opportunities that otherwise would have presented themselves.

Q: Was there the feeling that the Brezhnev regime was beginning to dotage, I mean he was getting older.

MATTHEWS: Oh, absolutely. In fact to such an extent that I was involved in the lengthy preparations leading up to the summit meeting between President Carter and Brezhnev in Vienna in early 1979. It was very painful to work these issues because whoever was doing it at the Soviet embassy here was on a very short string from Moscow. Every word, every change of phrase, had to be checked back because we were pre-negotiating the communiqué, the joint declaration, etc. But then we got to Vienna and, of course, summits then were a big news. There were hundreds, indeed there were thousands of news people. You don't see this these days because everyone is very blasé about whatever the latest summit meeting may be. But at the first dinner between Carter and Brezhnev, I forget which side hosted first, whether the Soviets did it at their place, or Carter was hosting at our ambassador's residence in Vienna, Brezhnev was so out of it. He was out of it, and this wasn't just an episodic thing. He'd been like this a long time. Whatever the fare was, you can imagine it was a not bad dinner, so he would bring the fork of whatever it was on his plate up toward his face, and more often than not the tines would jab him in the cheek, the chin, and he was in bad shape. It was an embarrassment. And, of course, the Soviet officials were hovering to help with this, help with that. He approached incoherency so you can imagine what the conduct of the plenary sessions was like. They were terrible. It was just an exchange of set piece presentations which Brezhnev could barely mumble. Gromyko, of course, would handle one on one with Vance in terms of the real exchange such as it was. It was very sterile. And then we exchanged views and the two parties signed the pre-agreed joint declaration, and everybody went home.

Q: Did we get any feedback what Carter thought about it?

MATTHEWS: Just, I think, everyone was sort of thinking...this can't go on too much longer. In fact, Brezhnev lasted as we know for a couple more years.

Q: He was there in 1980 at least. He was in Afghanistan.

MATTHEWS: Exactly, it's like carrying this forward just a little bit, not much because it was the end of '79 that they invaded Afghanistan. I would say certainly that in our Kremlinology, and we

all fancied ourselves to be practitioners of that science, there was total agreement, consensus, on the part of everyone that, well, this probably was something that to the extent that it had been run by Brezhnev at all...that the guy was clearly just not with it.

Q: What was the consensus in the Soviet Bureau who was running the store?

MATTHEWS: It seemed to us, and I think we later had reason to confirm this in more recent years when people could actually see Politburo records, that the level just under the General Secretary of the party, and the level or two beneath them, found this very congenial. Because here was el supremo, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in whose name everything was carried out. And basically it left the KGB, the Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister and the other powers that be at that level, work out their own arrangements and the people below them also did very well. So you had sort of a structure where everyone thought this was not a bad situation, I mean, from their standpoint. So the central committee functionaries were in the loop doing their thing. The ministry power brokers were able to do their thing. But it was a time of just total stagnation in terms of any initiatives, and God knows any attempts to suggest reforms. It was don't rock the boat, and the boat was sinking.

Q: During this time, before Afghanistan, you're in the multilateral side which you were dealing with, there wasn't a hell of a lot going on, was there?

MATTHEWS: Oh, no, there was a lot happening in the multilateral area. In fact, that's where things were going on because on the bilateral side...that was a pretty frozen piece of tundra. They still had very little immigration. You just had your basic operation. On the multilateral front we had the then already deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. This is before the Soviets moved in, etc. You had problems in the Yemens. You definitely had problems in the Horn of Africa, bad problems, with a very heavy Soviet hand there. And the Angola thing certainly. There was the whole situation to the extent we looked, and we did look, at the Soviet involvement there with Cambodia, Kampuchea, the Vietnamese move into that. There were a lot of perturbations.

Q: Was there the feeling that these are sort of the apparatchik, but rather hard nosed ones who were taking advantage of any situation to expand. Was the feeling that this was, whoever was running the business, was in an expansion mode.

MATTHEWS: Oh, definitely so. In fact, it was very popular in academic circles, Soviet specialists, Russian specialists at the time, I would say perhaps even now as well, to always want to see things in terms of Soviet doves, and Soviet hawks. Those of us who worked continually in these matters day in and day out, night in and night out, tended to see mostly just hawks. We didn't see any doves flying around. So to that extent, even though we all, I think, recognized that Brezhnev was on his last legs one way or the other, there was no sense that had he been a stronger fellow this wouldn't have been happening, or things would be more congenial. I mean, I think the consensus was that the Soviet Union was up to no good in most areas of the world either directly or indirectly. About the best you could say of them, taking the Mid East for example, is that they were essentially interested in playing a spoiler role. In other words, to trip us up in something we were wanting to do. So we took, and I think correctly, a very harsh view of what they were about.

Q: All right, we're sitting there, we have American interests as our responsibility, what were we doing in the various places?

MATTHEWS: We had our own US policies we were pursuing in the various regions, whether that was bilateral diplomacy in a particular country, or often it would be that we were marshaling up diplomatic and other support in regional forums. We were forever demarching the hell out of the Soviets, calling in Ambassador Dobrynin, or sending our ambassador in there. We had an entire flurry of unhappy demarches about this problem, that problem. Why are you doing this? Why are you doing that? Let us not forget Cuba. One particular scandal at the time, which blew up in I think a Washington August which is always a great time for a scandal, was the issue of Soviet MiGs in Cuba. I think it was subsequently ascertained these aircraft had probably been around longer than the discoverers of them in August of whatever that year was, thought they had been. It was one case of neuralgia after another. And there were also bilateral problems, there were attempted defections of ballet dancers. It was not a happy time. This is all before the invasion of Afghanistan.

Q: Were we watching Afghanistan at that time?

MATTHEWS: Oh we were definitely watching, and in particular my colleagues in the Near East Bureau, NEA, were very, very attuned to that situation because you had the coup in Kabul...I forget the names of the parties involved. The reason I remember this quite well is by that time I was up spending a lot of my 75-hour weeks in Marshall Shulman's office as his special assistant, and we had very frequent briefings I recall from the NEA people, and INR of course, on the developing, unfolding situation in Afghanistan. This was both before, and God knows after the terrible death of Spike Dubs who was assassinated there.

Q: Before we get to that could you tell me a bit about Marshall Shulman. Who he was, and what was his particular role and approach?

MATTHEWS: Marshall Shulman had for many years been a prominent academic, Russian specialist at Columbia University. He had been at Harvard actually well before that, but he had been at Columbia for a good many years, was very well known in academia as a Soviet specialist, wrote in the field, attended conferences of this and that nature, and was also a good personal friend, and had been for many years, of Cy Vance. Accordingly when Carter won the election, the administration was geared up, Vance was named Secretary of State, and Vance turned quickly to ask Marshall Shulman to be his advisor. At first the title and all that was very fuzzy. In fact, Marshall was sort of commuting from New York to Washington. I guess the idea was he would come in and confer great wisdom on the conduct of US-Soviet affairs, and go back to being a professor. This, as we know, in terms of how you view it in the bureaucracy, did not prove to be effective...Marshall quickly saw that this was not the way to wield much influence. So by the time I arrived, July 1, 1977, in that very few months period Marshall had just moved in full time and had been given the title of special advisor to the Secretary of State on Soviet affairs, and had an office up in mahogany row very near the Secretary's suite. Essentially, you recall in the Kissinger days, we had dear old Hal Sonnenfeldt who was up there in a prominent role. I think Hal actually was the counselor, but he was sort of the guru on East-West issues. For a

while you had Tommy Thompson, and people like that who were the big special person on Soviet affairs. So the role that Marshall Shulman was called to play for Cy Vance was not unknown in the State Department. In other words, there had been other great poobahs who showed up to be the super Soviet desk officer, if you will.

In this case, Marshall being the kindly fellow that he is, he went to great lengths not to agitate the bureaucracy, but rather to work as well as congenially as he might. And George Vest was the assistant secretary for European affairs. I was in the office of Soviet affairs, but Marshall knew all of us, and as the months went by more and more I wore two hats. I was the officer in charge of multilateral political relations section of Soviet affairs, and early in the mornings, late at night, and weekends I was Marshall Shulman's special assistant even though he had a couple of other special assistants. So we had a real interlock in terms of making sure that things done at his level, sometimes directly with the Secretary of State, were known to, and assisted by, the office of Soviet affairs. And I might say Marshall was also very good about bringing in the Soviet office division of the INR, Intelligence and Research Bureau. So in that sense he was a unifying and coordinating point. It is no secret, and it has been well described in several books, that Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor, felt that his view of how to handle issues with the Soviet Union was at least as good, and indeed better.

Q: Nothing like having two academics from Columbia.

MATTHEWS: This is true, and in fact this was a running problem. It didn't affect me and my colleagues in terms of the work we did, it was in terms of how the interaction went, mostly with the President. Those of us involved in the trenches were always very busy as I once said to someone which got into the New York Times. Don't ask me how this was...I think I was out speaking somewhere on US-Soviet affairs, which we did a lot of in those days, and it was good since we went all over the country. I was riding back on an airplane with someone from the New York Times, it may have been Steve Roberts, Cokie's husband, I can't remember for sure. He said, how did I see my role in the conduct of US-Soviet relations? I probably should have drawn myself up, and delivered some great profound thing. I said, and this actually was the actual quote that got into the newspaper story: I said, basically I think of myself as a gunslinger. But in effect, I was, which we were.

Coming to make the point, maybe then we can come back to this. In a very real sense, a very real sense, even though you had the intervening Reagan and Bush administrations, the situation we have now in the Clinton administration where Strobe Talbott came in initially as, if you will, this personage to handle the Soviet and Russian side, and now that he's deputy secretary, there's still someone doing that. What we had during those times has been by and large replicated and made even more formal. I think now the actual office of Russian affairs comes in the wiring diagram under this seventh floor personage, not under the European Bureau.

Q: Russian, and former Soviet affairs. Again, before we get to Afghanistan, I remember sitting next to...was it Thomas Watson who was ambassador, when I was in Naples when we were meeting the CINC South there, and he was telling Admiral Crowe that he was sent by Carter in order to open up better sort of commercial business type relations, and thought we might be able to put things on a better plane. And Jimmy Carter was, particularly before he got disillusioned

all over the place, was on a very positive thing, that yes, we can do business with these people. Did you feel prior to the disillusioning process that the President was not being very realistic about the Soviet Union?

MATTHEWS: Yes. I did feel that way, and others felt that way. It was one of the problems, though the President was indeed well intentioned. But one of the problems, as those of us in the trenches perceived it, was that President Carter would give a speech which would sound great in terms of doing all these things with the Soviet Union, developing relationships, etc. but his next speech -- and sometimes with good reason because of the things the Soviet Union had been doing, would be a toughie, or would have those elements in it. I think not by design, but by the way it played out in whatever sequence, let's say five, six speeches he gave, mostly devoted to US-Soviet relations over that period, a two-three year period or whatever it proved to be, you had Ying and yang. So it appeared not to be coherent. It appeared not to be consistent. And I'm not one for always adhering to consistency. As I say, a lot of the times the President changed what he was saying because the Soviets had done something egregiously awful. He wouldn't want to be giving a motherhood and chocolate candy talk at that time. But poor Ambassador Watson, the late Tom Watson, who was a terribly kindly man, of great distinction in the business world to say the least, was caught in the middle of all this

Q: From IBM.

MATTHEWS: The son of the founder of IBM and indeed, in his own right, was very successful as CEO, etc. How can I put this? Tom Watson never really knew what was happening in the sense that he arrived wanting to do good things. And he was sent with that mandate from the President, and he solemnly felt that he had that, and I think he felt he had it from Cy Vance too. I don't mean to suggest any problems there. But he had no sooner arrived in Moscow than the downward spiral of the relationship, culminating in their invasion of Afghanistan, rendered it totally ludicrous that he could seek any amelioration of the relationship. So his whole tenure, which was relatively brief, was not a happy one. And he was often, by the way, back in the US on either vacation or consultation. So his was not, unfortunately, a memorable ambassadorship.

Q: I'm thinking it might be a good point to quit at this point. And to put in at the end that we're going to pick up that you were in the Soviet Bureau, we're talking first about the assassination of Spike Dubs and how because of Soviet complicity, or appearance thereof, and how we viewed it, and then about events in Afghanistan.

MATTHEWS: That's right, and our time frame here will be '79 and '80 leading up to the presidential election here in 1980, etc.

Q: You're in the Soviet Bureau.

MATTHEWS: The European Bureau Office of Soviet affairs.

Q: How did we view events, I mean there were a series of steps in Afghanistan in that period.

Well, maybe you can explain what had happened at this time, as you saw it.

MATTHEWS: As I recall, we checked the date of that assassination as we were leaving the last time, and Spike's assassination took place in February of 1979, and I believe we also talked earlier about the whole period in '77, and certainly '78, when the US-Soviet relationship was in a downward spiral for a number of reasons. There were problems in the bilateral relationship, there were things which the Soviet Union was doing in the various world regions. I think we mentioned the Horn of Africa. We mentioned things in our own hemisphere, and Eastern Europe and what have you. And, of course, the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan which I must say the Near East Bureau, NEA, had been very much on top of early on, and those of us working in Soviet affairs of course had paid very close attention as well. Against that background, it was so singularly shocking to have an area where we were already evincing considerable concern produce an assassination of one of our most distinguished, and indeed beloved, colleagues, Spike Dubs, who had been in Soviet affairs in a number of capacities, both in Washington as well as serving as deputy chief of mission and Chargé in Moscow. And then Spike had come back and as I recall he had been a diplomatic in residence, and then went into the NEA Bureau as a deputy assistant secretary. I mention all of this because that was preparatory to his going on assignment as ambassador to Afghanistan.

Q: When you heard about the assassination, how did it hit the Bureau?

MATTHEWS: It was just devastating for the whole Department. In fact, I remember this vividly because that was a weekend where the Washington area had been hit by an enormous snowstorm, blizzard, it was one of those real humdingers not unlike ones we had this past winter. It was nigh impossible to get in from the suburbs. As I recall, there were a couple of other bad things happening at the same time. I believe, for example, Vietnam had invaded Cambodia at pretty much the same time. So there was a lot going on. I lived then as now in McLean, and I remember I called to the NSC sitroom, and they were sending a snowplow to pick up Zbig Brzezinski, the President's National Security Advisor. I thought I had made arrangements that I could hop on the plow as it passed a certain point in McLean but needless to say when I stood out there a while it became clear that I had been passed by.

Q: The plow had passed you by.

MATTHEWS: The plow had passed me by, such is life. So I remember walking in, taking some time to accomplish that. And despite the storm a number of people had made their way in. As I recall, I remember sleeping on a sofa in the office of the Department for at least a couple of nights, trying to deal with all of this. There were exchanges with our embassy in Moscow, talking, of course, with the Soviet authorities because of the involvement of Soviet security people in trying, they said, to resolve the hostage taking.

Q: I've talked to people who were there who have raised the question of not ineptitude, but complicity. In fact, Bruce Flatin raised the question of perhaps the Soviet security, the KGB type, or something had actually killed Dubs.

MATTHEWS: It was never clear. The circumstances were very confusing and murky, there was

a lengthy investigation, a very thick after action report which amounted to a compendium of everything known and suspected about it. And as I recall, some months later, no one ever made a definitive conclusion. But there was shooting. We know that there were Soviet security people present with the Afghan security types who said they were trying to resolve the kidnapping, the hostage taking. But gunfire broke out, and it was always very unclear as to the exact circumstances.

Q: What was the initial reaction in the Department, particularly Soviet affairs? Did you suspect that this might be a rogue KGB operation. What were you thinking?

MATTHEWS: As I recall, there were various lines of speculation. Of course, Afghanistan, and Kabul in particular, very tumultuous at the time in terms of plots, counter plots between factions within Afghanistan, the Red Flag faction one that I recall, versus some others. And the Soviets backing their people. There was just really no way to know definitively. I think everyone was so shocked that this had happened, particularly to a dear friend and colleague. But against the background of the upheavals in Afghanistan, and the very clear Soviet involvement, coups and counter coups. I would say at that time there was a growing consensus among those of us working, certainly in the trenches in US-Soviet affairs, that the Soviet Union was making a major power grab toward that region. So in that context the murder of Spike Dubs was seen as all the more alarming, and disturbing. And certainly no one ever dismissed the possibility that you mentioned just a moment ago, that indeed the KGB, the Soviet authorities, could have been more actively involved in the actual murder.

Q: Did you have the feeling at the time...I may have asked this question but we can always excise it if I have. Who was in charge of the Soviet Union at this time?

MATTHEWS: It was already in that period when Brezhnev was, if not in his dotage, at least he was not able to play an active role at all in terms of normal top leadership functions. That said, this had existed for some years as his health, pace of activity, declined. There had emerged a fairly stable collective leadership of those just under him, the power ministries, the foreign affairs, the security organs, the defense ministries, the related movers and shakers. Certainly there was no doubt on anyone's part that the KGB exercised immense influence at the time, both internally because there was horrendous repression, cracking down against Soviet Jews and other dissidents, including artists in the Soviet Union. And I believe I am correct also in terms of the kinds of operations which the KGB was mounting abroad in various world regions, not just there in Afghanistan. The intelligence assessment on the part of the State Department, and I believe the CIA and other organizations as well in the intelligence community, was that the KGB enjoyed a fairly free hand to mount operations and swing its weight around. So that added certainly extra levels of concern over the murder of Dubs.

Q: Were there other places in the world where you saw the...I won't say the fine hand of the KGB, but rather heavy hand, of KGB operations of destabilizing, or the equivalent?

MATTHEWS: There were indeed. In fact I think I mentioned the Horn of Africa, and there you had a pretty heavy and quite noticeable and provable hand on the part of the Soviet Union, KGB, and military intelligence as well. The same was the case in the Yemens at that time always to-ing

and fro-ing, North Yemen and South Yemen -- today it's just one Yemen. At that time that was an area of perturbation. They were certainly up to doing all manner of things here in our hemisphere, the Sandinistas -- that was just beginning to get underway, certain other guerrilla movements that they supported. That was also the period when, of course, Cuban forces were present in large numbers in Angola.

Q: And also were they in the Horn of Africa?

MATTHEWS: They were also present in the Horn of Africa. I remember writing a number of papers pointing out the problem was not just one of Soviet arms, but of Cuban legs carrying those arms. So it wasn't just sitting back on the part of intelligence analysts positing a worst case scenario. I mean there really were tangible things you could see the Soviet Union doing, and their hand was very present in the cookie jar. This wasn't a matter of conjecture.

Q: There was the feeling, at least announced by the Soviets, and often used by the strong anti-communist within the United States, that the Soviet Union was on the march, and the Soviet Union represented the future. How was the Bureau looking at this?

MATTHEWS: The Bureau, both in my previous assignment in Soviet affairs in the late '60s, as well as during this assignment in the mid and late '70s, had always quite consistently taken a pretty hard view of what the Soviets were about because we were dealing with this as part of our daily platter of issues. There were those, and certainly prominent in academia, there were others perhaps here and about in some places in government, who tended to concentrate, very excessively in the view of us who worked in Soviet affairs as professionals, concentrated too much on trying to distinguish between hardliners and softliners in the Kremlin. And frankly most of the professionals did not discern any great body of territory between hardliners and softliners, and without any doubt Soviet disinformation which was quite active and reasonably good at the time as a matter of fact, played to that. I mean it was part of the Soviet peace campaign, overtures towards scientists and academics. But I would have to say responding directly to what you posed, that those in the United States who wished to present a very harsh view of the Soviet Union were given a lot of material to work with, and really didn't have to gild any lilies in my view, particularly during that period of time.

Q: How did we see the Soviet Union's control over what was known as its satellites, or whatever you want to call it, Eastern Europe at that time?

MATTHEWS: We saw that they were reasserting a stronger pattern of control during that period. And this manifested itself, as I recall, mostly in terms of our intelligence assessments that they were doing more together with the intelligence services of certain members of the Warsaw Pact, and some of those nations -- East Germans, Poles, Czechs -- ran pretty active intelligence operations in conjunction with the KGB at the same time.

Q: Were we monitoring particularly what later turned out within ten years to be major cracks in the Soviet Union? Those were the various nationalities, were we looking at that? Or did we see this at all significant?

MATTHEWS: We were certainly looking very intensely at it. As I mentioned a moment ago, it was a period of particular repression, repression of Soviet Jews, of other human rights activists of any stripe practically, and goodness knows in the Baltic states there was severe repression there. So we were very aware of the expressions of nationalist sentiment, and of the discontent that prevailed. But the KGB, not just externally, but certainly internally, seemed to exercise an extremely iron hand at the time.

Q: We may have covered some of this, so if its duplicating again we might have to pick out the best expression. But we're moving now towards close to the last two years, and this is the third year of the Carter administration, and Jimmy Carter had come in with ideas that maybe if we showed Christian understanding, and were forthcoming, nice things could happen despite the fact we had a National Security Advisor who knew in his Polish heart that the Russians were always evil. Were you as the working officer, and the people around you, seeing a maturing of the Carter administration and getting a little more practical maybe about the situation?

MATTHEWS: It became more practical. Unfortunately, you're right I think in your characterization of how he came in to office by thinking good thoughts, and doing good deeds, hoping that in Moscow they would see the logic of this and be brought along, and the hardliners would be shoved aside, the hawks would be put down, the doves would be ascendant. That had pretty much eroded certainly by '79, and I would say probably by '78. President Carter gave a number of speeches. I recall there always used to be intense interest as to what kind of a speech would he be giving this time on the subject of US-Soviet affairs. There was always great analysis, not unlike the science of Kremlinology where we studied the pronouncements of the Soviet leaders to see whose line was being predominantly reflected. Of course, as Soviet behavior became ever more egregiously challenging, and events disturbing, then it naturally tended to become more a situation where the competition was keenly felt.

Q: Did you find that there was almost a natural fit between the National Security Council with Brzezinski who was highly suspicious of the Russians, Soviets as plain Russians, and the European Bureau Soviet affairs which had been watching this crackdown, and didn't really think pleasant thoughts about the Soviets, certainly at this period. Did you find that you were almost in a certain alliance against other forces that were trying to make it sound better, had a more rosy view, or not?

MATTHEWS: We certainly worked congenially with our colleagues at the National Security Council, and I knew all the Soviet specialists there at the time, and we cleared things back and forth. Cy Vance was Secretary of State, and as I mentioned Marshall Shulman was his special advisor on Soviet affairs. And Marshall had been certainly among those who felt that we could craft, we could shape, a more constructive US-Soviet relationship by giving it more centrality. I think he was certainly right on giving it more centrality, but it often suffered from either too much attention, or too little attention, and has not had the consistency that it deserved, especially during the more confrontational dangerous period when you needed a lot of centrality in my view. But again, it's the pattern of Soviet behavior, certainly their invasion of Afghanistan in December of '79, which worsened relations.

Q: How did that hit us? I mean, just prior to, and when it happened, what was our analysis, and

how were we reacting?

MATTHEWS: Things had been deteriorating, of course, in Afghanistan for a good while going back to the beginning of '79, with, of course, Spike Dubs' assassination, and before that with the coups and the plotting, etc. that the KGB was very directly involved in. When the actual invasion was mounted that was not just the straw that broke the camel's back, that was a whole heap of firewood that landed on the camel. That wrote the finish, absolutely finish, to any and all attempts to create, or recreate -- whatever verb you want to use -- a more productive, cooperative US-Soviet relationship. Thereafter for the remainder of 1980 up through the election -- through the end of the Carter administration -- there were almost no cooperative, and few pleasant components of the US-Soviet relationship. That behavior, their invasion, was seen as confirmation, corroboration of, if you will, the evil empire, which by the way was a perception that existed well before President Reagan's coining of that phrase after he had become president.

Q: Thomas Watson was the ambassador there. What sort of reports were we getting out of there during this period?

MATTHEWS: Thomas Watson was a very kind man, and I think we talked a little bit in one session, that he had, of course, an imminently successful career as head of IBM, having succeeded his father in that undertaking and further expanding it, making it into even more of a prosperous and successful company. But Tom Watson had an idealistic view of the Soviet Union from the days when he was a pilot ferrying lend lease and other goods to the beleaguered Russians, Soviet forces, etc. and he remembered that very vividly, as well he might have because he, I think, endured much danger and hardship, and was really in the thick of things at that time. And he hoped very much, and he hoped that the hallmark of his tenure as ambassador would be the creation, or at least to be present if not creating it, this more constructive, less confrontational relationship. And, in the event, quite the contrary. It was perhaps the most confrontational period we had between us and the Soviet Union since the days of Berlin and all of that. It was not a happy tenure.

Q: What were we getting from the embassy? Was what we were getting from the embassy more or less in sync with what the Soviet office was seeing? And also, what was it? I mean was there any difference, and if there was, what was it?

MATTHEWS: As I recall, that was already well into the period where, of course, we received embassy Moscow reporting cables, and we received their analysis including personal assessments from the ambassador. Then, and certainly as now, we relied more on our own analysis from Washington and I don't mean just the State Department, but CIA, Defense Department, the White House, wherever it might be. The despatches, the cables that would come in from embassy Moscow...I don't mean that they were disregarded or seen as unimportant, but my sense, and I've reflected on this a bit in the intervening years, my sense is that they felt very hard pressed just to cope with the deteriorating relationship. And more often than not, the embassy was in the position of having to march in almost every other day with a demarche protesting, or complaining, or asking for clarification, on our instructions from Washington. Most of the reporting stemmed from that as opposed to big think pieces about whether US-Soviet relations.

Q: What role, from your point of view, the feeling that the Soviet embassy played here in Washington?

MATTHEWS: Well, of course, Anatoly Dobrynin had been already the long-serving Soviet ambassador here, and those of us, professionals particularly, who worked in Soviet affairs always resented the access and the influence, and the power that the Soviet ambassador had here in Washington. Of course, a lot of this went back to the Kissinger era, but it extended up through the time we're talking about here. When our ambassador in Moscow had a hard time getting in to see the assistant librarian at the Lenin Library, everything there had to be approved by this committee, this official, and when you did get in to see a Soviet official, it was usually a very sterile exchange. Here, of course, Dobrynin for years had been very adept at cleverly getting in to see the president of the United States, privately I might add, anytime he wanted to raise his little finger. We really resented...

Q: What happened after the December '79 invasion of Afghanistan? Could you describe the reaction of the Carter administration, and what were you all tasked with responses, and that sort of thing?

MATTHEWS: There were heavy demarches over a protracted period of time.

Q: Before we go to the reactions from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, something I don't believe we've covered would be the June 1979 US-Soviet summit held in Vienna. Could you talk about that?

MATTHEWS: ...between Soviet leader Brezhnev and President Carter. Throughout 1978 and intensively into early 1979, the US and Soviet negotiators had been working very intensively on the SALT II strategic arms limitations treaty number two agreement which dealt with a number of thorny issues concerning strategic weaponry of both sides. All of this negotiation took place against the background of what we'd been talking about which is a downward spiral in the overall relationship. This is very important that we come to this because it always seemed to me then, as it certainly has always seemed to me since, that when we were talking about those who said we should negotiate more with the Soviet Union, that we should be less harsh, should encourage their doves, etc, that almost all of them turned instinctively, and solely, if I may add, to arms control as the little engine that could pull the rest of the US-Soviet relationship. I always believed then that was a flawed view. It was the tail trying to wag a dog when the dog was becoming much too large. And, in fact, it does seem to me that was the problem. There were good reasons on both sides why the SALT II treaty was seen as important and that we carried forward, came to the agreement, and had the summit meeting to ratify it, but the subsequent virtual total crash of overall US-Soviet relations proved the point that no amount of arms control, including an important treaty on strategic arms, could carry the otherwise decaying corpse, to put it starkly, of the overall US-Soviet relationship. All that said, I wanted to make that point.

The process leading up to the actual summit was very intensive. I was charged to work on it together with Bob Barry, who was the deputy assistant secretary in the European Bureau responsible for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We were negotiating the joint declaration,

communiqué or whatever you want to call it, which would be signed by the two chiefs of state, Brezhnev as head of the Soviet Union, Carter as our president, that would reflect the summit results. So that was worked back and forth very carefully, each word with a magnifying glass, etc. And it became evident as we got actively into that undertaking in late '78, particularly early '79, with all the other negative things happening in the relationship, that this communiqué, this joint declaration, was going to be not very much. In other words, I think the original thought had been that it would have mentioned lots of initiatives agreed by the two presidents, that we will cooperate more in this area, we will do more in that. But by the time in Washington, where we were doing this, we came to the agreed text, as I recall, it was not changed even in one word once the illustrious ones convened in Vienna and blessed it. It was basically just a short communiqué, joint declaration, that did little more than take note of the signing of the SALT II treaty.

I remember vividly that we tried to get the Soviet side to agree to a statement in the joint declaration that neither side strives for military superiority. The Soviet side refused. This was the subject of a lot of to-ing and fro-ing back and forth and the Soviets were not comfortable putting this into the document. So that's yet another indication of what we're talking about here. The actual summit meeting, which I attended coming over on Air Force One with the president, as usual the large accompanying party, was certainly in the history of US-Soviet summitry I imagine the most bizarre in several respects. Brezhnev, who of course was not doing well in general anyway, was in a very down period. Our intelligence people assumed that he was not always himself, obviously taking a lot of medication. There were several bizarre instances. But one of them was, at the official dinner, and I can't remember if it was the Soviets hosting it at their place, or President Carter hosting it at our ambassador's residence in Vienna. Whatever the cuisine, the food that was actually being served, Brezhnev would take his fork laboriously, raise up whatever it was, and more often than not the fork would go into the side of his cheek, and you can imagine what was lacking in terms of the repartee back and forth. Basically he had to have Foreign Minister Gromyko at his shoulder and other aides answering for him more often than not. That was the great summit of Vienna in 1979.

Q: Did you get any feel about how Carter reacted when all of a sudden brought up against the reality of who was the Soviet ostensible leader?

MATTHEWS: We all knew, and I think Carter certainly appreciated even before the summit that we were well into the leadership succession of the Soviet Union. Although I think we talked about it last time, Brezhnev went on to last another almost two years. It was incredible, and he became ever more of a vegetable as I recall. It certainly confirmed us in our view that, we were talking about the Soviet Union essentially ruled by a committee of people...Brezhnev had to keep himself alive somehow, and the folks beneath him found it comfortable to continue to exercise power in his name, etc.

Q: As we were looking at this, obviously we're trying to figure out who is going to take over. What were we thinking?

MATTHEWS: Well, I think, our Kremlinology proved to be pretty good. In the end I think we wound up being right among our short list of candidates we felt would replace Brezhnev...they

all wound up replacing him because each then died one after the other. We thought that Andropov, who was then the head of the KGB, and obviously a man of some influence, would stand a very good chance of becoming the General Secretary of the Communist Party as the top guy. Although Brezhnev had taken on all manner of titles in those last few years, Marshal of the Soviet Union, grand poobah of whatever. His administrative assistant who had worked himself up mostly by being a good staff aide, was Chernenko, and in fact, Chernenko, when Brezhnev finally did die, managed to get himself chosen as the one to be general secretary simply because I think he was such a dull, unchallenging piece of blah. So much of the same situation continued to apply. He was virtually incapable of doing anything on his own. So then he died, and then Andropov took over, and then following him of course the now much aligned Mikhail Gorbachev.

Q: You were in the Soviet office from when to when?

MATTHEWS: From the summer of '77 through early '81.

Q: Did you get involved in sitting down and figuring out how to be beastly to the Soviets? We were cutting out wheat, and I was wondering if there was a think tank of how can we stick it to the Soviets.

MATTHEWS: Oh, very definitely. In fact, as officer in charge of the multilateral political relations section I was charged with drawing up a so-called hit list of sanctions we wanted to look at to impose on the Soviet Union in punishment for its invasion of Afghanistan. That's the one you're referring to? And this was a very interesting experience. I was no stranger to hit lists. The Soviets had done egregiously awful things, in human rights, or whatever it might be. So we had gone to the trough before, you know, suspending Aeroflot landing rights, etc, there was a lot of nutsy-boltsy stuff like that. You could even do things with travel restrictions. But it was mostly minor stuff. So this, of course, was the big Kahuna, the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan. They seemed to be on the march, rampant, heading for God knows where, warm waters, heading towards the Persian Gulf. So as you might imagine we had all manner of entities contributing their ideas for a hit list. I recall receiving an NSC memo which had a bunch of stuff on it, and we had worked up options. Well, I don't want to sound immodest, but as sometimes happens, as often happens when there is a great crisis, everyone gets very tired; one person who is less tired than the others is asked to do something. I remember well, we had all been working for weeks on what the hell we should do to show the Soviet Union that by God, they weren't going to get away with doing this without getting whacked back some way somehow. So, everyone was very tired putting in 20-hour work days. It was a Saturday afternoon and I and everyone was sitting around, and we had all this stuff, and we got the word from the office of the Secretary of State, Mr. Vance, that he wished to have a meeting early the next morning because he in turn was going over to meet with the President where they would actually decide what we would do. In other words, the actual sanctions would be decided upon. I remember staying until very late Saturday night, 11:00, 12:00, 1:00 in the morning, whatever it was. And at this point I couldn't do this on the basis of any committee because the clock was ticking, and things were actually going to happen. So I took all this stuff, and there were dozens of things that people had contributed that we could whack them here, or we could do this, but most of it was just, as I say, penny ante stuff. I separated it into two columns. One was a very short column, it had maybe

five, six, eight things on it. The other one had maybe 20-30-40 things, who knows, on airport landing rights, on how we could deny them the sale of can openers under export control, add that to the list, etc. But also on the list, which I think had come from on high and wasn't generated necessarily by us, was the grain embargo, canceling participation in the Olympics, and there was one other that was of some consequence. I can't remember what that third one was. It may come to me because I think I have a note or two on this somewhere. So I drew up this memo, I guess maybe George Vest was the assistant secretary for European affairs, and a few others were going to be there, and I was invited to be present at the meeting with Secretary Vance also early Sunday morning before he went over to the White House. Well, Cyrus Vance was, and is, one of the kindest human beings you'll ever meet in your life. He never raised his voice, and God knows he never used any profanity or untoward language at all, and had great equanimity. We all admired him greatly for this. His office had received a copy of my memo which by the way was not changed. It's amazing, it's one of the few things I ever wrote, particularly going to high levels, that was not changed. I guess everyone was just too tired. So we get in the Secretary of State's conference room, on a Sunday morning, at an early hour. And he's been looking through the memo, and everybody is sitting around there, about eight or ten of us, whatever it was, and to our shock, we all almost fell out of our chairs, the Secretary of State says: you know, I've looked through all of this stuff, there are all these things...and he referred to the long list, and he said, that's all just, excuse me, "chicken shit". Cy Vance was not one to say anything like this. And, he said, there are only three things on here that will really get the Soviets' attention: grain embargo, canceling participation in the Olympics, and this third one that I can't think of. And he went over to the White House, and those were the three that were adopted.

Q: So a whole generation of American athletes can curse you.

MATTHEWS: Well, I think not for being the originator of the idea. This had surfaced elsewhere early on as to how in the world we could respond.

Q: For the record, the 1980 Olympics in the summer were going to be held in Moscow.

MATTHEWS: Yes. To recap, my role was to segregate all the penny ante options, to use a kinder term, from the several significant ones. There were another maybe four or five in addition to the three, but these were distinctly the three where Moscow would sit up and take notice.

Q: Did you get involved in the efforts to sell what we were doing to other countries, keep them out of the Olympics, not sell grain?

MATTHEWS: I was involved in it. There was one officer as I recall who took the lead in coordinating all the intense diplomatic activity to get other countries also not to attend the Olympics, etc. My office was closely involved in it, mostly just keeping track of what was going on. We didn't ourselves take the lead in doing the demarches.

Q: We started getting into this posture of confrontation. Nothing passes unnoticed in the Soviet Union, they usually come back at us. Were we seeing other things happening to us?

MATTHEWS: 1980 was essentially a marking time period. We had the unfolding of our boycott

of the Olympics. We had the onset of the grain embargo. Essentially the US-Soviet cooperative relationship shut down.

Q: And you had the election in the states too.

MATTHEWS: We had the election in the states, and then of course everything went into suspended animation. And I recall that as being a period when there was not a lot going on. There was another flap over the presence of Soviet MiGs in Cuba during one of those summers, but that was just part of the list of perturbations that I referred to. The big one was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing reaction. The Soviet propaganda machine for its part, of course, retaliated, or responded, that all this stuff that the United States was cranking up, the sanctions etc., was no more than what we had wanted to do to beat them about the head and shoulders all the time, and that it was just evidence of the anti-Soviet malicious attitude on the part of the United States.

Q: What did we find the world reaction was? Both the Soviet invasion, and our counter moves.

MATTHEWS: As I recall we were fairly pleased with the reaction we got from most of our allies. I mean, the non-aligned movement was shaky and flaky as so often in those matters. In the Mid-East itself you had, of course, the attitudes which were more a function of the Arab-Israel problems than they were of this. But I recall that most of our key allies, not all NATO by any means, were in fact alarmed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and concerned that it portended a more assertive move into the Gulf region, or could, not that it necessarily did, but that it could.

Q: What were we getting both from the embassy, from the CIA, and other agencies. At that time, during the aftermath up until you left, until '81, any disquiet in the Soviet Union from whatever passes for public opinion, even sub-rosa public opinion.

MATTHEWS: I don't recall our ever coming by any of that at the time. Later on, of course as we know, there were manifestations of discontent once the Soviets started incurring considerable casualties. But back then, adding of course to the alarm in general, in helping the US case it wasn't too long after they went in with the initial force of troops, that they began adding to their force strength by deploying large combat forces.

Q: Did you find things heating up as far as what we were doing during the 1980 period as the election came up. You had Ronald Reagan who represented at least in the context in those days about as far right a candidate, strongly anti-Communist as you could get in the mainstream political system, and seeing the Carter administration trying to up the ante. Did you feel the political tug?

MATTHEWS: Well, of course, we were very aware of it. You had team A, team B, certainly foreign policy played...

Q: What was team A, team B?

MATTHEWS: There was an effort mounted to show that a basic, overall intelligence estimate of Soviet intentions was too relaxed as to what the Soviets were about. It might have been by the Committee on the Present Danger, I can't recall. I know they were very active in doing things which were picked up by the Reagan campaign of 1980. The foreign policy issues in general played a much more prominent role in that election campaign than goodness knows it did here four years ago, and much more than now. Speaking as one who was in the trenches, one of the gunslingers, we felt we had our hands full just trying to deal with the ins and outs of what was happening in US-Soviet relations.

Q: When did you leave Soviet affairs?

MATTHEWS: The election, of course, was in November, and I had earlier been assigned as DCM, deputy chief of mission, to Helsinki, and had wanted badly to go because it was near and dear to my heart, and I had spent a lot of time in Finland over the years. Also, the US ambassador in Finland was Jim Goodby, an outstanding Foreign Service Officer with whom I had worked on many European security issues. Jim had asked me to be his DCM and I was honored and delighted. But fate intervened. I stayed on, and wound up not going to that assignment, staying on to be a continuity link as the senior special assistant to Marshall Shulman who was still working in the capacity of special advisor to the Secretary of State on Soviet affairs. The Secretary of State at that point was Ed Muskie because Vance by then had resigned over the abortive Iran rescue mission. The other thing in the background of all this, speaking of other perturbations, goodness knows was the Iranian hostage...

Q: By the way, in the Iranian thing did we see the Soviet hand there at that time?

MATTHEWS: As I recall, there were strong suspicions that they were very happy to see us in that situation, further sticking it to us over that. So the Helsinki position came and went as it were. I think the director general notified me that I was selected for the Senior Seminar...obviously after the election I was going to self-destruct, and had been at that point already another three-four years -- three and a half, in Soviet affairs again. So I got an assignment to the Senior Seminar which I was going to do. Then fate again intervened. President-elect Reagan asked Alexander Haig to be his Secretary of State, Haig among other phone calls he made at the time, called Walter Stoessel with whom he had worked closely in the Nixon years when Walt was deputy assistant secretary for European affairs, later assistant secretary, etc. Walter had been the ambassador in Moscow when I was in Leningrad. At that point Stoessel was serving as our ambassador to Bonn, Germany. So Haig called Stoessel and asked him to become Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and I got a call from Walt Stoessel asking if I would be his executive assistant in that capacity. So the Senior Seminar went out the window, and I wound up present at the transition between the Carter and the Reagan administrations, and all that then ensued.

Q: Why don't we talk about this transition period? We're talking about January 20th, 1981, because some transitions just are kind of transitions. But this one was a set of true believers on one side being replaced by true believers on the other side, in a certain extent in foreign policy. Or by that time disillusioned true believers on one side.

MATTHEWS: Perhaps, although within the State Department it was obviously mostly the political appointees...

Q: I'm talking about the impact of the political appointees. From your perspective how did things go?

MATTHEWS: I thought it went fairly smoothly. The transition teams had done their usual preparation of mammoth books that no one was ever going to read. Every transition team does this. You know, you kill thousands of trees to produce these briefing books, and that happened once again. But it had the beneficial effect, it seemed to me at that point, because some of those people we got to know, and they took positions here and there in the Department, and in some of the other national security agencies. I remained present in my office...it did not hurt that the office where I was, a nice office I might add, overlooking the monuments, mahogany, etc., was given to Walter Stoessel to be his transition office, before he had his confirmation hearings and moved into the big, big office of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. So my memories of the morning of January 20, 1981...actually I guess I should say 12:01 p.m., were footsteps of the aides to Secretary-designate Haig coming down the inner corridor to see who was around, and putting up little signs as to who was going to be where. I did not suffer any indignities because it was already decided that our space would be Stoessel's, and it was known that I would be Stoessel's executive assistant. But it did not take the new team very long to settle itself into place. Of course, everyone had to go through confirmation hearings, so they were in designate status. And you had the Secretariat, of course, operating as point of transition, and very effectively so I might say during that period.

MARSHALL BREMENT
Political Counselor
Moscow (1974-1976)

Ambassador Marshall Brement was born in New York in 1932. He received a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College and a master's degree from the University of Maryland. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1952-1955. Ambassador Brement's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Hong Kong, Moscow, Singapore, Djakarta, and Saigon, and an ambassadorship to Iceland. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on April 11, 1990.

Q: You went to Moscow, again. This was as political counselor, from '74 to '76. How did you see the political situation then?

BREMENT: I was there for post-Watergate, after Nixon's removal. But it was still the Kissinger era of our diplomacy with the Soviets. So we were still maintaining our policy of detente, and still negotiating, trying to follow up on SALT I, with lots of summit meetings going back and forth. Unlike the first time I was in Moscow, the big difference was the busyness of our embassy. The embassy was enormously busy, people coming through, delegations, exchanges. In the '60's it was a reporting embassy. That was all the embassy did. In the '70's, it was a working

governmental embassy, with all sorts of things, all sorts of people coming through.

The internal situation of the Soviet Union was very stable. In fact the mark of the Brezhnev period altogether in Soviet history is that he just got people in one job and if there was no trouble, then they stayed in that job. Now it is called the period of stagnation. But things were looking up for the Soviets in that period. The Soviets were saying and believing that the correlation of forces in the world was moving in their direction. The economy was still improving. New oil sources had been opened and the export of oil meant major hard currency accounts opened up for the Soviets. There was a good deal of cleaning up in the center of Moscow, with new construction along a street called the Arbas. Moscow doesn't change much, compared to other cities, but at least compared to its own past things looked a lot better and I think there was a certain sense of optimism, certainly in the Foreign Ministry. People felt the U.S. was in decline and that things were moving in Soviet favor.

Q: Did you find more openness with the Soviet officials and all?

BREMENT: There was much more openness, though I would say I was in a different position as Political Counselor than I was as a Second Secretary. And this was the era of detente so I could have access to many more people. Whereas the first time Moscow was a very buttoned up place. And I was Political Counselor, which meant that I had entree to everybody in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There was always a reason for me to see somebody, whereas the first time I was dealing with Asia so I didn't have a particular reason to go, other than to deal strictly with Asian affairs, where we were at loggerheads. But the main difference was that in the era of detente it was quite encouraged by Soviet authorities to see people from the American embassy, if you had a legitimate reason to see them. So that was one factor, and then you had the dissidents, which was another factor. You had a whole new different angle on the Soviet Union that you couldn't get before from Soviet citizens. But even the dissidents weren't very good at giving the big picture. Their objectivity was always in question. They were painting a gloomy picture of their lives in the Soviet Union, of conditions in the Soviet Union, of the way they and their friends had to live, of the future of the Soviet Union, and of the lack of imagination of the Soviet bureaucrats, and so forth. But they weren't conveying a sense of a Soviet Union that was falling apart, or a system that was being broken down, or indeed of a system that was going to fall apart.

Q: The dissidents became quite a focus, but how did we feel about them, they were obviously damn good news for people who wanted stories. That was something else. But the embassy looks at any group from a professional view point, did you find them useful?

BREMENT: Well, they added to your work load, but yes, I found it useful to be able to talk to people who were native to the society who were skeptical about the society. They would talk honestly, and that is a heady experience after you have been in Moscow for awhile. I do remember going out to visit Jack Scanlan in Warsaw, and being enormously struck about how different the Poles were. The Polish officials sounded to me like Soviet dissidents, that is about the level at which you could talk to people. But of course I was in Moscow in the sixties for the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial, all remnants of the thaw that began under Khrushchev in the cultural field. The rigidly doctrinaire Suslov, their chief ideologist, cut off the Soviet intellectuals and really ratcheted down the situation. So stagnation culturally is probably a good way to

characterize the situation. Politically there were no changes. Diplomatically they had a whole series of successes. They thought they resolved the German problem, through the various German-Polish treaties, and then through the Helsinki Final Act. They achieved what they had been aiming for all along, that was a ratification of the borders as they emerged from the Second World War in Europe. This the United States essentially ratified, and this was a major diplomatic achievement. It was what Gromyko had been working for twenty years. So things were looking up for the Soviets. And indeed, when they sent a Cuban army to Angola, that surprised everybody, because they hadn't done anything like that before. But it was part of the upbeat expansion of their role in the world.

Q: Did this Cuban army in Angola make us rearrange our thoughts about the top? Did we see this as a resurgent aggressive power?

BREMENT: Yes, I think we certainly did. I'd have to check Kissinger's memoirs, but I remember his last trip to Moscow was when I was there in '76 and essentially he was saying that. In not too veiled diplomatic language, he said that you can't really have an Angola and call the situation detente. You can't do that and then talk about not taking "unilateral advantage" of the other party, as was stipulated in a signed solemn agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States on the prevention of war. You cannot sign such an agreement in 1972, and then go on and ship a Cuban army to Angola. The two things are not compatible. When it came to the United States, in the Presidential election of '76, Ford got rid of "detente" as a word describing U.S. policy because it became extremely unpopular in the United States, and with damn good reason in my view.

Q: ..and was this the attitude? Did you see a swing in attitude of the officers of the Embassy?

BREMENT: No, they were all pretty shell-shocked. Life in Moscow became much less pleasant.

Q: This was not a euphoric time for anyone in Moscow...

BREMENT: I don't think anyone who has ever served in Moscow has ever been euphoric. The only time I ever saw a real change from the Soviet side was during the Apollo-Soyuz mission, the joint Soviet-U.S. space mission. The Soviet press for about three weeks read like the press of any other country. There was never anything wrong, no racial situation in Detroit, no lynchings in Texas or whatever. Nothing was wrong with the United States at that point, for about three weeks and then it went back to what it was before. You work in the embassy and you have the constant pressure from Soviet surveillance -- planting bugs, planting bugs on you. Indeed, we had the whole microwave problem at that time, which was pretty grim for a lot of people and sent Embassy morale into a nosedive.

Q: Would you explain what this was?

BREMENT: It was an interesting example of the different perspectives that you have on these things. Because of really different views within the United States government on what was permissible to happen to its employees, and the legal status and the moral status of those employees, we went public with the fact that for years the Soviets had been beaming microwaves

at the sensitive sections of our embassy. It is still a question whether low doses of microwaves are injurious to one's health or not. Indeed, if they are, then a lot of people in this country are in a lot more danger than the people in our embassy in Moscow. Anybody living near a TV tower is getting a lot more microwaves than a guy in the American embassy. The difference was that they were beamed on a very narrow frequency, so that you were getting a charged beam at you in the embassy in Moscow, whereas nobody else in the world has ever suffered that kind of treatment before because you don't get that normally. On a navy communications ship the radiation is through the whole spectrum of microwaves, where in this case it was just one narrow beam. So anyway, when we went public on this, quite understandably a lot of ladies became very worried about what it was doing to their babies. Indeed, a lot of people talked about birth defects, and a lot of people got cancer. There was a mysterious outbreak of appendicitis in the embassy among people just on the right floor where the microwaves were being beamed, my wife being one of those. So, it became a tremendous morale question, and we tried to get the Soviets to turn it off. And they kept saying this is ridiculous, it is just Cold War thinking, and so forth. They never could really understand what it was we were talking about.

Q: As this really not understanding or was it just that the KGB was so much in control?

BREMENT: I think the Soviets genuinely felt that we wanted them to turn off the microwaves and that we were being ingenuous in our stated reasons. They thought the reason wasn't the health of our employees. The reason was we just wanted them to turn off those microwaves. And we were generating this publicity in order to put unacceptable pressure on them to get them to do what we wanted them to do. That, I think, is how the Soviets genuinely saw it, because their medical literature, and even our medical literature does not make an unimpeachable case that these microwaves are genuinely injurious. The dosage was well below our own safety standards.

Q: One final comment on this. I served five years in the embassy in Yugoslavia. We knew people were trying to listen, and sometimes I think we get hyper sensitive about being listened to. I am not quite sure. Do you feel that really a lot is coming out from this? Does it really make a difference from an intelligence point of view?

BREMENT: I think very little. I would say that there was a difference between the Soviet Union and other countries, in that we know that the Soviets devote more effort to this, an enormous effort. Something like thousands of people are employed in the various surveillance functions that they have just against the American embassy. I think the way they do it is that they have a bank of listening devices and most of the time no one is talking. When they start conversing something gets switched on and it triggers the recording mechanism.

I think the Soviets more or less size you up one way or another as a personality, and figure out what kind of work you are doing and if you are not a target, they really don't pay too much attention to you. If you are happily married, or moderately happily married, they really don't care about your sex life. But if they have some reason to think you may have homosexual tendencies, or that you may have financial problems that would allow them to blackmail you, something blackmailable, then the KGB will certainly operate. I know of two cases where they used homosexual bait essentially to get somebody at the embassy. And there is just no way they would have known that these people had homosexual tendencies without the microphones. One

of them was married. So it can be a useful means for a blackmailer to learn the forbidden secrets of his quarry.

Q: So it is not so much the information but a means at getting to somebody?

BREMENT: Yes. I think it is more of a means to blackmail somebody. I think it would be rare indeed, that they would get specific information they were looking for from the domestic conversations of embassy officers.

I would really be curious to look at my own file, because I am sure it contains the most bizarre misunderstandings. They have people who are really good in English, but not that many. They couldn't really listen to even this kind of a conversation without making a lot of mistakes, unless they were native speakers, or close to native speakers.

Q: You don't have that many. Well, I want to move...

BREMENT: And very few people would talk to their wives about sensitive political or military information. The value of the listening devices is to get somebody.

LOUISE TAYLOR
Cultural and Information Officer, USIS
Moscow (1974-1976)

Ms. Taylor was born and raised in Illinois and educated at Wellesley College, George Washington University and Boston University. After joining the Foreign Service of USIA, Ms. Taylor served in Washington and abroad in the field of Cultural and Information. Her foreign posts include Moscow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and Rabat. She also served in Washington as USIA Desk Officer for Afghanistan/Pakistan and for South Asia and as Policy Officer for Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States. Ms. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

TAYLOR: There were only eight of us in my junior officer course. We immediately bonded. The training took place at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue, where USIA used to be. We had such a wide ranging group of characters in our little group of eight. It just made every day fun and interesting. The training, in retrospect, was very weak. USIA was extremely reluctant to assign me to Moscow as a junior officer because – and they were right – in Moscow during the '70s, we did not do programs the way USIA operated everywhere else. They said, "We're giving you this training to run a library and to have programs and all these other things and you're not going to be able to do any of that."

Nevertheless, when I got to Moscow, USIS Moscow was so glad to have me or anybody because although they had a staff then of eight or 10 officers, not counting Leningrad, everybody was so overworked. There was so much to do. Even though we didn't run a normal cultural center, we

were trying to get out into institutions. So, just having another body, even though I didn't know how to do anything, was good for them. The training that I got in Washington was fun. I never learned how to write a cable. I didn't even know what EMBOFF [Embassy Officer] was. I started reading these cables in Moscow and finally said to Jim, "Who is this EMBOFF person? He goes everywhere! EMBOFF goes here and EMBOFF goes there. I've got to meet him." That's how naïve I was. It is just a generic term used in cablese language. I really think that a better kind of training would have better equipped me. On the other hand, I came with no preconceived notions. I got thrown into a situation where one of the more senior officers was quite ill for five or six months and almost literally was not able to come to work. So, I immediately had to do her job. This turned out to be the best thing for me. Many junior officers in the days when we had lots of staff had nothing to do. USIA in some places was overstaffed, so it was make-work for junior officers. I had a real job with real responsibilities, although when we went to our next post, which was Kabul, Afghanistan, it's true; the Agency was right. I had to learn everything all over again. There, I was the director of a cultural center and had an English teaching program of 1,000 students and a seminar room and a theater and a big library. I had not done that before.

Q: Go back to Moscow. You were there from when to when?

TAYLOR: '74-'76.

Q: What was the situation with America versus the Soviet Union at that point? What was life like there?

TAYLOR: America versus the Soviet Union in the '70s was probably the best time to be in Moscow. It was the height of détente. It was the Kissinger years. Kissinger was out there at least once a month, sometimes even more. There was a full blown bilateral cultural agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union which allowed us to do a lot of things. Although you could not travel as an individual throughout the country, because of the fact that we had this umbrella agreement, particularly in USIA, we were able to travel a great deal. I accompanied the Robert Joffrey Ballet, my old stomping ground. They came under the cultural agreement. I accompanied the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra to Baku, Yerevan, and Tbilisi. I don't think I could have gotten there easily because our travel was so limited and restricted. I accompanied the New York Jazz Repertory Company to Rostoff on the Don. And a number of other places by virtue of the fact that we had a vehicle that allowed us officially to be our cover, to travel. If you just wanted to apply as a couple or as a group of friends to go visit someplace, the Soviet authorities would most normally turn you down. So, that two year period, which by the late '70s was completely marred and turned around by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, really was a flourishing period of relationships between us.

Also, I found, of all the posts I've been in, that was the best post for third country interaction. My husband was the Middle East watcher in the Political Section. We had wonderful relationships with representatives of Arab countries there that we would not have had in other countries. Everybody turned to everyone else because there was no information coming out of the Soviets, so you had to use your contacts. We had Egyptian, Syrian, Indian, and a lot of Western European friends. We just all bonded together. This created a wonderful third country

international community that for us also existed in Afghanistan but less so in the other countries we've been in. The environment was difficult because it was hard to get appointments with Soviets. But at the same time, everybody was in it together and you had a lot to learn from your colleagues in other embassies. I don't remember talking as much in my entire life as I did for the two years we were in Moscow. There was just so much to be learned. Every day was a new experience. Every day, they'd throw something different at you.

Q: What were you yourself trying to do?

TAYLOR: The best way I could describe it is to divide it into the Information Section and the Cultural Section where we were. We worked with institutions varying from the press, to universities, to the think tanks that were around town. There was the Institute of History and the Institute of Social and Economic Studies. These were major institutions. Of course, the Institute of USA and Canada Studies, the famous one you hear about all the time. Our efforts were to try to bring American experts in a variety of fields into contact with the leadership or the faculty members or the editors of these institutions to set up a dialogue, if that's possible. We used the performing arts in the same way. Let me give you one example that might be illustrative of what I tried to do for two years.

A history professor from Temple University, Marshall Fishwick, a wonderful guy who traveled for USIA quite a lot, came to talk to a number of institutions, the ones that I could get agreement from, on the subject of freedom of the press and the subject of the press in the western environment. We tried not to make this too heavy-handed. But that was basically what the subject was. He was a man of tremendous energy and great humor and liveliness. He just galvanized the audiences that he talked to. But I remember at the Institute of History, where I did have a number of what I would call "friends" in Soviet society, he had a small display of journals, everything from Seventeen Magazine to The Journal of Foreign Policy and everything in between, some with lots of pictures, some very scholarly. Altogether, it was probably representative of maybe one percent or less of what is available in publications in the United States. I'll never forget that at the end of that lecture, people were crowded around Marshall and asking him, "How do you teach journalism?" They were asking informal questions based on what he had been talking about. One woman whom I knew came up to me next to this exhibit of the journals and magazines and said to me, "You know, I am so glad I'm not an American because I wouldn't know what to read. Here in the Soviet Union, people tell us what to read. You have so much choice that I just couldn't make up my mind what to read." I have never forgotten that. That to me said, "That is why we are here."

Q: Were you having problems with the KGB?

TAYLOR: Everybody understood that your phone was tapped both at the office and at home, that the maid that you hired would go through your personal papers. If you didn't hire a maid, there would be a certain amount of ransacking done at your apartment. The people who lived in our apartment before us were a military couple and they did not hire a maid. Not only was their place ransacked and things left upside down many times, things were also stolen. We had a maid from the central hiring authority, UPDK, which served the embassies – still do, I think – and I liked her. She was a delightful young woman. I knew that she had certain requirements. As long

as you knew it and you understood it and you lived within those limits, I had nothing to hide. If she wanted to look in my checkbook, she could look in my checkbook. The one funny thing that happened once was that we had gone on a trip and Jim had taken some pictures of me at the beach in a bikini. These were hardly centerfold-type pictures. We had put them up on one of those folder displays where you put slides up and it's lighted from behind. We were going to sort them into trays. This photograph of me in a bikini disappeared for about a week from the house. So, we would say very loudly in the living room (We had quite a nice apartment actually), in the dining room, in every room, "You know, I know that slide was there yesterday. I saw it. It was right there on the third row in between these other two pictures." We just kept saying it. Pretty soon, it came back. The same was true of our address book. We were very careful never ever to mention the name of Russian contacts or to write their names or addresses down. I had nothing like that lying around. Everything else I thought, "Well, if they're interested in this, they're really wasting their time." So, that did not bother me so much. I assume there were times that we were followed in cars. The only time that I was concerned about it was when we went to visit dissident friends. If you recall, the dissident art movement was one of the big things then. Most of the USIA people had pretty good contacts within the dissident art movement. One time, I had Jamie Wyeth, the artist, in town as a speaker. I took him around to some of the dissident places and I know we were followed. But there was no way to do it otherwise. There was no way I could have gotten to these places. It was almost impossible to drive in Moscow. That meant that frequently you had to go with a driver. Simply by virtue of being with a driver, the KGB would know where you were going. The blatant following really occurred more out of town. Jim and a friend were followed in a very comical way in Minsk once. He and another guy had gone to buy books in Minsk. The Political Section had a big book buying budget. They bought up every book there was in Minsk. Since there were no cars in Minsk at that time, it was quite easy to tail Jim and his colleague. They knew they were being tailed by sort of a Mutt and Jeff team. It was pretty comical. One night, they went to a nightclub in the hotel they were staying in. These two thugs were sitting over there. They'd wave and they'd wave back. The funniest time when I was along was when we were in Leningrad buying books. We had been driving around all day buying books. I was with Jim at this point. You had to travel with somebody, either your spouse or someone else. So, I went on that trip to Leningrad. We went around and ordered all of the books. All of the bookstore people were familiar with this embassy program. They said, "Okay, it will take us three hours to bundle these all up. Come back in three hours." So, Jim and I went around and looked at things in Leningrad. At the end of the day, we went back and picked up parcels everywhere. It was the last stop of the day. It was snowing. It was winter. It was getting very dark, about 4:00 PM. Our tail was behind us. They had been pretty bumbling throughout the day and kind of comical. We were driving around in one of these little Zhiguli, which is those Soviet Fiats that belonged to the consulate in Leningrad. We pulled up in front of the bookstore and we went in. There were just stacks of books. I didn't know how they were all going to fit in the little car. We came staggering out with them and our tail came in the bookstore. They picked up the parcels, brought them out to the car, helped us put them in the car. We all shook hands. We spoke pretty good Russian at that point. We said, "Well, that's it for the day." That was one time when it was very obvious. We did nothing. Other than buying the books, we went to do some sightseeing. We went to lunch. Occasionally, when you were in another city, somebody very odd who spoke perfect English would show up sitting at your dinner table. There are some funny stories about happenings in Moscow.

The best story of all time that we still talk about now actually happened to Jim, but we were all involved in it. That was when he was traveling with the then Secretary of the Treasury, Simon. They were all on the same plane. A press guy, a radio guy who spoke perfect English, Boris, who worked for Radio Moscow, sat down next to Jim and they were chatting on their way to someplace on the Black Sea. Jim was reading a book by Laurens Van Der Post called The View of All the Russias in paperback. It is a wonderful book. Boris and Jim chatted all the way. At the end of the trip, Boris said, "I'd really love to read that book. Would you mind lending it to me?" Jim said, "Sure." Anytime you can get a western publication in somebody's hands. So, he gave him the book. Then a series of invitations came from Boris and his wife, who was a Swedish language broadcaster for Radio Moscow who spoke no English. This was a bit unusual. So, we told our various bosses that we were going to accept these. They said, "Fine." One night, we reciprocated by having Boris and his wife and a couple of other official Russian couples, no dissidents, at our apartment for dinner. The big thing in Moscow was to show movies. It was a great way to entertain. The Russians loved it. We were showing Blazing Saddles or something like that. One of our guests was to this day a very good friend to the then CIA station chief. He lived in the apartment directly below us. We had a bunch of other people. As Jim was taking the movie screen down (We had our own screen), Boris ducked behind the screen and pushed this little piece of paper in Jim's hand. Jim just quietly pocketed it and continued on. The evening continued on. I think Jim actually took Boris and his wife home that night, if I'm not mistaken. At the end of the evening, Jim opens the little note. It's an agent's message. So, we took it into the embassy the next day. Our friend Bob was there and other people were there. He said, "Yes, this is a legitimate message, but I have no idea why he's giving it to you." The station chief then asked my supervisor, the PAO, Ray Benson, a wonderful guy, who always likes a bit of mischief, and Jim's boss, Marshall Brement. Both of them authorized our continuing to see Boris just until the Agency could figure out what was going on here. So, this message went back to headquarters. It turned out that Boris was, according to what he said in the message, a legitimate double or maybe triple agent, but the Agency, the CIA, had dropped him over the years. They had used him years back, but then they dropped him. His information was of moderate interest only. So, life continued on. We would see them occasionally. Each time that we saw them, Boris would give Jim a message. Finally, we were getting ready to leave Moscow. I think it was the end of our second year. Boris and his wife invited us to the opera. They were going on a trip to the Black Sea and they had really wanted me to go with them. Every day, they'd call me up and say, "Oh, Louise, you've got to come with us. We love you so much!" I just wasn't able to go. So, I got together a little pile of paperback books for Boris to take and then I got some fashion magazines and house magazines for his wife. Because she could not read English, she liked to look at the pictures. One of the books that I got for Boris was Tinker, Tailor, Sailor, Spy by John le Carre. I thought he would think that is a good read. And a couple of other things. I put them in this bag and off we went to the opera. Jim had decided and he told the station chief that that night he was going to tell Boris that he really had the wrong man, that we were leaving and that if Boris really wanted the relationship with the embassy, he had to do it with the correct outfit. So, he decided to do this at the intermission. I went off with the wife. Jim went off with Boris. We got back to our seats and the lights went down and Jim whispered to me, "I can't tell you anything more, but just ditch the books. Don't give him the books. Give him the magazines." This was to have taken place later in the car. So, I thought something had happened. We got through the rest of the opera. As we went home in the car together, I gave her her bag of magazines and I put the books under the seat. What turned out to have been happening over a

seven or eight month period... Boris was quite irate at Jim when Jim told him that Jim was not a real agent and that he was dealing with the wrong person. Boris said, "Well, why didn't you tell me this from the very beginning? On top of that, where is my money? I haven't been paid!" Jim said, "Well, I just don't know anything about this. I don't even know why you turned up in my life." Boris said, "Well, you activated me." Jim said, "I have no idea what you're talking about." Boris said, "Well, what about the word 'Cossack?'" It turns out that when Jim had handed the book A View of All the Russias to Boris, he had turned down the corner of the page where he had finished reading and it pointed to a chapter called "Cossacks." This was Boris' codename from the '60s. Boris had thought that the embassy was asking him to come back to work for them. All of the time, he had been passing these messages of moderate degree of interest to the CIA and they were not paying him for this and they were not giving him all the stuff he was used to. As we say to our friend Bob, and we still see him – we go out to dinner a lot – "Here he was, he missed one of the biggest stories that was right under his nose, right in our apartment, and he had no idea what was going on. He had no idea why Boris had resurfaced." So, when we got back to the apartment that night after the opera, Jim went straight to the bookcase. Boris had returned the book some months earlier and Jim had just put it back on the shelf. He took it off of the shelf and opened it up and there was Boris' first message saying, "I'm here. I'm back. These are my terms. This is what I expect." That had never been passed to the CIA because Jim didn't have a clue. I think that's really one of the best coincidental stories that I've ever heard and one of the best ones that happened to us.

Q: I think this is a good time to stop. We'll pick this up when you left Moscow in 1976 and you're off to Afghanistan.

TAYLOR: By way of Dari language training.

Q: Today is February 1, 2001. You wanted to add a few more things about Moscow.

TAYLOR: Yes. You had asked me a little bit about living conditions there. I wanted to make one more comment about living conditions and also working conditions. That was really what defined our existence in Moscow, what we were able to do, how much we were able to accomplish. First of all, working conditions. In my line of work in the USIS operation there, despite the fact that it was the height of détente with lots and lots of exchange going on between the United State and the Soviet Union at all levels, there were still thousands of prickly thorns in the side of the bilateral relationship. Many of these thorns would come to haunt us even though it might not be directly involved with what the USIS project of the day or month happened to be but simply because something had gone wrong in the bilateral relationship. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be instructed to make sure something didn't go right. As a junior officer, this was my first tour in the USIA overseas. I found that I would set up a speaking program on any subject of mutual interest. I talked about journalism last time. Maybe arts administration or the American university system. I would have a speaker lined up from the United States. I would have all of the visas and everything that you had to do to get it all done including having have the appointments made. The speaker would typically get to Helsinki. I would get a call typically at three or four in the morning saying that the speaker had been denied either entrance into the Soviet Union or the Finnish authorities had been informed by the Soviet authorities that they would not allow this person to enter the Soviet Union after all. So, you had a very irate professor

from the United States or speaker or expert or even government officials on some occasions expecting to come to the Soviet Union for a two week professional tour. We had knocked ourselves out for weeks and weeks and weeks trying to make this happen. For some unknown reason, again, totally unrelated to the specific project but something at some other level in the U.S.-Soviet relationship had gone wrong and then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be instructed to make sure that further obstacles were thrown in our path. So, very often, the project did go ahead, but frequently there would be some little things that would happen along the way. Instead of being able to go to Vladivostok with the speaker, Vladivostok would mysteriously disappear from the itinerary and Habarovsk would be substituted and things like that. But when the speaker was denied permission to travel altogether, that really was a disappointment. We always worked so hard to make these things go right. So, that's just one comment on-

Q: Could you retaliate?

TAYLOR: It wasn't in our interests to retaliate. We didn't want to block the Soviets from carrying out their activities in the United States. On one level, it was in our interests to make sure that most Russians saw as much of our country as they could. Now, there were retaliations for use of the dacha. I think everybody knows the famous American embassy dacha that's 25 kilometers outside of Moscow. That was as far as we were permitted to drive. So, we had this fiction that Soviet employees of the embassies here and the consulate in New York could drive only 25 kilometers in a radius of New York or Washington. But of course, within 25 kilometers of New York or Washington, you have all the riches and splendors of the world, whereas in 25 kilometers of a radius of Moscow, you have virtually nothing other than this dilapidated old dacha which looked like Heaven to us when we got there. There were times when you'd get personally angry about these things. I remember once seeing a Soviet diplomat shopping at the Georgetown Safeway. I'd see these Soviet diplomats there just going up and down the aisles and putting all of these things in their cart and remembering my days in the Soviet Union when the scramble for food was really difficult – not just for the two of us, both of us working full-time, which made it even more difficult, but for families with children, getting nourishing food could be a full-time occupation.

I'm sure that people engaged in this program will have heard of the dollar stores. It was where you could find for hard currency the staple items as well as a few fresh food items – and by that I mean a very few items - for dollars. You could occasionally find a kilo of carrots, but of the kilo of carrots, at least half that would just be dirt. They would dig the carrots up and clumps of dirt and all would go in the bag. But they were fresh. You could occasionally find fresh apples. We quickly learned that there was one cut of meat and only one cut of meat that was edible. So, everybody ate filet in the Soviet Union for two years. It wasn't too bad, but it wasn't fabulous either. Occasionally, you could find a chicken. The U.S. embassy had a small, extremely inadequate commissary. It was vastly, shockingly overpriced. It cost so much to bring goods such distance and on the train and through all the diplomatic hoops that they had to leap through. The commissary was probably maybe twice the size of this room, which is a rather small space, and had one or two freezer compartments, which meant that such things as a little three ounce can of frozen orange juice was rationed. Each family, no matter how large, could purchase two of these small cans of orange juice per week. That barely gets two people through a week and you treasure your orange juice in the morning. Similarly, you could purchase one to two

packages of Bird's Eye lima beans or frozen peas or whatever a week. This was rationed because there was no freezer space available. People who ran the commissary and the administrative counselor looked around for freezer space on the Soviet economy to rent so that we could have more foodstuffs. They found that it would really not be safe nor keep the food protected by renting from the Soviets because their freezer conditions and their capability was deemed to be not only unsafe but unsanitary. Whatever the temperature was supposed to be, it was at least five degrees higher than U.S. safety requirements called for. Anyway, it turned out to be unfeasible to get extra freezer space. So, if you wanted to have a dinner party, for example, for 15 people, and you wanted everyone to have frozen lima beans, you had to ration yourself and store up and horde for about 10 weeks before you could get enough of the right kind of food to serve a group of people. Now, we all lived this way and it became a joke. When my parents came to visit, for example, they brought in their luggage a rib roast that they had wrapped very carefully. We all ate it and treasured every bit. Still, I would say that, particularly for families with children, the issue of food was always a difficult one. If you spoke no Russian at all, it was almost impossible to get around. Much as in our country, there were very few signs in any language other than Russian. Including in the wonderful metro, if you didn't speak Russian, you couldn't maneuver in the system. I would say that life was extraordinarily difficult.

The only easy part of getting around Moscow was that since very few Russians had personal cars, there was hardly any traffic. The huge, wide boulevards were empty of traffic. So, we never once sat in a traffic jam.

Q: You all are replete with stories of male officers, married and unmarried, who find all of a sudden a pretty young lady presenting herself, obviously sent by the KGB. How about you as a married professional woman? Did nice looking young men come up and be available? Did you ever have any feeling that they were targeting you in this way?

TAYLOR: I mentioned in the story last time about the mistaken identity of Boris, the KGB spy. Boris and his wife, both of whom were considerably older than Jim and I were at the time, were actively trying to get me to accompany them on a trip they were making to Sochi in the south on the Black Sea. Certainly, had I agreed to go on that, there would have been some kind of entrapment involved, I'm sure - not with either one of them, but somebody else. The direct answer to your question is, no, I don't feel that they ever sent any attractive man in my way for any particular purpose. I do remember being approached a few times when Jim and I would be together, for example, walking around in Red Square. We had had a conversation in our apartment one night just speculating, "What would you do if you had a million dollars?" "Well, if I had a million dollars, I would..." We talked about travel, building a house someplace... Somebody in the group said, "I would never work again if I had a million dollars." So, the next night, Jim and I were wandering around Red Square just because it was a pleasant thing to do every once in a while. A very well dressed young Russian approached us and he had some cassette tapes that he wanted to sell. He supposedly also wanted to purchase our clothing. Then he had some little fake icons that he wanted to sell. The line that he used was, "Now, if you buy these icons and you sell them on the western market, you'll never have to work again." He said this in perfect English. So, whether this was just an unbelievable coincidence or they had taped us, they had thought, "Oh, here is a vulnerability. These people are talking about never having to work again," not realizing it was just fantasy and for fun, and they tracked us down to Red

Square and set this thing up... It's almost too much to believe that they could have done it. But in terms of somebody being targeted on me, to my knowledge, I don't think that happened.

Q: When I was in Belgrade, I used to take the pouch to Sarajevo or to Zagreb from time to time. We had a compartment. I vowed that if one of these beautiful young ladies was sicced on me, I'd keep at least one knee on the pouch at all times. Nothing ever happened.

TAYLOR: I began to think at a certain point, after close to two years in Moscow when nobody was asking to buy my clothes anymore, "I'm getting pretty dowdy here." People would come up and start asking me instructions in Russian: "How do you get there? Do you know where this is?" I thought, "I've got to get out of here and go refurbish myself because I'm beginning to look like a Soviet citizen."

When we traveled with the pouch... You usually got a trip a year if you could get away from your office. That means we got to Helsinki twice in the two years we were there. But we had to have someone else with us. On the two occasions, one time, Jim was not able to travel, so I went with another woman. The second time, we were able to travel together. But it was not allowed to go on the Red Arrow train, that wonderful train that left Moscow at midnight and got into Helsinki the next morning around 9:00 or 10:00. It was a very leisurely, wonderful trip.

JAMES E. TAYLOR
Political Officer
Moscow (1974-1976)

James E. Taylor was born in Oklahoma in 1938. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California in 1960. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1961-1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1965. His career included positions in Iran, Germany, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, and Israel. Mr. Taylor was interviewed on December 5, 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: How was the Soviet Union looked upon at that particular time?

TAYLOR: From 1973-74, you were in the beginnings of the detente era so people, Nixon and Kissinger, were moving towards a policy of down playing the threat side of what the Soviets were trying to do: their efforts to export Communism, and to subvert foreign governments in various third world countries. We were running behind Willy Brandt, of course, because he had launched his *Ostpolitik* several years before it occurred to us to enter the detente mode. He was extremely imaginative. I have great respect for him as Chancellor of West Germany. The *Ostpolitik* was designed to open relations with the East, both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. To get away from the rigid, hard line, Cold War policies generally of the sixties.

Q: You were in the military school and taught by emigres. I understand these were emigres for the most part who probably belonged to the Communist Party and couldn't get visas to come to the United States so we went to them instead of them coming to us.

TAYLOR: Some of them probably were that, but most of the staff at the Garmisch institute were as anti-communist as you could possibly imagine. There were a number who had been POWs, captured during World War II, and managed somehow not to go back and their anti-Soviet feelings were extremely sensitive. The entire curriculum and outlook of the Russian Institute in Garmisch was extremely hardline, anti-Soviet, anti-Moscow. There wasn't anyone who was willing to listen to the concept of "maybe we could work something out, we could deal with this regime somehow and try to work towards a common goal of some sort." That was not acceptable. By and large it was a generational thing. I think the youngest member of the staff had to be at least 60 years old. They represented a generation that was exposed in the Soviet Union pre-World War II. I don't think anybody came out after World War II. So, it was a very narrow, substantive time and curriculum there, not terribly rewarding by insights, but my major objective there was the language and to be able to develop an ear for it and try to learn to speak it as much as possible.

Q: So, in 1974 you left.

TAYLOR: In 1974 I went to Moscow.

Q: You were there from when to when?

TAYLOR: From 1974-76, two years.

Q: What was the situation vis-a-vis the Soviet Union at that time?

TAYLOR: I suppose one could argue that was the height of detente. There were efforts at the highest level to improve relations, to work together to try to solve various not only bilateral problems but to reduce tensions in other areas of the world where we were in effect competing, such as Africa, the Middle East and to some extent Asia. On the bilateral sense there were several, four or five, Kissinger visits. He would come over and would stay out in Lenin Hills, which is where the VIP delegations were put up and negotiations held on various arms agreements. This wasn't my field, but as far as I recall these were the beginnings of the major bilateral arms reduction treaties and agreements. It was a lot of alphabet soup at that time and subsequently I have forgotten a lot of that. But, it was interesting to see how a Secretary's delegation would come over and behave, especially with somebody like Kissinger. Of course, we all know his opinion of his role in the world.

We could travel in most areas of the Soviet Union. They had closed areas, of course. The major method of governmental control keeping us tethered to Moscow and Leningrad when we got too close was logistical. They made it so difficult to make flight and hotel reservations. They made it so difficult, even at the height of detente, in ways that made it so unpleasant that you would often give up trying to do much traveling.

One little program we had down there was price comparison of agricultural goods. There were great questions and uncertainty at the time about the Soviet grain harvest, which was either adequate or disastrous.. A lot of people felt we should let them starve to death and then

communism would be less dangerous. So, one way of trying to evaluate the truth about this particular harvest, this was 1975 I believe, was to have everybody who traveled anywhere take along a check sheet consisting of various questions. What kind of produce you saw, what kind of meat, what kind of poultry and at what price? How long were the lines, not was there a line? We had a couple of Agriculture attachés, and I guess they were responsible for collating all of this information and trying to reach a conclusion from it. One argument was that if there was a lot of meat in the market that meant it was a bad harvest because they were slaughtering all of their livestock because they didn't have any grain to feed them. This was an interesting non-State Department effort, which I felt was worthwhile. Apparently it did contribute to some degree to our conclusion that they did have a disastrous harvest that year and we were able to construct a grain deal which meant a huge amount of money for Kansas and places like that.

So, that was a little side light of the kind of efforts the embassy did in terms of collecting information.

Q: As you traveled around, did you ever feel the heavy hand of the KGB giving you a hard time, or sweet young ladies appearing at opportune times?

TAYLOR: You always traveled in pairs and were briefed to avoid that particular latter point you brought up. As far as the official surveillance, it was definitely there and it seemed to depend upon the concern of the local security officials involved. There was virtually no surveillance in Moscow outside of your housing complex because there were just too many foreigners and it was too big a city and they couldn't track everybody all of the time. And, much was the same in Leningrad where the post was smaller, but still they just sort of let it go. But, if you traveled to a smaller town, into Siberia, the Caucasus or some place like that, you could definitely count on the surveillance guys being very, very evident. They often apparently decided they didn't care whether you knew they were there or not. They were just going to be right next to you and behind you and see what you did. If you didn't like it, that's tough, get on the next plane and leave, which is probably the purpose anyway. They didn't particularly welcome your visit and were probably just as happy to see you go as soon as possible. If a little bit of heavy handed surveillance contributed to that departure, so much the better.

So, I would say it depended upon the local official; in the smaller cities they probably were more nervous to have embassy people running around.

Q: Given all this, were you able to develop any friendly contacts?

TAYLOR: Probably fewer than you could count on one hand; say three people. We knew that they had to have official sanction to see us as frequently as we saw them and do the kinds of things together in Moscow that we did. But, despite the fact that we knew and they probably knew that we knew it, they continued to socialize with us. There was one couple in particular. They were both professionals, professors in different fields. One was a very senior economist in the government and she was in the arts. We went various places with them, to the theater, the symphony and things of that sort. But, you are right, it was virtually impossible to do that on a large scale. If you make a couple of friends, that would be about it.

And in those days, in the time of detente, one of our major goals was to try to convince the Soviet government to lay off, if you will, their own citizens who might be inclined to have contact with Westerners. That was part of the agenda we had during detente, that you have to loosen up internally and one of the concrete ways of doing that was to make it less threatening for your own citizens to have exposure and friendships with Westerners. How much we succeeded, I don't know, but some people felt that they had good friends. We did have a few, and some others in the embassy felt that they had developed reasonably close relationships with some Soviets.

Q: What was your job?

TAYLOR: The first year I was what they called the publications procurement officer, which is an overt collection effort. The person who has that job buys publications, books, encyclopedias, maps, anything that is in print from as many bookstores in Moscow as you possibly can, but also from out in the provinces in major cities where there might be different publications from those found in Moscow. It had been going on for about 15-20 years before I got there and went on for years afterwards. It is funded by 15 or 20 government agencies back here. The largest being CIA and State, of course. So, it was a collection, a logistical operation, a management kind of job. My budget was about \$250,000 a year, so it required some budgeting effort. This meant a lot of books because they were very cheap. It was fun because I got out and was able to move around a little more and was exposed to unofficial Soviets a lot, people working in bookstores, the Soviet working man or woman.

Q: I have talked to people who have done this and they say in the big city it was a little hard to do it because they were a little more sophisticated, but when you got out in the boondocks the clerks were pushing books because they got more of a quota and were kind of interested. Did you find that?

TAYLOR: Yes, that is true. You would show up in some remote city and go to a couple of bookstores and people couldn't understand why you would want 20 copies of this stupid thing. You are right, they would be willing to sell you as many copies of anything. You could buy the whole bookstore if you wanted to and had the money to do it. But, in Moscow I ran into a number of people who were very leery of making everything available. They would sort of give me the impression that they were conducting their own censorship program as to what they should sell to foreigners.

Q: What was your impression of the book publications in the Soviet Union? How wide ranging they were and quality of them?

TAYLOR: There was a huge number of scientific and technical titles being printed at that time. I wasn't very surprised at that given the nature of the society. I guess there were a lot of people who depended upon technical skills to retain some standard of living and others who were hoping to develop these same skills in the technical field to get a better standard of living. But there were large bookstores that were doing nothing but technical and scientific books and they were doing big business. I don't recall any emphasis in any bookstore on what you would call fiction or current events or other fields that are so popular here. Even there they would have huge

selections of scientific and technical departments. They were very limited in terms of writers. The writers who were well-known to be acceptable to the regime were there, but they weren't especially popular or widely read. So, I guess I would say it was much more limited than just about anywhere else in the West, with the emphasis on the hard sciences and technical fields.

Q: What did you do your second year?

TAYLOR: The second year I had the Middle East and Africa portfolio in the political section.

Q: What does this mean?

TAYLOR: The political section was a very large one. I think we had nine officers, about four in the internal side who focused on internal developments in the Soviet Union, analyzed them and reported back, and about five of us on what we called the external side, Soviet policy toward certain geographic areas of the world. One colleague had Western Europe, for instance, somebody else would have the bilateral arms negotiations. I had Middle East and Africa, and another fellow had Asia and another one Latin America. This meant in effect we followed Soviet policy toward these regions, Soviet reaction to developments in those regions. In Africa, for instance, Angola was beginning to become a big bone of contention in the bilateral relationship. That was the first time anybody could remember where an African issue really took a lot of time in a political section. And, of course, the Middle East; it was just after the 1973 war and the Soviet rearming and support for Syria. But not much moved on the bilateral front in the Middle East.

Q: Could you go to the Foreign Ministry and talk to the equivalencies of the Desk officer and say what is going on here?

TAYLOR: Yes, there was a particular officer with whom I dealt on the Middle East and there was a more senior official with whom the political counselor dealt. Most of the time the two of us would go over to the senior guy and I could on my own go talk with the junior guy, an appointment could generally be set up in a couple of days. Those were the dealings on the Middle East side. As I recall it was rather amusing when I first called their equivalent of the African Bureau and asked with whom do I speak on this particular issue or something like that. It took them days to figure out what to do because nobody had ever asked about Africa before because it had never been of interest to both countries. So that is the way that worked.

We dealt a lot with other embassies. There was an interesting practice on the Middle East side. There were eight or nine embassies with officers focusing on that or it was part of their portfolio. This was Germany, Britain, France, Canada, Japan, the Western allies. We would have a practice of about every three or four weeks get together for a long, long lunch at one of our apartments and discuss what had happened in terms of each particular officer's experience over the last few weeks. Basically we would try to time these to fall after something major like a Kissinger visit, or a visit by the British Prime Minister or the French Foreign Minister, or something like that so we could hang it together. Then, whoever was the lead, if you will, would give a briefing to his colleagues saying what you could without being out of school and revealing too much. Basically you knew you could brief these people and the information would go back to their governments.

Q: You were briefing the KGB at the same time.

TAYLOR: Probably. Yes. Our ambassador, the British, French and German ambassadors, had a meeting every Friday at rotating embassies and they would meet for about an hour. So they would do much the same thing. Ambassador Stoessel would call down and ask for some briefing points on what he could tell the other three ambassadors regarding our particular area. So, we would prepare him for these things. So, at all levels we were working very closely with our allies' embassies. It was a good way to learn things because obviously we were among the best informed, but not totally informed. Obviously our allies had contacts and insights that we didn't. So, it was a useful, cooperative effort. As I say, even at the height of detente one was still living in a controlled environment and information was still difficult to obtain and was very valuable and prized if you had something that other people wanted.

So that was basically what all of us in the political section were doing, especially the external guys. The internal guys had it a little harder because they didn't have a lot of other government officials to call on. You couldn't call on the foreign minister and say, "Well, is there anything interesting going on?" It just didn't work that way.

But, this was the days when there were incidents involving Soviet artists. It has been twenty years, but there were incidents where they were trying to hold art exhibits of some kind of contemporary art in a public park or somewhere and the bulldozers would come and smash it all and arrest some people and there would be some people lying in front of the bulldozers in civil disobedience, and things like that. So the internal guys had a lot of contact in the artist community, the dissent community and among the Jewish community. Jewish immigration was a major issue at the time. That played in different ways, both here domestically, and domestically within the Soviet Union and then bilaterally in the concept of human rights. So, the Jewish community there was a major target for our internal guys for gathering information.

Q: While you were in the political section, what was the evaluation of Brezhnev?

TAYLOR: This was mid-Brezhnev. He died four or five years later. Basically it was that he was really probably 98 percent fossilized intellectually and 75 percent physically maybe. The levers of power were in his hands or those of his advisers, but Brezhnev was not anyone who would advocate or focus on changes or anything innovative. The man was very limited, if not totally without any concept of reform and change and modifying policies of various kinds.

Q: How did you all view the various nationalities and their problems in the Soviet Union at this time?

TAYLOR: It was not an issue that was front burner. The general view was that Moscow and the Soviet institutions of power had everything in absolute control internally. There was no question of nationalities breaking away or staging any kind of uprising. Nonetheless, there was a feeling that they had taken as many steps as they were willing to provide autonomy, or recognition that the nationalities did in fact represent non-Russians, separate kinds of societies, values and cultures, but they were not willing to allow that to develop into a political movement of any kind. The lid was on and the lid was going to stay on. There was absolutely no doubt in anybody's

mind about that. If anybody ever tells you that they were predicting what was going to happen in 1989, they are blowing smoke of some kind because there was never any discussion or questioning that the Soviet Union would exist forever.

Q: Looking at it from the outside I always thought it was a lousy system economically and all that, but as far as socialist control the communist system can really grab people and keep it from going somewhere.

TAYLOR: That is exactly right. I never read or heard anyone try to predict what was going to happen until it actually happened. I don't know if anybody has actually tried to claim that they did predict it.

Q: How did we view the two areas you were looking at? What were the Soviets after in Africa, particularly in Angola? Although, I imagine Ethiopia was also a place of interest.

TAYLOR: Yes, this was the time of competition over Ethiopia and Somalia in the Horn of Africa. There was concern that the Soviets were expanding. Not only was there the general view that the Soviet government was in control internally, but the general view was also held that they were quite willing and able to export their ideology and their political influence. They were trying to do it in the Middle East and they were really doing it in Angola and the Horn. We had considered Africa, in particular, an arena for both American influence, and a Western role. We were concerned with the Soviet willingness to expend political resources and also military and economic resources in Africa. That was going into a new area and raising the competition to a new level, which we considered threatening. Threatening in and of itself, not necessarily to vital American interests, although military control over the Horn was a broader question of access to the Gulf and South Asia, etc.

Q: Did Cuba enter into the equation in Angola at all?

TAYLOR: Yes, Cuba provided the manpower, the cannon fodder for the joint Cuba-Soviet effort in Angola. It was quite clear that the Soviets were funding this effort and that the Cuban army had always been equipped with Soviet equipment and quite capable of using it in Angola. They were quite effective, being much better organized than any of the Angolan parties. So, militarily they were quite a factor.

Q: I take it what you were doing almost the entire time you did this was reporting and there wasn't much representation, we don't like this, we wish you wouldn't do this, or would you please do this, with the Soviets?

TAYLOR: There wasn't much of that, no. My particular involvement would be a demarche with the ambassador or the political counselor, and that happened half a dozen times in my experience.

Q: You would draw up a statement and go over it and he would deliver it?

TAYLOR: Yes. They would note it and generally not respond, but we didn't expect them to.

These were the standard diplomatic approaches that one expects.

Q: Were you also watching other parts of Africa to see if the Soviets were fishing in troubled waters, etc.?

TAYLOR: As best we could. There were concerns in other parts of East Africa like Mozambique. They were obviously focusing in on former Portuguese colonies that were being left in chaos. The Soviets threw their surrogates into these former colonies in an attempt to use them as means of entry into the political arena in East Africa. Mozambique was sensitive because of its location close to South Africa. There was little doubt that if the South Africans felt a threat emanating from Mozambique, the South Africans would react and we didn't really want to be on the side of supporting any South African military activities into neighboring countries.

Q: To try to get to the mind set, here the Soviets are playing around in the Horn of Africa, in Angola and all, were you and your colleagues sitting back and saying, "Big deal. This is not going to go anywhere," or was there the feeling that this might start something that in a way we would end up with a series of hostile countries to American interests in Africa?

TAYLOR: I can't speak, obviously, for the highest levels of American policy making, but I got the sense that people both in the Soviet field as well as people working on the African side in our government, felt considerable concern that despite the various high level visits that had taken place by Nixon, Kissinger, Brezhnev and the atmosphere of detente and the publicity about cooperation, they were embarking on a real, genuine expansionist policy into an area which had not been part of their focus before. Whether people were terrified? No, I don't think they were, but I think there was genuine alarm that this was sort of counter to the understanding we thought we had with the Soviets because they were so willing and able to diverge from that and begin mucking around in areas which were essentially very unstable. The old phrase "correlation of forces" was in vogue those days. That being the doctrine that the tide of history was on the Soviets' side, the side of communism, and that it couldn't be stopped by Western reaction and efforts and that the Soviet Union had an obligation to support these revolutionary, what were called national liberation movements. They had done so in Cuba and would do so in the other areas of emerging independent countries. My sense at the time was that there was real alarm in Washington, that this was something that we had to address, even though there were no vital US interests in Mozambique and Angola, for example. On the Horn of Africa there were other concerns.

So, I guess in a nutshell, the alarm over Soviet willingness and eagerness in many ways to export ideology was coming to the fore. And, of course, this became even more heightened in the late seventies after the Shah fell, Afghanistan fell and Brzezinski's calling that area the "arc of crisis."

Q: We were drawing long red arrows towards the Persian Gulf, right through easy passage through Afghanistan.

TAYLOR: Yes. Again it was absolutely impossible for anyone to foresee that it would be only ten years from the fall of the Shah in 1979 to the fall of communism in 1989.

Q: It looked like it was going the other way.

TAYLOR: Exactly. And I detected, maybe people who worked in Africa and the Middle East felt that the universe rotates around whatever your particular job is, but I tend to think that maybe even the people higher up in the geographical Bureaus were concerned about what was going on.

Q: What about in the Middle East? You had the 1973 war which was just over. This was before Camp David which effectively took Egypt out of the equation and completely really changed the whole balance. From that time on it was a whole different set of calculations. But at this point, Egypt had shown up well in the war, although it lost it. We were very nervous about oil. The Soviets were resupplying the Egyptians and certainly moving into Syria and Iraq was practically their vassal state. From your perspective, what were the Soviets trying to do?

TAYLOR: They were trying to build a large enough relationship with Syria which was probably their closest ally, and favorite government with which to work in the region, to offset American influence on the Israeli side. Again, as you point out, this was well before Camp David. But at that time our policy was to try to get negotiations in a peace conference somehow started among the various parties, but doing it gradually, step by step. That was the cliché in our policy, don't do anything in a general type of peace conference which would achieve nothing and just overwhelm the Israelis diplomatically. We wanted to do everything possible to arrange a step by step negotiation among the various parties involved. The Israelis with the Egyptians, the Jordanians, the confrontation states, but including Syria. The Soviets did everything possible to support the Syrians in rejecting that approach.

So, I guess by and large at this particular time between the 1973 war and the beginning of the Camp David process with Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in response to Begin's invitation there was very little movement on the political or diplomatic side. I would say it was not a time of spinning wheels because there was a lot of effort and time spent by a lot of bureaucrats, me and thousands of others, working toward whatever we could achieve in terms of developing these contacts that would eventually lead to something, we hoped. Again it was one of those human things that you couldn't predict. You couldn't predict the fact that all of a sudden Begin would say, "Well, okay, if you want peace, come to Jerusalem and we will discuss it." And Sadat saying, "Okay, why not?" Who could have said that was going to be the way it would develop?

My own feeling, and it is a minority view but I am not alone in holding it, is that the 1973 war from Sadat's point of view was a last attempt on the military side to prevail. He indicated to his own military, who were and are a political force in Egypt, that we had our best shot. We surprised them, we got a lot of force across the canal. We did this and this and you guys did your best. But, we are not going to do it again. We cannot take these losses, withstand the cost in financial terms of another war and constant conflict. You have had your chance. I gave it to you. I gave you everything we possibly could in terms of building up your ability to fight this war and we lost anyway. So, no more military solutions. I am going to pursue the diplomatic and political side. And so he did. He came home with a huge prize in the Camp David Accords. He got all of the territory back, billions of dollars immediately and every year since. It cost him his life, of course, but in the larger scheme of things Camp David was far better than winning the war.

Q: In Moscow were you able to talk to the Egyptian and Syrian embassy people?

TAYLOR: Yes. I mentioned the practice of dealing with my NATO allies on a regular basis. There were two guys at the Egyptian embassy who were as top notch diplomats as I have ever run into and they were always readily accessible and wanting to talk and meet and discuss things. Never met a Syrian. Did meet an Iraqi once, but that didn't last very long. The Jordanians were good and very friendly. But, basically the contacts I had on the Arab side were more with the Egyptians than anybody else.

There was an Israeli trade office, or something like that, but we didn't have much to do with them. That kind of liaison all took place in Washington or in Israel. There was just not much to do with them.

Q: A question I like to ask at each post. Walter Stoessel was your ambassador. How did he operate?

TAYLOR: He was much in the mold of Armin Meyer. He was old line Foreign Service. Very formal, very gracious guy. He had his agenda working with other ambassadors and when necessary at the top levels at the Foreign Ministry and other ministries. He would spend every weekend out at the dacha. The ambassador had a dacha about 25 miles outside of town. He and his wife would go out there every weekend, so he was not tied to the office the way a lot of us were. But, he was very structured in his day. There were set staff meetings and some of them would be with the entire political section, sometimes with just two or three depending upon the issue. He tended to delegate the actual running of the mission to the DCM.

Q: Who was DCM at that time?

TAYLOR: Jack Matlock.

Q: Who later became ambassador.

TAYLOR: That's right. The first few months I was there it was Spike Dubs, who became Ambassador to Afghanistan. Then Matlock took over and ten years later was ambassador himself.

Q: Is there anything else that you think we should cover in Moscow?

TAYLOR: Oh, there are the normal funny stories.

Q: Well, tell me a funny story.

TAYLOR: One time a colleague and I on one of these book buying missions were out in Smolensk. We took the train out there and it was in the dead of winter with snow three feet high. We went to dinner at one of the approved restaurants, probably the only one in town that was open at that time and our KGB surveillance which had been with us all day long were at the table

next to us. After dinner we were heading back to the hotel and needed to ride a bus back. We came out of the restaurant into a freezing cold blizzard and were about maybe 30 or 40 yards ahead of our surveillance. We saw the bus we needed pull up at the bus stop but then start to pull away very slowly. Totally inadvertently, not trying to have anybody lose his job with the KGB or anything like that, the two of us started running towards the bus and barely got to it before the door closed. Of course, our surveillance came bounding up and were pounding on the door, but the bus driver didn't stop. So we ditched our tail accidentally. I don't think those guys were too happy because they were not the surveillance the next day. They probably in effect were disciplined somehow. But they could have been very ticked off at us. Because the standard ground rules were don't be cute, we looked at each other on the bus and said, "God, what have we done? It was fun, but what have we done?"

ROBERT K. GEIS
Russian Language Study
Monterrey, California (1974)

Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Leningrad (1974-1978)

Robert K. Geis was born on October the 28th, 1939, in Havana, Cuba. He joined the Foreign Service in 1962. His assignments abroad included Buenos Aires, Bucharest, Guayaquil, Leningrad, Trinidad and Tobago, and Florence. Mr. Geis was interviewed by Lewis Hoffacker on April 21, 1999.

GEIS: In 1974, I was selected, after lobbying for the job, for the new branch public affairs officer position in the recently established consulate general in Leningrad. As a result of the policy of detente with the USSR, this consulate had been opened. So I started doing graduate work in Russian and Soviet affairs at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and also a course at George Washington University. Then, in the summer of 1974, we packed up and moved to Monterey, California, to learn Russian. This was to be a year course at the well-known Defense Language Institute in Monterey. Ours was an experiment based on the notion that was prevalent in USIA and in the State Department at that time than the training out at Monterey was better than the training at FSI, and while it was delightful to be in Monterey for a year, the DLI experience, as far as I'm concerned, was a mistake. We were a group of three USI officers with our wives and we were given a separate class and teachers, but we were being taught within a rigid system created for the army's needs for surveillance training, and thus emphasizing comprehension with little attention paid to conversation, and we had to constantly fight to get conversational training and to get away from the highly specialized military vocabulary. In other words, we learned such things as how to say "barbed wire entanglement," which we didn't expect to be using an awful lot while we were in Leningrad. However, we did get through the course, but to the best of my knowledge, after our complaints, this experiment was never repeated.

So we were off to Leningrad. It's hard for me to summarize briefly four years in that brooding

and sinister yet beautiful and exhilarating Russian land. We were lucky to be in Leningrad, one of the great planned cities, whose grandeur remained even if somewhat tarnished, lucky also to be in an apartment in the heart of old St. Petersburg and not in a complex for foreigners, as many of our colleagues were, particularly in Moscow. We were two blocks away from the old Winter Palace, now the Hermitage, and one could not help but become a devotee of this great city, of its history, and its culture. At this time, U.S.-Soviet relations witnessed the heyday and the beginning of decline of detente. Shortly after my arrival, the Apollo-Soyuz docking experiment took place, and the Russians played this event to the hilt as proof of their technical equivalence with the U.S. They used the image of the docking of the space ships as a parallel with the 1945 meeting of the Russian and U.S. troops in Germany. And it was interesting, and my contacts in the Soviet media at the time were surprisingly friendly, emphasizing this remembrance of the war and our meeting and our being allies in the war. In fact, more than at any other time, particularly the media contacts were friendliest. The Cosmonauts and the Astronauts later visited Leningrad, with much fanfare, and I was involved in the first of many escort duties over the years.

Our educational and cultural exchanges were very active at this time, under a bilateral agreement between the two countries. We worked with the infamous Goskoncert, which is the Soviet State Concert Bureau. I was involved in implementing our exchange program, not only for Leningrad but also for the three Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. I came to know Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius, their capitals, and their stalwart people very well. These republics were permitted a bit more cultural freedom of action by the Soviets, so that American touring groups often were scheduled there. I was, in fact, one of the few more senior officers who was permitted by the U.S. Government to visit these republics. Our consul general in Leningrad, for example, was not allowed to visit since we deemed that such a visit would come too close to recognizing the incorporation of the formerly independent republics into the USSR. At the time of my arrival, one of the more unique exchanges was in progress. It was the first Soviet-American film co-production. And at that time I met and assisted the director George Cukor and several of his stellar cast members, including Elizabeth Taylor, Cicely Tyson, Jane Fonda. Fonda was also in the cast, and I made a pointed effort to be cool toward her for her Vietnam activities. She thought the Russians would welcome her with open arms, which proved not to be the case. They apparently didn't like this radical, even if she was pro-North Vietnam. As it turned out, unfortunately, *The Blue Bird*, the film, was a resounding flop in the U.S. and was duly christened by the critics as "The Blue Turkey."

Leningrad at that point was selected for one of our major East-West exhibits. This was called "Technology in the American Home." It was in January of 1976, and we worked at that time with some old friends from USIA's Exhibit Division, but we also entertained them and their language guides who'd come over for the exhibit at the consulate's *dacha* on the outskirts of Leningrad. Like the villa in Romania, the *dacha* was a wonderful retreat from the Leningrad routine, both for cross-country skiing in the winter and for water sports out in the Gulf of Finland in the summer. But back to this exhibit. I wanted to mention that they were truly effective propaganda vehicles, well worth every cent we every spent on them.

In 1976, in the performing arts area, we had a major country music show headed by Roy Clark, and later we had the superb American Conservatory Theater (ACT) of San Francisco, which did

productions of *The Matchmaker* and *Desire under the Elms* in Leningrad and Riga [Note: Another notable visitor around then was Jackie Kennedy Onassis. She was accompanied by Met Director, the redoubtable Thomas Hoving. They were arranging one of the exchanges between the Met and the Hermitage, a major exhibit of Russian costumes, for which Mrs. Onassis was writing the catalog. She was a sweet and rather shy woman and we talked about her children. The Fourth of July, 1976, we celebrated with a reception at the consul general's palatial residence, and then my wife and I snuck off. We had been invited to go sailing in the Gulf of Finland with the director of the Jubilee Sports Palace. We met this gentleman at the time of the Roy Clark performances, and he was a real character. He had been an Olympic champion sailor, and so he took us out on the gulf, and we toasted the Fourth with champagne, caviar, and flares shot up into the white nights, into the bright night sky of the Gulf of Finland. It was truly an unforgettable experience.

One of the most exciting aspects of life in the former Czarist capital was the history and culture of the city - the great museums, the Kirov, the summer palaces, theater, concerts, and above all for me the ballet, both classical and a certain amount of modern dance. We had some contact with official artists and performers but much more with the unofficial and dissident artists and intellectuals of the city and of the Baltic republics. One was almost able to have normal social contacts with these people, which was certainly not true of any other Russians, and they sort of helped to keep one's sanity in this land of constant surveillance by the KGB. I remember very fondly the artist Volodya Ochinnikov, whose Malevich-like art celebrated folk and later religious themes. We spent evenings with much vodka and eating potatoes at his mother's *dacha* outside the city. There was the talented Tolya Belkin, noted for his humorous drawings; Sasha and Tanya Danov, whose paintings and ceramics were rooted in his native Dagestan, which is one of the Caucasian republics, in fact, right next door to the infamous Chechnya. We had wonderful warm evenings with the Danovs, eating *shashlik* and drinking Georgian wine. The Dyshlenko brothers, Sasha the writer and Yuri the abstract artist, and their lovely wives. And last, but not least, the redoubtable Eugene Rukhin, noted as an abstract collagist and dissident. His untimely death in a studio fire in 1976 was attributed by some to the KGB, and he certainly suffered. He was Jewish and certainly suffered from KGB harassment for years. I had the pleasure of introducing American artists who visited during that period, such as Jamie Wyeth, Larry Rivers, and George Segal to these dissident artists and friends. I always attended their unofficial exhibits. It was interesting because the artists- (end of tape)

You mentioned, Lew, your interest in what anti-Semitism was like at that time. I certainly had contact with a number of Jewish intellectuals and writers and artists then, and there's no question that, I think, some of them were singled out as Jews for a certain amount of harassment; however, anti-Semitism was certainly not the policy of the Soviet Government, as it had been under the Czars. And indeed, there were prominent Communist Party members who were Jewish and had been ever since the Leninist era. But at that time, anti-Semitism in the population persisted. There's no question about it.

Q: It was endemic.

GEIS: It was endemic. It's always been there and probably always will be there.

Q: But no pogroms.

GEIS: There were no pogroms at all. Our policy at that time was trying to effect a greater exchange of Jews via the famous Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which you'll remember was being pushed to get more Jews being permitted to emigrate from the Soviet Union, and of course the whole idea of most-favored-nation treatment was dependent throughout that period on whether or not Jews were being given permission to emigrate. So that was very definitely affecting, in fact, having such an effect that it was part of the items that caused the decline of detente, which was going on during the time I was there.

But anyway, to go on, as I was mentioning these unofficial artists. They always had a feeling that their contact with official Americans was a positive thing for them and that they felt that they might not just suddenly be spirited away during the night if they knew Americans and if the Americans had contact with them. So they encouraged our getting to know them and to attend all their exhibits. And it was on one such occasion that I was going to visit an exhibit where the KGB demonstrated its dismay with me very clearly, displeasure, by what we called bumper-to-bumper surveillance. They were following my Volvo, and it was not a very happy experience, to say the least.

The USSR at that time took its toll in a more personal way. In the spring of 1977, my marriage began to fall apart. In order to keep our problems as private as possible in this land of surveillance, my wife and I sometimes actually went to use the secure area of the consulate for our discussions and arguments, but we did divorce in the summer of 1977 while I was on home leave in Texas.

As I mentioned earlier, I have Russian roots - in other words, Volga German roots. And on my arrival in the USSR, while I was in Moscow, I discussed with then Ambassador Walter Stoessel the advisability of sort of seeking out or searching out my roots. He was very encouraging, but I soon discovered that the ancestral villages were in off-limits areas near the city of Seratov on the Volga, so I essentially gave up the possibility of trying to look into that. However, in the spring of 1977, a colleague of mine in the West German consulate approached me and said that a person by the name of Geis had visited the consulate and had asked about me. I got goose bumps. I wasn't sure, was this a KGB setup, or was it a real encounter with the past? So I invited Viktor Geis to come to see me at my apartment. He had read of my name in copies of the Leningrad newspaper. His trucking co-op had a relationship with a co-op in Leningrad, and therefore he saw the Leningrad papers. And he turned out to be a very nice, simple man about my age, a truck driver. His family, which was of course German ethnically and had suffered during the war - they had been sent, deported, as many Germans were, to Central Asia, where Viktor was born - but then they had been allowed to return at a later date, and they now lived in the area that my family came from on the Volga. Although I later did some research at home, during home leave, I was never able to find any direct ties to Viktor. In fact, our grandparents were almost a generation apart in age. Viktor later on brought his family to Leningrad to meet me, and I ultimately decided that either he was real or he was one of the best actors in Russia. He was both naïve and very determined. I actually got my dissident artist friends to attempt to explain to him the potential damage to him of his contacts with me, but Viktor pressed on. Finally, as I was

about to leave the USSR in 1979, he asked that I extend an invitation to him and his family to visit the U.S. - that is, to emigrate. I did this, and I also made arrangements for him to be received and assisted in the U.S. when and if he was able to leave. Unfortunately, we have never heard anything further from him at all.

In the summer of 1977, I returned as a bachelor to Leningrad. Kate, my daughter, was still with me while her mother established herself as a Pan Am employee in Moscow. I applied to the state agency which assisted the consular corps in Leningrad for a maid and a cook, and they sent over a buxom blonde to help me out. It turned out that she was lousy cook but she seemed to me to be the stereotype of what a KGB agent would find alluring. I was not allured, and I asked for a replacement. And this time they sent a good cook and a very nice married lady who helped me out. The KGB was all too obvious [Note: We have recently been intrigued to learn that the newly elected President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, was a KGB operative in Leningrad during the years we were there. Furthermore, he was involved in surveillance of Western diplomats! I guess if you must be spied on, why not by a future president!].

Q: Good for you.

GEIS: Our busy program continued with a documentary film director who called on me to discuss the prospects for a film on the Kirov's famous Vaganova Dance School, which had produced such luminaries as Anna Pavlova, Nureyev, Makarova, and Baryshnikov, among others. The result was an academy award winning film narrated by Princess Grace called *The Children of Theater Street*, where the school was located in Leningrad. Unfortunately, this fine film, which had been sanctioned by the authorities, was not acceptable to them ultimately in the final version, since it mentioned, albeit briefly, the great Kirov defectors. However, I had the good fortune that they sent to me a 16-millimeter copy of the film, and I was able to show it, once only, to the principal protagonist of the film, some of the major ballet people in Leningrad on a very quiet, private basis in my apartment one weekend. And so it was a very wonderful experience to be able to do that, but I'm sure now - I would hope, anyway - that that film is now being shown widely in Russia.

Jimmy Carter was now President, and with his emphasis on human rights policy, relations with the USSR cooled rapidly. We still had cultural presentations, but fewer. At that time, the Vice President's wife, Joan Mondale, visited, and as a result we were allowed to see the great Russian Museum's subterranean collection of the Russian avant garde artists, Kandinsky, Malevich, and Filonov among others. These people were not acceptable to the Russian authorities, whose standards, of course, were socialist realism for all art. At this time also, the wonderful Paul Taylor Dance Company visited Vilnius and Leningrad. I was their escort and became a great fan of this fine company. It was one of the first modern dance companies to visit the USSR. For some reason or other, because I once admitted to having attended the Baptist church in my youth, I became the "designated Baptist" at the consulate. So when noted Baptist senators, John Glenn and Sam Nunn, visited, I took them to visit the onion-domed church which had been turned over to the Evangelistic Baptist Christians in Leningrad. It was truly a memorable experience to see these two symbols of American democracy and achievement in space in this unusual setting. Although I'm not a believer, many of us in the consular community expressed our solidarity with the Russian Orthodox believers by attending Easter services and other such events. One really

unforgettable event occurred when the consul general and I attended the funeral of the Archbishop of Leningrad and Novgorod. This sumptuous event, with its pomp and magnificent music, lasted some nine or 10 hours, during which we all stood and watched. I'll never forget that one. In 1979 the great blues singer B. B. King visited, and he was a great hit. He's one of the nicest people I ever met. During the four years of my stay in Leningrad, I had three local cultural assistants. One we were forced to let go because of alcoholism. A second, a very capable woman, became too useful to us, and the KGB pulled her out. So this was one of the crosses we had to bear with local employees in Russia. Shortly after I left the USSR - this was the summer of 1979 - I was once again misidentified in articles entitled "Mask" and "Sly Diversionists." I was alleged to be a spy [Note: In stark contrast to this Soviet misuse of the media was my experience with the American journalists resident in Moscow and in Leningrad, such as Chris Wren and David Shipler of *The New York Times*, Phil Caputo and Emil Sveilis of UPI. As Americans, we owe a lot to these talented analysts of the complexities of the Soviet Union, who labored under tough conditions for themselves and their families].

It had been an unforgettable experience with many ups and downs. I came away with a great affection for the voluble, romantic, and long-suffering Russian people. I would never have dreamed at that time that 10 years later the Berlin Wall would have fallen and the Soviet empire would begin to break up. I feel strongly that the seeds of all this were being planted during this time, which was the Brezhnev era, which would later be called by the Russians, the period of the Great Stagnation. It was called this during the period later on of the democratic Russia.

Toward the end of my Leningrad assignment, the new director of USIA, John Reinhardt, visited. He has been much criticized by agency officers as not sufficiently political and hard-information-oriented. In contrast, I liked him, approved strongly of his emphasis on two-way reciprocal communication with foreign cultures. In other words, the idea is that you're more effective as a communicator inasmuch as you get to know and involve yourself in the local culture, language, *et cetera*. Reinhardt called this the "second mandate," which, as I saw it, was something that most good agency officers did anyway in the course of business. Now it had official sanction, and Reinhardt also actually changed the name of USIA to the U.S. International Communication Agency. Maybe seeing in me a kindred spirit and in any case taking pity on me after the draining Soviet experience, Reinhardt gave me my first country PAO-ship. This was to the lovely country island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It would prove to be my most wonderful and my favorite assignment.

ARTHUR A. HARTMAN
Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of European affairs
Washington, DC (1974-1978)

Ambassador Arthur Hartman was born in New York, New York in 1926. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in France, Vietnam, and the United Kingdom (England), and an ambassadorship to the Soviet Union. This interview was conducted by Bill Miller on May 31, 1989.

HARTMAN: ... I stayed in EUR into the Carter administration and Cy Vance. I went with Cy to Moscow. I had, by the way, in the Kissinger period of course had been with him at all his meetings with the Soviets and at the summits of both Nixon and Ford.

Q: That was in the context of the allies.

HARTMAN: Well, it was in the context of actually negotiating with the Soviets; because we covered East Europe and the Soviet Union in European affairs.

Q: You had as a task the problem of informing the allies about what was going on?

HARTMAN: Informing the allies and working with them in certain cases on some of the negotiations, but also with the Soviets on all of the bilateral negotiations, and on the preparations on the Helsinki meeting for example; of settling the final issues on that.

Q: So you met the top Soviet leadership in that context?

HARTMAN: Yes, that's really my first exposure to the modern top leadership.

Q: How did it strike you? You had seen the great men of Europe, that post-war generation. What did the Soviet leadership look like to you upon close examination?

HARTMAN: Right out of primitive society, it was incredible. I mean to go into the Kremlin being led by these goose-stepping soldiers into the office where Brezhnev was, and the formality of the meetings, and the lectures from Gromyko and occasional bits of humor. Henry was great at pulling that out of people and Brezhnev in a sense used to show off for him, so we got more of that perhaps than was normal.

The whole primitive nature of that society, and of course the backwardness of the city. We did get to see the Far East under Ford which not many other people have, although they are now beginning to talk about opening up Vladivostok.

Q: Well that group of Bolsheviks, you saw the last of the Bolsheviks with Brezhnev and the group around him?

HARTMAN: I'm not sure it's the last of the dedicated Orthodox Communists, but I think you are right, the last of the Bolsheviks.

Q: With all of the shaping influences that seemed to happen for them. Was it a sense of ideas that had frozen in concrete?

HARTMAN: No, not at all because they were playing the game and this was the time when rather serious negotiations were going on in arms control. I arrived on the scene just after SALT-1 really because that was done while Henry was still over in the White House. The beginnings of, a framework for SALT-2, carrying out some of these agreements; the Helsinki negotiations,

the emphasis on Human Rights.

Q: You were beginning to see quite a bit of Dobrynin?

HARTMAN: Yes, yes although as Assistant Secretary he was not fond of coming to see me. He did on a number of occasions but he had a special relationship with Henry and he wanted to keep it that way. He was treated very favorably and when I finally got assigned to Moscow, I luckily got an administration that had changed that and I was able to insist on a little more reciprocity for the poor man who was Ambassador in Moscow.

Q: Where was Brezhnev's office in the Kremlin?

HARTMAN: In the central building, the Council of Ministers building it's a sort of triangular building and it was up on. I remember they always had a small elevator so Kissinger and one other or two other people plus the General who was leading us could get in the elevator. The rest of us would have to dash up these two very long flights of stairs to be up at the room where we left our coats and be able to walk in with Kissinger when he walked into Brezhnev's office.

Q: When you were Assistant Secretary and working with Henry on the negotiations, was this the period when you mastered the intricacies of arms control, force levels, etc?

HARTMAN: Well I was never the principle person. Bill Highland, Sonnenfeldt, people like some of these very bright arms control people that we've had in the past worked on the detailed negotiations obviously with very close linkage to the negotiators themselves. I was sort of peripheral, but in on the discussions and also talking about them at my level with other people, and publicly presenting the results, and publicly presenting the arguments, and talking to the allies about it.

Q: Who from that period on the Soviet side continued on into your tenure as Ambassador?

HARTMAN: Well, Gromyko. I remember one of my last calls as I left Moscow was on the President of the country who was now Gromyko. Dobrynin obviously and he has now come back to Moscow and I used to see a lot of him there but in the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The man who was Dobrynin's Deputy, Korniyenkev who was the Principal U.S. Desk Officer, and a very difficult individual to deal with, but one who I have come to respect and like over the years. He was very bright and he knows his stuff, although he tends to be very old fashioned in the way he negotiates. Varansoff who is now back there as the Deputy Minister and Principal Arms Control Negotiator was in the Embassy in Washington. I then knew him when I became the Ambassador in France, I saw him once when he was ambassador in India; but he is clearly of the new breed and very much in the sort of Dobrynin model and not in the old Korniyenkov or Gromyko model.

Q: How did the assignment to Paris take place?

HARTMAN: Well, I went with Cy Vance to Moscow in March 1977. I was not enthusiastic about the position he was taking there. Les Geld was on that team along with a number of other

people. I felt at the time, and we were not told much about the position until we got on the plane. This was one of the interesting things at the time because they were anxious to prevent leaks and so there was a little meeting at the White House and then we were all on a plane, and it was only at that point that I along with Les Geld and the others who were working even more directly on the policy were informed. I had the feeling that it was such a change from the previous position and that the Soviets were unprepared, and that we were going to run into heavy seas. Therefore it might have been better to continue with the old just to try and get that nailed down before going onto something else. Well we got blasted out of the water by Gromyko and I had a feeling that Cy was not totally behind what he was doing. I mean he was kind of ordered to do that out of a meeting that took place with Sprague and others. It was not a good show, but I am fond of pointing out to my Soviet friends that they shot out of the water the position that they took them almost ten years to come around to again, and now accuse us of not giving enough support to: namely deep cuts in strategic forces. So, the objective I had no difficulty with. I think deep cuts was a hell of a lot better than just trying to put caps on the programs that both sides had planned to do in any case. It took us a long time to get back to that. With the Soviets it seems to me that you have to have a certain amount of continuity, at least you used to, maybe now you don't. We didn't have it at that point. In any case shortly after that time Cy called me in. I don't know if he was still uncomfortable with me being in EUR and sort of reminding him of old positions or what, anyway he said "How would you like to go to France?" I said "Gee I'd be delighted!"

THOMAS W. SIMONS JR.
Political Officer
Moscow (1975-1977)

Ambassador Simons was born in Minnesota and raised primarily in the countries of his father's Foreign Service assignments and in the Washington, DC area. He received his education at Yale and Harvard Universities and at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. He also pursued studies in Europe. Entering the Foreign Service in 1963, Mr. Simons had several tours of duty at the State Department in Washington, DC and at the White House, dealing primarily with Foreign Trade and East European affairs. His foreign posts include Warsaw, Moscow, Bucharest and London. He served as United States Ambassador to Poland from 1993 to 1995 and as Ambassador to Pakistan from 1996 to 1998. Ambassador Simons was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Well then, you left Policy Planning when?

SIMONS: I left in January of 1975 and started taking Russian here at FSI (the Foreign Service Institute, now NFATC) with my wife. It was a very unsatisfactory learning experience. I've learned three languages here, and two of them were wonderful and Russian was not.

Q: Why not?

SIMONS: Well, we had a brilliant teacher whom many people liked, but who didn't like me, and

who didn't like my wife, who had to leave early in the day -- we had two small children -- early every day. She didn't like spouses anyway, and for both of us our unsightliness was compounded by the strong Polish accent that we started learning Russian with; some Russians will claim they find it charming, but they really don't. It took us most of our tour in Moscow actually to scrub the Polish accent out of our Russian. Anyway Madame de la Cruz was angry at me, short-tempered. I mean we just did it for six months, then we had to go out to post. So that was the first half of 1975.

Then we went to Moscow and arrived the day of the signature of the Helsinki Final Act. Gerald Ford signed in Helsinki, and he was savagely criticized by the right wing of the Republican Party for selling out. That was an election issue the next year in the primary against Ronald Reagan. But anyway there we were in Moscow. The way I got to Moscow took some Foreign Service conniving. There I was in Policy Planning in '74 without much of a job. I mean I've described the things I did, which were fine, but it was not particularly a full time job. And if you start in Eastern Europe in the Foreign Service in that day and age, and if you like Eastern Europe, you probably should be smart enough to realize that you can't build a career just on Eastern Europe. You have to attach it either to Germany, as many people did, or to the Soviet Union. In other words you had the same dilemma as Eastern Europe itself, you can't go forward on your own, you sort of come down to being somebody's client. For me the opportunity opened up because Walter Stoessel, who had been my Ambassador in Warsaw and who liked me and who had then come back as Assistant Secretary for European Affairs in those early years, was going to Moscow. It was very hard for somebody like me who had not been there before to get a job in Moscow at what had become my rank, because Jack Matlock was the Director for Soviet Affairs and was adamant that only people who had been there as junior officers should go back at what was then Class Three level. Warren Zimmerman had been an exception. He had taken the job as Chief of External Reporting in the Political Section, the head of the sub-unit that reported on Soviet foreign policy, even though he had also not been there. He had a Yugoslav background as I had a Polish background. So what I did was go to Stoessel through Joan Clark, who was Director of Personnel at that time in EUR, and I got him to ask for me; so that's how I got to Moscow in the summer of '75.

Q: So after Russian training you went to Moscow from when to when?

SIMONS: I went to Moscow from August of 1975 to February of 1977, so just 18 months.

Q: What was your job?

SIMONS: I was Chief of the External Reporting sub-unit in the Political Section. The section had about 10 people under a Counselor, divided into two units, one for internal reporting, domestic politics, and one for external reporting, foreign policy. Almost everyone who served in those units in that era later became an ambassador.

Q: Who was the head of the section?

SIMONS: Marshall Bremant was the Political Counselor. Jack Matlock became the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), and Walter Stoessel was there as Ambassador. Matlock was DCM

and later Ambassador. Marshall Brement, who was later Ambassador to Iceland having been Jeane Kirkpatrick's deputy at the UN (United Nations) for a while, was the Political Counselor with his wonderful new wife. He had been the Public Affairs Counselor in Saigon and had met there a journalist from Time or Newsweek named Pamela something and married her. They were there as kind of newlyweds. He had served there before. He was a China expert, a very, very bright man, a very fluent man, not a particularly active man, I should say, but maybe if you're a newlywed that happens.

Q: The External unit, who was in it?

SIMONS: I was the chief of External, and I tended to do Europe and what there was of Eastern Europe. Darryl Johnson, who is currently Ambassador to Thailand, was the China person and did Asia. The Middle East when I came was Jim Collins, who later became Ambassador to Russia. There was Dick Miles who is currently retiring from his fourth ambassadorship - he is now Ambassador to Georgia - and he came in to do Africa. I forget who did Latin America, I think maybe Miles did. Mike Joyce and then Ted McNamara did arms control. Anyway there were five of us. Similarly, in the Internal section you had Joe Presel who did dissidents. The head of it was Dick Combs who later became my deputy on the Soviet desk and then Art Hartman's DCM in Moscow.

It was a group of really very talented people. It was a joy to be there. Stu, this was the détente plateau. In other words the breakthroughs had been made, but they had opened doors in Moscow. You could call up and get appointments to see very interesting people and have lunch with people. At the same time not much was going on in relations, because the Soviets were starting to wait for the 1976 elections. They were watching. You know Nixon had resigned. You had Ford as sort of an interim president although he was going to run. But it was not a time for big bold negotiations. The last effort to do that was in February of 1976 when Kissinger made his last visit to Moscow to negotiate on SALT II. After he had left, the record later showed, Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense, at the time with political ambitions, had changed Kissinger's instructions, had just taken the guts out of Kissinger's instructions, so he was left there in Moscow high and dry sort of begging the Soviets for a gesture. I had a 104-degree fever for that visit and got up at four every morning to read and summarize the Soviet press for the party. But I did get to go with a fever like that to the lunch that Kissinger gave for Gromyko at Spaso House, and I can remember walking in with Bill Hyland who was a confidant of Kissinger's and having him say, "There's no one left in our government who has a sense of the national interest." So that was kind of the end of détente, for the time being at least, until through to the election. But for someone like me who was new to the Soviet Union -- I mean I knew a lot about it of course but was new to actually being there and dealing in Russian with the Soviets -- it was a wonderful time to be there, because the doors were open but I wasn't required to do things where I could stumble. It was a great learning assignment.

Q: Well here you are, I mean you had served in Poland so you got a feel for a socialist country and how it operated. Do a little compare-and-contrast when you went to the Soviet Union? What you were seeing about how things worked, didn't work and all that.

SIMONS: Well, I mean the Soviet Union was much more powerful and self-aware as a great

power and much more monolithic because of the system. It was more concerned with discipline, it was more secretive, it was more frightening. People were more frightened. You got the sense of fear. It was also less developed. We travelled around the country as much as we could, and actually loved it and liked Russians, but there was kind of fearfulness about it you didn't have in Poland. It was more of a police state and more backward; there was less availability of goods and services. But Peggy and I are not people who care much about creature comforts so that didn't bother us very much. We thought they were a great and talented people living under a police regime that was chastened and subdued, but still a police regime.

Q: Were you able to get out and sample the Russian soul or anything? In other words, were there any places where you could go take a look and see what was going on?

SIMONS: From time to time you were able to do that when you travelled. Well, we had friends in Moscow. We had friends who were on the fringes of the diplomatic colony. They were mainly artists. Very many of them were kind of black-sheep children of senior officials, so that they would be sort of punished but only up to a point. I mean we had a dear friend who sort of drank himself to death while we were there, who was a very late son of the great Soviet novelist Konstantin Paustovsky, with his young wife and their child. He was an artist, not a very good artist; but he'd been sent out to Kyrgyzstan to dry out at a certain point -- you know, the end of the world -- but then he'd been let back and was still allowed, still given permission to see people like us. You know you go to their parties and sort of drink with them, and you assumed that there was a police presence, but you could still make friends with them.

I remember we gave a party in our apartment there and all these artists came and we were playing tapes of Vladimir Vysotsky, the great folk singer and cabaret singer, and people were smoking marijuana cigarettes in our little diplomatic apartment there. The next week Jacques Amalric, who was the correspondent for Le Monde -- he later became editor-in-chief of Le Monde in Paris -- was having lunch with me in the American Embassy cafeteria, and he said, "You know my nanny," i.e. the Soviet journalist who was assigned to cover him, "my nanny asks me why people are smoking pot in Tom Simons' apartment." So I said, "Well, let me see what I can do about that." So I went to a couple of these artists and I said, "If I ever hear about this again, none of you will ever sell a painting to a diplomat again." Of course it was a threat that I had no possible way of making good on, but I never heard anything again. The police were kind of all around, but you could still make friends.

You got more insights by travelling, because you didn't always have a policeman in your carriage. I can remember we were travelling in the northwest, Pskov and Novgorod, and there was a man there in our compartment who had been off trying to sell some Asiatic plaster casts that he made himself at home to some store. It turned out he was a magician, an amateur magician, son of a Polish aristocrat who lived over on the Estonian border in a town where one of Russia's greatest monasteries is, Pechory, and he said, "Come see us." I said, "Okay, well maybe we will." So when we were in Pskov and we finished sightseeing, we went down to the taxi bank and asked the taxi guy, "Can you take us to Pechory?" He said, "Sure." So we got in and we were not being followed. We looked this guy up, spent the night with him, went to the monastery. His little daughter came out in her tutu and did little magic tricks for us, and we talked to them about what it was like to grow up in a place like that. He is actually of Polish

descent. So you could sort of get insights. We didn't press people to hate the regime. You just had more or less normal social interchanges and you do get some feel for what the country was like. It was a country that was not very dynamic. It had reached a certain level of prosperity. People were proud that Russia was respected in the world. They didn't much like living under a police regime, but that was the way things were and they were getting three squares a day, and it was better than before. So it was that kind of a place.

Q: Well, did you sort of -- you and the other officers -- realize that you were in a state of stasis or something like this? Often you don't know that until after you are away from it.

SIMONS: I think so. I think we did. The only serious negotiation that was going on was something on Peaceful Nuclear Explosions where Stoessel was the chief of our delegation. It was something that came out of those agreements in '72. I think we actually reached some kind of conclusion on that, but that maybe it was never ratified. But you know it went at a fairly stately pace, and you knew there was no umph. Then I was the control officer again for Governor Harriman when he came out in the summer of '76 on behalf of candidate Jimmy Carter to kind of assure the Soviet leadership that Carter wouldn't break any crockery, so that they didn't have to worry about a Democratic victory even though they had been very attached by détente to the Republican Administration. The Soviets tended to prefer the devil they knew. It's also true that Harriman later felt betrayed by Carter, because after he won Carter did start breaking a lot of crockery by writing letters to Sakharov and stuff like that. Yeah, I think people felt that not much was happening, but they enjoyed being there. They enjoyed the kind of access to the Soviet system that détente had opened up for us.

Q: Well, what about the Helsinki Accords, and particularly Basket Three that dealt with human rights, movement of people and the like, that eventually became a wedge that changed quite a bit of things in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union? But at that time was that seen as anything?

SIMONS: It was seen as a good small thing. In other words the day I got there Izvestiya, the government paper, the so-called government paper, published the entire text of the Helsinki Final Act. That was one of our requirements and that was great. Then you knew because you were in touch with dissidents. I knew most of the major dissidents through Joe Presel, who was the "dissident officer" back then.

Q: Whom I'm interviewing now.

SIMONS: That's great. He would kind of stagger in in the morning, red-eyed and hung over from his nights with the dissidents, and Mac Toon didn't like that when Toon became his Ambassador, but he'll tell you about that himself. The dissidents began to use the Helsinki Final Act as their cover for the kinds of objections and dissent that they were doing in Soviet society. I remember writing the cable, the analytical cable from Moscow when the Helsinki Final Act was signed, and I remember writing that the Soviets signed the Helsinki Final Act "with clear, dry eyes." They didn't expect whatever changes it was going to make in the way they operated were going to be intolerable to them, or were going to threaten the system; otherwise they wouldn't have signed it.

Q: Well basically what they got was stabilization of the borders.

SIMONS: That's right, and of the whole political status quo in Europe.

Q: Yeah.

SIMONS: I mean that was useful to them, but then they immediately went charging on the theme of following up on military détente with political detente. Then they of course had wanted the economic benefits too, and that was what Jackson and the Jackson-Vanik Amendment kind of brought to a screeching halt. If you remember, Helmut Sonnenfeldt was going to be an Under Secretary over in the Department of Commerce or the Treasury kind of running a vast expansion of U.S.-Soviet economic relations, and he couldn't get himself confirmed, and that just never happened. So I think the Soviets were disappointed, but I don't think they were afraid in any way. They thought they could control whatever effects Helsinki had. I think in the end there is something to it. They had trouble in Eastern Europe, but in the Soviet Union they managed to control their dissidents until the very end.

Q: Looking at their external affairs, were any other countries, you know Romania or Hungary or Poland or anything, or France or Germany, were things happening during this period?

SIMONS: We're talking about 1976, and 1976 of course was the death of Mao in China, a very important event, and we would report on that. It was very early days, it was very hard to tell. I think it meant a lot in the end but it was hard to tell then.

Q: Yeah, it was still too soon.

SIMONS: Yeah, very hard to tell what the impact of that would be. You had major struggles in Africa, which were a major issue in relations with the Soviets, because you had the decolonization of Portuguese Africa and Cuban troops in Angola and in Ethiopia I think, or in the Horn of Africa. That was a major issue in our relations with the Soviets. Kissinger kept warning them that you're not going to be able to sustain détente if you keep doing these things in the Third World that make it look as if you are carrying the struggle forward there. I remember talking to my best friend in the Soviet establishment, Yuriy Gankovskiy. He was an Afghanistan expert whose father had been shot in 1937, and he had rehabilitated himself by leading 50 infantry charges in World War II and surviving, and then he became a scholar of Asia because he couldn't get any closer to the centers of power. But he was a great Afghan expert, and became a great advisor later during their Afghanistan war. I remember saying to him, "You know, Yuriy Vladimirovich, we learned a lesson in Vietnam, but if you keep doing what you're doing in Africa we can unlearn it. You're doing well in the world and now is the time for statesmanship and your leadership is old." He looked at me and he said, "My dear Tom, I wish you for yourself what you're recommending for them, but think of it this way: they have no more appetite, they don't care about women, all they care about at their age is keeping power." So that was part of the Soviet stasis as well as the kind of adventurism in the Third World which we saw, because we covered the foreign affairs parts and the Internal section covered the internal affairs part of the 25th Party Congress, which was I think in February of '76. There you could see on stage these African revolutionaries shouting from the podium about how the world correlation of forces was

shifting and they were the vanguard of socialism. And we saw Mikhail Suslov, who was the ideological guy on the Politburo, leaping out of his chair and pulling his translation plug out of his ear in his enthusiasm for this kind of thing. So they really had something going with national liberation movements, and it was dangerous to our relationship. So that was an element of things. But we were just watching that; we weren't doing anything.

Q: I'm not sure, when you were there what was the situation in Portugal? Was it still up in the air?

SIMONS: Portugal was still dicey.

Q: I mean I've talked to Frank Carlucci and others who were involved, a very important thing in that time. but what about the view from Moscow of that situation?

SIMONS: Well, I can remember Marshall Bremont asking me. He had been on a vacation in the Iberian Peninsula and he came back and said, "Tom, we've got to write a cable on Spain and Portugal." I said, "Well, Marshall, we don't know anything about what the Soviet view is. Let me go see somebody; let me talk to somebody about what the Soviet view is of Spain." He said, "No, no, we've got to get it out right away." So I wrote it off the top of my head just from kind of reading the newspapers. So we did report on it. Our reporting was that if Spain and Portugal kind of go in a socialist direction the Soviets will be happy, but they're not promoting revolution in NATO's backyard. I think that was kind of where we saw it. So for them it was really sort of Africa, with China on the horizon, but the U.S. was the big apple. You know relations with the United States and the strategic equation were really sort of the main thing for them. That went cold after that visit by Kissinger early in '76. I was struck years later when the George W. Bush administration came to power and Rumsfeld was appointed Secretary of Defense again, and Kissinger was asked to comment. I read in the paper that he said, "I think it's a wonderful appointment because now he has no higher political ambitions;" because it was that that led him to undercut Kissinger there in early '76.

Q: Were we looking at that time at the Politburo, and as your Russian friend was saying, were we seeing these guys as a geriatric adventurous group? Often when people get older they get more cautious.

SIMONS: Well, we were seeing the people who were on it as geriatric, as aging, devoted to stability. I remember going to see Roy Medvedev, who was sort of a Marxist dissident. I mean he was from the apparatus. He was the one who wrote Let History Judge, anti-Stalinist things. But we had access to major intellectuals like that. I remember him saying to me, "Brezhnev is the best you are ever going to get, because he doesn't want trouble." Well, the truth is he didn't want trouble in relations with us, or in all the other major things, I mean in Europe or even with China. But I think that the revolutionary outlet was the national liberation movements.

But they also thought things were going their way, so they felt that they were just doing not much. We thought that they were going great guns, paying for the Cuban troops in Africa and the like, and that this was very adventurist. I think they just thought they were supporting national liberation as the way history was going. It turned out history wasn't going that way, and what

they were doing was going to help to reverse that when Ronald Reagan came to power. It's just my feeling -- it's a theory that I've developed recently in trying to teach this period at Stanford -- that the establishments of both countries were forced toward stabilization of the international situation, but they were queasy about the loss of ardor and fidelity to principles, the national political principles, that this involved. In this country it took the form of fear of a sellout to Communism, and the way we kept our principles intact was to promote human rights. In the Soviet Union it was fear of a sellout of revolutionary ardor for proletarian revolution, and the way they kept their principles and consciousness intact was support for national liberation. They wanted to keep it kind of separate. I can remember during the '80s, working this brief from Washington, how hard they tried to say, we can talk about bilateral relations, we can talk about arms control, but regional crises are out of bounds. They are not a proper subject for conversation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. We're merely supporting the forces of history that are out there. So they tried to put up a firebreak and isolate these things from each other, and of course we wouldn't let this happen, beginning also with Carter, beginning with Afghanistan.

Q: Yeah, well, I was going to say -- this is after your time there -- but this movement with Afghanistan was almost the beginning of the end. It was a little bit like the Athenians heading for Syracuse or something like that.

SIMONS: But that came at the end of the Carter Administration, which was a time when I was no longer in it; I was in Romania and then in London. I think it perplexed them. They couldn't figure the Americans out. We looked just so confused and incompetent that by the time they really felt under pressure in Afghanistan, they thought they were going to be losing a country that was near-socialist and a neighbor, and that they had to do something desperate, so they tried to do a Czechoslovakia. By that time I think they had kind of written off the Carter Administration, after the Cuban brigade incident, and after seeing how hard it was to get to the end of the road on SALT II which had basically been negotiated by Ford at Vladivostok in November of 1974. It took four years to turn it into an agreement. So I think they had kind of washed their hands of the Carter Administration and felt that whatever its reaction they still had to do what they had to do in Afghanistan. During my time, in '75 looking at Africa, '75 and '76 -- and the fall of Saigon was in April I think wasn't it -?

Q: April of '75.

SIMONS: ...in my time there they felt that things were going their way without much effort from them. Later on I think they thought that Afghanistan was more drastic.

Q: How was our Bicentennial, July '76, how was that celebrated in Moscow?

SIMONS: We had a party in Spaso House, and Gromyko came, and I can remember talking to the America desk officer in the Central Committee International Affairs Department, I forget his name. He had a gold tooth, he was very Soviet, old-fashioned Soviet, and he had written an editorial that day in Pravda about the American Communist Party, with its respected leader Gus Hall, as the vanguard of the American working class. I don't think I asked him whether he really believed that or not.

Q: You know the American Communist Party is a play thing of intellectuals and...

SIMONS: ...and of the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation).

Q: I think the FBI supported it.

SIMONS: Well, I think probably the majority of the Central Committee were FBI. Anyway we didn't know at that time about Operation Venona, or I didn't until much later, where we were tapping their files or we'd broken their code. But that was just the sign of the stodginess of the Soviet sort of thing. Then we had a very moving time at the American Embassy dacha outside Moscow, and I remember it especially because I was Master of Ceremonies, everybody else was on vacation. That was 200 years of the United States in a setting like that, sort of isolated and in kind of hostile territory. It made you appreciate everything we are. I should recount another aspect that ran like a thread through that tour in Moscow, which was the microwave crisis that broke during the time I was there. The Ambassador and DCM had kept it quiet while Kissinger, I think, but certainly the Administration had pressed the Soviets to stop it, to stop microwaving our Embassy. They had refused to do so, so at that point we had to break it to the staff. It caused a lot of fear and unhappiness, especially I remember Carol Niles, Tom Niles' wife, standing up in back and she's from Kentucky like him, I think, and had this rich sort of border-state accent, wailing "I conceived a CHI-ULD in this Embassy." So there was fear and I think there were lawsuits, there were later lawsuits.

Q: Oh yeah. Well, we didn't play that very well. This is the time when it was sort of "what you don't know won't hurt you."

SIMONS: It was, there was more of a stiff upper lip kind of thing, but we did break it, and we did sort of try to make a dialogue about it, getting it out and treating people who had been subject to it.

Q: Was there every any thought of saying, "Look, Soviets, if you want to play this game we're shutting our embassy down."

SIMONS: I don't think so, I don't think there was. I think that would have been the thought for Jesse Helms, but not for the Administration.

Q: But I mean the thing was serious enough.

SIMONS: Well, I think it is probably true. I mean Mrs. Stoessel won't say so, but in the end it probably killed Walter Stoessel, because he died of leukemia years later. Back then he had to go out and get treatment; he was bright red. It turned out that the two waves of microwaves crossed in his office. I don't think that was purposeful, I think they were trying to get at our machinery on the floor above. But if you're living through that it's hard to be sunny about Soviet society or the people that you are up against.

Q: Did you ever run across or deal with, or was he even a figure then, Arbatov?

SIMONS: Oh yeah, we dealt with him.

Q: This was an American-Canadian institute or something?

SIMONS: Yeah, Georgy Arbatov was head of the USA and Canada Institute of the Academy of Sciences, which was an institute that we considered a force for good and Lord knows he told us that he was a force for good. He had worked his way up, and he had a lot of expertise in the Institute. He was one of our regular contacts partly because people spoke wonderful English there. But even if they didn't they were knowledgeable and they had license to be with us so that was useful. Arbatov had gotten himself in the détente years into a position of I think quite a trusted advisor of the leadership on U.S. affairs. He attempted to continue that, but by the same token he was sort of ground down in the decline of détente, and had to get sort of nastier and nastier about exclusive U.S. responsibility for the decline of détente; so he got more and more orthodox as time went on. But at that time, no, he was a valued person who was considered a force for good.

Q: How about the art of Kremlinology, of reading the papers? Had that matured or was that almost a thing of the past?

SIMONS: No, no, we could still do it, it had matured too. Dick Combs was an expert at it, the head of the Internal section; for the Party Congress he predicted by the placement of people that there would be these departures and that these people we in trouble. But it only takes you so far. It was a very solidary leadership and very secretive.

Q: Well, from a practical point of view up to a certain point, you know, one of the great coups I'm sure in the political field was who was going to replace whom; did it make any difference? I mean until Gorbachev came along, but up to that point, looking back on it.

SIMONS: I think it did because it took until 1972 for Brezhnev to consolidate his position. I think he had to fire the Ukrainian Party chief who was the opponent of what they were trying to do with the United States, I forget the man's name, but he had been sent in there to quash Ukrainian nationalism, and they had to fire him for Brezhnev to reach the ascendancy that he reached in 1972, and it took that for us to be able to proceed with détente, with the treaties that we negotiated and signed, with the whole skein of cooperative agreements that were put in place. So Kremlinology was important then. Once Brezhnev was consolidated, his position was pretty good. I remember Stoessel presented his credentials to Podgorny and I got to go, or Toon did later on and I got to go to that, got my picture taken. No, it was not so important between Brezhnev's consolidation in 1972 and the really serious beginnings of Brezhnev's decline in the late '70s. So in my time it was not terribly important. I mean the party congress, the 25th Party Congress that I covered, was a very staged affair; like the Democratic Party convention next week, it was going to be a celebration of the status quo. It's going to be a celebration of Kerry in this case. No, at that time Kremlinology was not essential, but later on and earlier it was. So it was a skill that kind of needed to be kept up.

Q: Did you get any feeling -- we talked about this before -- by the time you left, that you might

say that maybe the greatest analytical failure was not realizing how weak the Soviet Union was in many of the essentials, particularly its economy and the ethnic divisions; but was this apparent to anybody there? Were you thinking of the thousand-year Reich and the thousand-year Soviet Union?

SIMONS: The way that played out for us there was that it was more difficult for us than for other Americans to see the Soviet Union as really a dynamic threat to the United States. Now that didn't mean that we knew the economy was a third the size of ours, and I mentioned earlier in these interviews they were a very powerful military force, and that tended to skew judgments. But watching the Soviet economy work, the civilian economy, I mean even then it's a dual economy, with an efficient military sector and inefficient civilian sector. There were some aspects of that, sort of like Indonesia under the Dutch: you know, the plantation economy and then the native economy. It was very hard for us to see the Soviet Union overwhelming us or kind of overtaking us. I think that put us on one side of the argument about how to deal with the Soviet Union. I think most of the people that served there feel, you know, "steady as you go, treat them like adults, don't pamper them." You got a basic confidence that the United States is able to deal with whatever threat the Soviet Union poses to us. We certainly didn't feel that they were ideologically a threat. It was hard for us to see how they were examples to the rest of the world in anything but the military side. In other words, it was sort of the East European dilemma after 1968. Of course in our country there were people who for a whole variety of reasons that I think are just being researched were very afraid of the Soviet Union and really felt it was an up-and-coming threat, the thousand-year Reich as you put it.

Q: This is tape 4, side 1, with Tom Simons.

SIMONS: I mean I'll just tell two personal anecdotes. We put our daughter in a Soviet school, a Special School focused on English, and it was a wonderful experience. Once we got her in -- they didn't want to take her, we sort of had to lean on UPDK, the diplomatic administration, to get her in -- but once she was in she was treated like a queen. She was seven at the time. She learned Russian, wonderful Russian, by Christmas. We were treated just as parents. In other words we were called over when she had disciplinary problems, we were called over for the little festivities that take place on various occasions -- when you finish the first reading book all the parents are called -- things of that sort. And just being a parent it occurred to me, first, that it is a collective experience, because all the children are beloved by their teachers, and that allows the teachers to be draconian in terms of intellectual performance. It is sort of different from us where everybody is supposed to be at the top intellectually. That's not true there. But on the other hand everybody there knows that they are valued as a human being. It's a great virtue of the Soviet school. The other thing was that going to these little performances, like finishing the first book, I remember once saying to myself, with a shock of recognition, that this was like being in first grade in St. Paul, Minnesota, during the War, because three things were being celebrated there too: first, learning; second, upward social mobility -- learning will get you ahead; and third, by learning you serve the country. In other words that learning was going to make our lives better and serve the country. There is a lot of patriotism sort of built in. So you have that about the Soviets. Again, you know, we ended up sort of respecting a lot of things about the Soviet system but not being afraid of them.

Then at the very last, I think the Soviet administration kind of liked me. They thought I was constructive because we liked to go out and visit old churches, my wife and I, around the Moscow area but elsewhere too. We had been trying to get to a church in a place called Pereslavl-Zalessky almost ever since we had arrived, and we had always been refused permission by whatever route we put in for “for reasons of a temporary nature.” Whatever route we put in for, whether we were coming from Vladimir-Suzdal or coming from Yaroslavl to get to this place in the middle of the Golden Circle, as it is called, the old cities around Moscow or northeast of Moscow, we were turned down. Then in January of 1977, just before we were leaving, with the temperature at 40 below -- and 40 below is where Fahrenheit and Centigrade cross -- we put in one last time, we were leaving in two weeks and we put in this last time to go by train, and they gave us permission. The train left Moscow at 14 minutes after midnight and got in at 5+ in the morning to this little town, and it came back the next night at midnight plus and got into Moscow at 5 a.m. plus. So we got into this town. I remember 40 below. Your spit froze before it hit the ground; you could not spend more than half an hour outside. You had to go into a local cafeteria, and it was a meatless day and when we went in there for lunch we were overwhelmed by police spies asking us if we were interested in military secrets. It was a town where time had stopped. The church was beautiful, by the way; it was a 14th century church with Persian motifs on the walls, a mystery how they got up there, lovely. But you felt the quietness of Russian country life; the shopping center, you know the place where they sold the household goods and stuff of that sort, must have been built in brick in 1880, and hadn't changed. Women were still washing clothes by cutting holes through the ice in that place. (We also discovered why it was so hard to get to: we went to a Hindi movie in the afternoon to get out of the cold, and were surrounded by skinheads, first-year soldiers; it was a training area for the Soviet Army.) You really got the feeling, partly of a world at peace (aside from the police spy) but also of a world that was not very dynamic. Again, why would our country, such a dynamic country, be threatened by this unless they sort of went crazy with their weapons? I think that that was sort of it.

Q: That was the great fear.

SIMONS: That was the nightmare. I never had any doubt myself that our country, if we got our own act together, could easily deal with the Soviet threat.

WILLIAM VEALE
Soviet Union Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1975-1977)

Mr. Veale was born in Washington, D.C. into a US military family and was raised primarily at Army posts in the US and abroad. Entering the military after graduating from Georgetown University, he served with the US Army until joining the Foreign Service in 1971. Throughout his career Mr. Veale dealt primarily with Political/Military and Disarmament affairs, serving both in the Department of State and the Department of Defense. Among his assignments, Mr. Veale was posted to Strasbourg, Berlin and Rangoon. He also taught in the Political Science

department at the US Air Force Academy. Mr. Veale was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2000.

Q: After several years there you were transferred back to Washington and given an assignment on the Soviet desk. Who was your chief on that assignment?

VEALE: The Soviet Desk was part of the European Bureau (EUR/SOV) whose Assistant Secretary was Art Hartman. The EUR/SOV Office Director was Mark Garrison and there were three Deputy Directors. By the fall of 1976 they were Robert Barry, James Wilkinson (Exchanges), and William Edgar (Economic Affairs). But Sol Polansky was my first boss and the second was Wilkinson.. This period I found absolutely fascinating because what Kissinger was trying to do at this point – this was 1975-77 – was build a web of interdependence with various parts of the Soviet system. He constructed a series of intergovernmental agreements that would engage new and untouched parts of the Soviet system. The mother of these agreements was a science and technology agreement, which was basically spurred by the science advisory to the president. It spawned a series of agency types of agreements, with 11 in all, running from space, housing, agriculture, environment, transportation, to energy. The office I was in, on the Soviet desk, was charged with sheparding these. There was also a supplemental aspect of individual exchanges, which was run through the National Academy of Sciences.

I was required to write periodically reports aimed at gauging the progress. The controversial issue at that time was whether or not we were simply opening up our own society to Soviet spying, or were we getting benefits from it.

Q: Tit for tat

Towards the end of that assignment I was asked to do a cost benefits study for the NSC (National Security Council) staff. This was a very laborious project. Under each agreement there were various projects and there were project leaders for each one, so we were getting input from all these people and trying to decide what were the benefits that were flowing to the U.S. and what were the costs involved in maintaining these benefits. The study, I think, was fairly controversial because although it looked as though we were getting remarkable access into the Soviet system, the nature of the benefits that were flowing our way were very intangible and of a calculus that required more time then we were using to look at. So, this was potentially politically controversial and basically the NSC sat on the study and did not want it to see the light of day where it would become politically controversial.

Q: So, it didn't get to Congress?

VEALE: It didn't get out. The Ford administration basically wound up sitting on it. I have felt to this day that we were sowing, through those agreements, the seeds of the reform movement in the Soviet Union. The recognition that this anal-retentive approach to information in the face of the computer age and the management skills that the west was developing as a result of that were the kinds of things [inaudible] in the past. I think there were people who were aware of this in the state committee on science and technology. There were people who were interested to begin doing something about this. This was a system that had not successfully institutionalized the

innovation process the way the west had and they could use espionage to steal but they couldn't seem to incentivize a system of innovation on their own. I found that fascinating.

In light of my prior military experience, one of the more mind-blowing things I remember is that I read the Penkovsky Papers (Editor's Note: Oleg Penkovsky, *The Penkovsky Papers: The Russian Who Spied for the West*, Doubleday, New York, 1966.). Igor Penkovsky had been a Soviet army colonel working at the State Committee on Science and Technology and I found myself in the course of this assignment and once in their negotiations in the offices of the State Committee on Science and Technology. This was back in 1975. I went on a delegation with Gifford Stevers, the president of Science and Technology at the time. We went to the Soviet Union for some negotiations in the State Committee on Science and Technology's offices and I remember being allowed to wander off to the men's room by myself and I thought, "My gosh, this may have been the place where Igor had visited."

Q: So you did get to Moscow?

VEALE: Yes, in 1975 for some negotiations. That was my first and only trip to the Soviet Union during that period. That was a benchmark for comparisons that I made later with my second trip which was not until December 1992. I saw vast differences.

Q: Did you have a feeling during your time on the Soviet desk that Secretary Kissinger was micro-managing our relations with the Soviet Union or did he leave the people on the desk and in Moscow some leeway?

VEALE: I don't know if micro-managing is the word that I would have chosen. Kissinger was running the Department through a very small group of people and Baker later did the same thing. But, he had a very deliberate set of plans and programs that he wanted to see executed and he wanted to make sure they were executed the way he wanted them to be done. When I was on the desk, a colleague in the bilateral affairs section of the desk interpreted a measure that had to do with either Jewish immigration or some human rights aspect in the Soviet Union and there was some miscommunication within the Department of State about how that issue should be handled. People didn't engage Hartman, and they should have at the time, so this counterpart of mine took some initiative and the roof fell down on him literally because of this. Basically what he was doing was structuring the situation where the U.S. seemed to be taking a much more forthright view on human rights issues with respect to the Soviet Union and I think this issue was not handled the way Kissinger wanted it to be handled so there was a considerable amount of flak that the Department took generally from the White House on that issue. That is my one recollection of an instance where things were being handled in a way that was different from ... [tape cuts out]

Q: Did you find your background in ACDA helpful to you while you were on the Soviet desk?

VEALE: Yes, because I understood the strategic weaponry backdrop against which the science and technology gambit with the Soviet Union was being played at that time. And, there was a whole other dimension to that assignment which was on the detective side, if you will. I sat in on interagency deliberations chaired by the Director of Central Intelligence -- this committee

structure; there was a committee on exchanges -- that looked at all these exchanges with the Soviet Union: their implementation, intelligence, and so forth. There was a considerable amount of concern about shopping by Soviet spies. The Soviets would put people who were known to be engaged in intelligence activities on delegations and the question was politically whether or not to deny their visas and so forth. So having the background of strategic weaponry helped in that respect.

Q: Were you involved in preparation for the Helsinki conference where we signed the CSCE agreements?

VEALE: Yes, but not in this assignment. Not for the initial CSCE agreements, but later in a subsequent assignment I was involved in working out confidence-building measures in CSCE.

Q: How about the problem of the immigration of Soviet Jews. Did you get involved in that?

VEALE: Only in the incident I mentioned which was handled by the bilateral affairs section so I wasn't directly involved.

Q: It was about this time that President Ford refused to see Solzhenitsyn, did that cause us any heartburn in the Department or any problems?

VEALE: I think there was some surprise at that. I remember that distantly. I can't give you a thumbnail sketch as to what the Department's views were on that, but I remember being disappointed at that. I think the junior officers at the time were somewhat surprised as well.

Q: I guess my question is: had the Soviet desk recommended that he receive Solzhenitsyn or not?

VEALE: I can't remember that.

Q: What about the question of radiation in our Embassy in Moscow. Did that become an issue for you or not?

VEALE: I was asked if I wanted to go to Moscow on assignment. My wife and I had discussed starting a family at that point. I had a good friend who had been in the Embassy during the period the radiation was taking place and I was not comfortable with the idea of going off to the Embassy based upon what I was hearing from people about the possible unknown impact of the radiation. There was a lot of concern about this, a lot of concern that the Department was not being forthright because of intelligence concerns about the use of this radiation to active micro bombs and things of that sort.

MARILYN P. JOHNSON
Russian Language Training
Garmisch, Germany (1975-1976)

**Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Moscow (1976-1978)**

Ambassador Johnson was born and raised in Massachusetts, graduated from Radcliffe College and served in the US Navy (WAVES) in World War II. She received further training at the University of Geneva, the Sorbonne and Middlebury College. Her Foreign Service experience include postings as Cultural Affairs Office, Public Affairs Officer and/or English language instructor in West Africa, Tunisia, Niger and the Soviet Union. In 1978 she was appointed Ambassador to Togo, where she served until 1981. Ambassador Johnson was interviewed by Ann Miller Morin in 1986.

[Note: *Persis* Johnson is Ambassador Johnson's sister, and was present for the interview.]

JOHNSON: Vulnerable, yes. Ready to pick up quickly with somebody else and a good easy target for them. So that was in the back of my mind, and one day when Hal Schneidman was away and I was attending a meeting of the area directors with Frank Shakespeare before he was leaving as director of USIA, Frank Shakespeare said, "Now I'm leaving USIA." He had had a very strong ideological bent on the difference between the iron curtain and the free world. He said that everybody should see what it's like there. That although he was leaving and perhaps people coming in would not be as strong as he, he said, "I want you to know that this ideological battle is going to be going on for another ten years and anybody who wants to become anybody, a senior top-level officer in USIA, had better have served in a post behind the iron curtain." When he finished I raised my hand and said, "This is fine, Mr. Shakespeare, but do you know that there are two groups of people anyway who cannot serve, who would like to, but cannot." I told of this experience and he didn't know about this. He turned to Kempton Jenkins who was a State Department officer serving as USIA director for the USSR and Eastern Europe, said, "Is that true?" He answered, "Yes, you know. It's a very difficult life for women over there, so we haven't assigned women." I said, "Look I don't think it's a difficult life. You probably feel women are more susceptible to compromise. A woman who is my age, a single woman, I think would be less susceptible to compromise than a married man. First of all, I would know, I think, why somebody was being particularly nice, and secondly there would be nothing [to it] if I had an affair." I didn't say, if I had an affair. I would be less susceptible to blackmail."

Q: Of course you would.

JOHNSON: From the blackmail aspect of it. Frank said, "Well, Marilyn, we'll look into that and when we send somebody you'll go to the Soviet Union." And he didn't forget. When I went to the Senior Seminar I knew that I would have an assignment as CAO in Moscow after the Senior Seminar. It worked out.

PERSIS: You had said to Mr. Shakespeare that there were two categories of people here who could never get ahead. And so he said, "You'll be the first woman to go, Marilyn."

Q: That's terrific. So you went to an unpronounceable place to study.

JOHNSON: Garmisch-Partenkirchen. In the army, it's the United States Army Russian Institute, USARI.

Q: Is that the regular Garmisch that everybody goes to in Germany?

JOHNSON: Yes. It's a split city and Partenkirchen is on the other side of a main street, but Garmisch is where the US forces in Europe have a recreational center. It's a lovely, spot you know. I could do my skiing and my tennis. I took up cross country skiing there because I was going to Moscow.

Q: Now how long did you stay there?

JOHNSON: It's one year. It's a year course.

PERSIS: No, you stayed one year. It's a two- year course.

JOHNSON: For the military it's two years.

PERSIS: She was also taking Russian privately in Washington.

JOHNSON: I [was tutored during] the Senior Seminar.

PERSIS: They had said you cannot do anything other than the Senior Seminar. If you have to have your eyes examined or your teeth fixed, do it before you enter because it will be so rigorous. She said, "I can take the Russian."

JOHNSON: There was a Russian teacher that lived over in Arlington so I would go a couple times a week, I guess, before or after the Senior Seminar course just to brush up, because they wanted to have you be a 4-4. I didn't get to be 4-4 but I got the 3-3 there. That was a delightful year and also it happened to be right across the mountain pass from our friends in Innsbruck so we were like going home with our family there.

Q: Then you went to Moscow?

JOHNSON: Then I went to Moscow as cultural affairs officer.

PERSIS: And we drove to Moscow.

JOHNSON: And we drove. We still had the Malian who had worked for me. He came to the States with us. I couldn't keep on a full-time job with Persis unless I had somebody to help.

Q: What year was this? Let me get this straight. 1976?

JOHNSON: '76 I finished Garmisch. It was one of those things where you can't leave until the

new fiscal year. We were still in the July fiscal year and they had to have the money for transfer. The PAO said, "She has to be here by the fourth of July," because you meet people at the reception, you know. So we had a very short time, but I wanted to drive and he had a car and I had a car, so we drove through Austria and Czechoslovakia and Poland and went in over the Brest-Litovsk border crossing.

Q: Your Malian, what happened to him while you were stationed in Washington?

JOHNSON: He came to Washington with me. We brought him in under the H-2 visa. As I say, that was wonderful because he could take care of Persis at home and run the house. They ran the house and I went to work. He was with us in Moscow. It's a long story we won't get into, but he wanted to come in under another visa and stay here. I said, "No, I brought you in under the diplomatic [visa] and you must leave. Unless you can transfer the visa while you're here you must leave when we leave." He did and then tried to come back under another visa and he couldn't get in, so he came back to us in Garmisch. Then he went to Moscow with us. That was when I was in Moscow that the great surprise to everybody, including myself, was, would you like to be ambassador to Togo? And I knew Togo. I had happened to have driven down through what was then Dahomey and Togo going to a budget conference in Ivory Coast to pick up Persis. Persis joined me in Niger and we drove back from Abidjan.

Q: So you were in Russia two years?

JOHNSON: Yes, from '76 to '78.

PERSIS: In the fall of '78.

JOHNSON: It was September I left. I was July to July and then I was planning to be a third year there. It was a three year tour, two and a half to three years, and the cable came and took everybody [by surprise.]

Q: You heard by cable?

JOHNSON: By cable.

Q: Before we get to that, would you describe your life in Moscow? You're one of the few women officers to serve there.

JOHNSON: Yes. You had no problem there because there are a lot of women in the government and our chief contact in the ministry of culture was a woman - a very strong, severe Madame Butrova, who had served in Washington, so she spoke excellent English. She was in charge of all of the cultural exchanges. Then we had somebody else on the educational side. This was a very good time for us. Detente was dwindling but we still had the programs so we had good exchange programs with American students. There were problems all of the time because the Soviets would not grant them access to certain archives, or they couldn't travel, or they went to one city when they wanted to be in another. But there was an educational exchange program going on, a full-blown one. We also had an IV [International Visitor Program] program with many... we had

individual grantees and then we had groups of educators. American educators would come to the Soviet Union and Soviets would go to the United States and we were arranging these. Also we had a couple of exhibits from the Met that came over, one exhibit from the Met and then they were preparing for another. Shortly after my arrival, Jackie Onassis turned up at the airport. Walter Stoessel was ambassador and he asked me to go out and meet her. Although she was coming to deal with the Soviets, he wanted her to know that the embassy was there if she needed anything. I went to pass the message on. I guess I saw her...

PERSIS: They had a luncheon.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, I arranged a luncheon at the residence for her.

Q: Why was she coming over?

JOHNSON: She was coming to research materials for the catalogue on the Russian costume exhibit. Remember when the Met had that wonderful Russian costume exhibit? Actually it was Diane Vreeland who did most of the work. But Jackie came over.

Q: She edited the book.

JOHNSON: Yes, she edited the book. Hoving [director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York] came with her.

Q: Did he?

JOHNSON: They went to Leningrad and she saw the sleigh there. I remember it was absolutely necessary that they have a sleigh for one of the exhibits.

Q: Yes, indeed they did. Did you see the exhibit?

JOHNSON: Yes. We got to know some of the people who came over, the curators, and also the man in charge of the shipping and all, the logistics. We've kept in contact with him and he arranged for us to go one day when it was closed to the public, I think. We happened to be in New York on that day so we did see it. Persis could go around in a wheel chair with not too many people.

Q: Did you feel much sense of restraint while you were in Russia?

JOHNSON: You know that you're limited for travel. You're limited to twenty-five miles outside of Moscow and certain cities are open cities and other cities are closed cities. But I never had the impression of being followed at the time. Persis and I went over there saying we know that it's a different system and we know that we will be watched and listened to but we're not going to have it influence us psychologically. Some people would talk to a chandelier, or something. We just assumed that there were listening devices and we never consciously said anything we didn't want to be heard. But we did not worry about it or make a game of it. We arrived in July and we traveled a bit. Was Phoebe there that year?

PERSIS: August, yes.

JOHNSON: In August we went to...

PERSIS: We had the experience in August of knowing they knew exactly where our car was every minute.

JOHNSON: You mean Zagorsk? That wasn't that year. Was that August? We drove to this monastery city in Zagorsk. As we were going up to the churches I noticed the flower stand on the left and it was on the wrong side of the street and I said, "We'll stop on the way back and buy some flowers there." When we came back the stand wasn't there. We kept looking and we drove around and around trying to find it. Then I did spot some flowers and parked over by the station and went back to buy the flowers. When I came back there was a motorcycle cop by the car and he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Obviously I'm buying some flowers."

PERSIS: "Where are you from?"

JOHNSON: "Where are you from," I guess. I said, "Moscow." "This isn't on your itinerary. Get up and get out of here."

PERSIS: The whole circumstances, too. We were not off the main road, just like the cars parked down there. But we were also blocked so that nobody could see us, really. There was a train going through and the traffic was stopped. But this cop came from the far side and came right to us. He knew exactly where our car was. I mean he didn't see it because he couldn't see it. We figured that a bug was on our car. It had been put on and they knew where our car was. So we knew this was so, but it was all right. We weren't doing anything.

JOHNSON: We drove to Vladimir and Suzdal. There were two famous cities.

PERSIS: We also had the wonderful sense that if anything went wrong, or if we got lost, somebody would appear beside us.

Q: Yes, indeed.

PERSIS: And tell us we were on the wrong road.

JOHNSON: As I said, it didn't bother us. At Christmas time we flew to Austria to spend Christmas with our family, the Austrian family. When we landed in Frankfurt, it was amazing. It was as if a weight had been lifted off our shoulders. We were not conscious of this oppression that was hovering over us. But we got into Frankfurt and it's another world. It surprised us.

Q: You don't even know that you're experiencing this weight. I know exactly what you mean.

JOHNSON: Then, of course, when we went back, we got to know some of the people who were not out-and-out dissidents but had been friends of the Sakharovs and friends of Solzhenitsyn, the

man that was supposedly the character of Rubin in Cancer Ward. A devoted communist who still believe in communism. We got to know him, Lev and his wife, Raisa, who had been the interpreter for Lillian Hellman when she had gone there a couple of times, and other writers and artists who were not members of the artists' union and couldn't exhibit. But some of them participated in the free - this was the time when they had those free exhibits that were not supported by the union but they allowed them to show some of their works. They came to the house. We were able to get films through USIA. I had a projector at home and they were avid for any information on the theater and the arts. I showed films and they came to our home for dinner and to read. They could borrow our books and things. The Soviets knew that. But as long as you didn't go too far, it's all right. One time a sculptor, a very fine sculptor, had a book about his sculpture written and published in West Germany. Several of his big sculptures are in cities in West Germany. But he couldn't get any copies of the book. We were going to Austria and his publisher said that he would send fifty copies and I would take them back when I went. Did I take them back or did I send them? I guess I had them sent to me.

PERSIS: We didn't have that many. We had just a few. We just brought them for his own use.

JOHNSON: Five or so. I don't know, anyway, some number.

Q: Did you bring them in the pouch?

JOHNSON: I don't think I did on the pouch because I didn't want to do that. We brought them ourselves. I guess they were in a suitcase and they didn't look through our suitcases. There was nothing subversive. It's just a book about his sculpture that he couldn't get. We were friends with some of the exchange students and one, doing his doctoral thesis in theater, was having a terrible time in the dormitory at the beginning and was going to have to leave because of the conditions. I went out to look at the dormitory and it didn't seem too bad by my standards. I guess he was a little bit more delicate than I. I said they'll get you some other dormitory, but he couldn't stand it, so I said come and stay with us until we get you relocated. So Sidney came and stayed in our apartment with us. He never did get relocated. He stayed with us. It was very good. He was very interesting.

We had made plans to go to the Kopelev's home together one evening but that day suddenly there was something wrong with my car. We assumed that somebody had tinkered with it. I know one time it was the tires. You can't use the telephone. We thought we were being discreet about our visit, but they knew that I was going to go out there and they fixed it so I couldn't have my car. This was a Sunday and I had some work to do in the embassy so I asked for an embassy car to come out and take me in to the office. On the way we were going to drop Sidney, who had the books we had brought from Germany, and he was going to give them to the sculptor. Then he and I would meet later on after I had done my work in the office. I would take the subway and we would meet at the subway stop near where our friends lived and go spend the evening with their literary friends. As I say, it was an embassy car. We didn't mention anything about the books and we dropped Sidney off and I said, "Bye, see you sometime." We didn't say anything about meeting in the metro. He was followed by somebody who came up and said, "What you doing? Where are you going?"

PERSIS: Also knew theater and...

JOHNSON: He knew theater and talked to him, so Sidney knew that this was somebody that they had set for him, and he said, "Come up to my place and we'll talk about theater." Sidney was trying to shake him. He couldn't shake him and Sidney got very shaken himself by then, because he knew that they were after him. And there was another time they sent him a letter and they used a middle name that he had never used except on his passport. They were trying to blackmail him. But this person obviously had been sent to waylay him and to frighten him. They like to let you know that you're being watched.

PERSIS: They know what you're doing. This shows the wonderfulness of the Russian people, too. When Sidney didn't show up at the sculptor's, the sculptor called our home. He would know that our phone was tapped and it would be known that he was calling. But he called me to ask where Sidney was. Then Sidney finally did get there, much later.

Q: With the books?

JOHNSON: With the books.

PERSIS: They called me again. In the meantime I guess you had called.

JOHNSON: I was at the subway station waiting for him and he hadn't come, so I called to know if there was a change in plans.

PERSIS: It's strange. You are very much aware that they know every single thing you're doing and thinking. They let you know. They call you on the phone... in ways you just know that they know.

Q: Is it a helpless feeling that you get?

PERSIS: I don't know. I don't think we reacted too much to it. You also have the security of knowing that nothing is going to happen to you that isn't planned.

Q: That's true.

PERSIS: You know that nothing could happen to you.

JOHNSON: Also there was nothing that was really wrong. We did help perhaps get a few manuscripts out and a few books in, but that was the extent. We were being friendly with these people and we were giving them the opportunity to talk with Americans, to see American films, to come to dinner and meet different people. I know I was there when they had the first international book exhibit when the Americans participated. I said, we should have a reception for them, the American publishers. But the chargé d'affaires said, no, that was their business. There was no reception. So I said, "I'll have something at my apartment for a few of them to meet." Because Nadezhda Mandelstam was still alive; she was a widow of a great poet, and [Robert] Bernstein and some others wanted to meet her, Bernstein, the Random House publisher.

So I invited the different Soviets that these publishers said that they wanted to see. They were able to get together in my apartment. There was a good exchange then. It was good for us because we got to see a lot of the interesting people and talk with them.

Q: Did you find that as things waxed and waned between the Russians and the government of the United States, it affected you directly?

JOHNSON: As I say, it was beginning to affect our exchanges. They were not so friendly at the end. We worked on a renewal of the exchange agreement. And we did, I think it was '78, that we signed another exchange agreement. At that time we were still working but after I left, people told me that activities diminished tremendously because detente was...

Q: You left, of course, before Reagan was inaugurated but that must have made things really...

JOHNSON: It made it worse in the beginning, but meanwhile it was Afghanistan, you see, December of '77. Then Carter cut out things.

Q: Did you have Russian servants working in your home?

JOHNSON: No, I was fortunate.

Q: How were you able not to? I thought they insisted.

JOHNSON: I had my Malian. I didn't need one.

Q: They didn't insist that you have one?

JOHNSON: No, because I had one.

Q: I thought they planted one anyway.

JOHNSON: No. Some people didn't have any. They got so fed up with them. We had them come in for parties. When we had receptions and dinners, they would come in and work. But they were ones that worked for other people. Persis went to the hairdresser that was reputed to be a colonel in the KGB. They're nice people. I feel sorry for the employees in the embassy and USIS over this present culture, it's called, in the Soviet Union. But they must have some feelings about the United States and Americans and yet they are Russians. They know they are working for their government. It must be tearing them apart inside if they're sensitive people. I know that the cultural assistant we had, everybody said, "She's also a colonel in the KGB." But she was a nice person and she was very interested in showing art. They did an inspection of the Soviet Union last September. Bob Rockweiler said our CAO assistant was very nice to him, Took him around to museums, bought him a book. I have to feel sorry for them.

Q: But everything is done for a reason?

JOHNSON: I guess so, but they are genuinely warm people.

PERSIS: Very kind to me.

JOHNSON: They were very kind to Persis.

PERSIS: They have a great respect for age and for any infirmities.

JOHNSON: Whenever we traveled and were going up and down steps, the men and everybody would come over and ask, "Can't we help? They were very friendly. In fact often they were friendly and wanted to continue to know us and I had to tell them for their own good they should not.

PERSIS: Had to do it diplomatically.

Q: How was entertaining? Was the social life much less rigorous than in other countries?

JOHNSON: I tried to entertain because it was a good chance... For instance, we had some American students over there, university students. We were starting some courses in the Pushkin Institute and other places. I would have them for Thanksgiving dinner. I don't know whether I asked any Soviets or whether it was just all Americans for Thanksgiving, but we would have, whenever there were exchange groups, we would try to get the Russians to come along with the Americans. It's not as easy, perhaps, as elsewhere, and you know that they name certain people to go, a certain level will go to certain people's homes.

Q: If they said, "Yes," could you count on them being there?

JOHNSON: If they said yes... This is one thing we found, too. In dealing with them, if you're having a negotiating session or you have an exchange agreement, if there is something down in writing, then they will abide by that. But it takes a lot of hard work and patience to get them to come to the table and say, yes, this is the way it will be. My experience was they would live up to the letter of the agreement.

Q: Did you find it frustrating?

JOHNSON: It was frustrating only sometimes, in one thing negotiating for the Paul Taylor dance company, I think. The dance people want certain things and the Soviets say, "This is our hall and it's this way. We can't change it." Or we would say, "You're supposed to take care of the trucking," and they say, "No, it wasn't in the agreement. We didn't say we would do the trucking." Then you have to go back and say, "It's going to cost this much more to truck the things from one city to another." I don't think I felt frustrated because you have to keep chipping away.

Q: Did your style of operating change? You couldn't be too spontaneous, I would think.

PERSIS: Oh, she is.

Q: I know she is, and I wondered if it could be under those circumstances.

JOHNSON: I think you have to think ahead and you have to have different positions. You have to be ready to give but not give too much, and expect them to give on certain things. You become exasperated sometimes with the bureaucracy of it and that they will not answer a note for a long, long time. But that's not peculiar to the Soviets. A lot of other bureaucracies don't answer notes.

Q: How did your servant feel about living there?

JOHNSON: There was a Marine club at the embassy. People from the friendly embassies all went there. That was the center of activities. They showed films a couple of nights a week. He had a red mustang car, a new car. He became very popular. He didn't mind it at all. He knew all the Finnish nannies.

PERSIS: And the Africans.

JOHNSON: Africans, the students at Lumumba university, you know.

PERSIS: And the ambassador's son and cousin or something or other.

JOHNSON: Emile enjoyed it there, I think. He didn't mind too much.

PERSIS: He didn't feel the color bar.

JOHNSON: There were black Marines there, too, and he was treated more like an American. He dressed like an American, spoke English.

PERSIS: By this time he was more American than African.

JOHNSON: He didn't want to go back to Mali.

Q: I can imagine. Then one day you got a cable.

JOHNSON: A cable came in and I took it to the PAO and he said, "You'd better take it up to the ambassador." The ambassador was shocked, and so was everybody else. He said, "Oh, you arranged this. I happened to know John Rheinhart, who was the head of ICA at the time. I'd known him when he was the director for Africa. He had been out to visit. I had gone along with him and the PAO to the meeting with the minister of culture. So the immediate thought was that I had arranged this with John Rheinhart when he had been there. I said, "No, I didn't arrange it with anybody. This is a complete shock to me." I said, "There's only one possibility that a friend of mine, one of my colleagues from Bamako had come out when Secretary Vance came to a meeting. He had a few minutes and I drove him out to the house to see Persis. As I was driving out I said, I'm not particularly happy with what the internal - it had nothing to do with Soviet side - but inside the USIS operation" and I said, "I may retire or ask for reassignment or something." He said, "Would you like a DCM job in Africa? There are lots of DCM jobs." I said, "No, I don't

want anything. This is my own thing. I'll make up my mind. Don't do anything. I'm not interested in that." So what came to my mind when I got this cable was, David has gone back and it was equal employment opportunity and he probably said, "There's a woman out there if you're looking for an ambassador. This was my assumption. Nobody ever told me anything. When I went back to the State Department, one of the first days back there when I was getting ready for the assignment, I met the former political officer from Moscow. He said, "I was just on the panel for you and was happy to approve you." He said my name was on a panel and that's how I got it. I know that many of the ambassadors in my OERs [officer evaluation report] would write, "She would be a fine ambassador to the country." She does this, that, or the other thing. But those are things you don't take seriously. I never had any ambition to be an ambassador. I was happy to just go along my own way. I don't know whether I ever even saw David after that, but I wrote to him and I said, It seems to me that you're behind this." He said, "Marilyn, I did inquire when I came back but I found your name on the list from USIA as a possible candidate for appointments to Africa." So he inquired but my name was on a list that USIA had supplied to the State Department.

Q: That's because of Carter, of course.

JOHNSON: I think so.

Q: Carter demanded so many top women.

JOHNSON: Again it's where being a woman has worked for me.

Q: Definitely. Before we leave Russia, what lessons did you learn from your time there?

JOHNSON: Oh, gosh, Persis, what lessons did I learn from Russia? What I learned is that people are people. I'd always known this. We all had different political systems and different loyalties, but we should understand the other person's point of view. And certainly in negotiating you should know from what perspective that person is approaching the negotiations. You have to understand his position and background and his responsibilities to the people behind. We can't just say to a Russian, "Okay, now let's do this and let's do that." We saw with this walk in the woods in Geneva, it never came to anything because the powers that be are not ready to accept it. So we have to know their perspective and their limitations for negotiations. I think that if you understand more their premises and bases for thinking and for actions, then each person can do a better job.

I've always thought you have to find a mutuality of interests. We're trying to tell America's story, we're trying to have programs that will be of mutual benefit, or we're trying to get everything for our benefit, but I think the only way you can get something is to find an area in which both countries or both groups have an interest and want to get something. There is a point where you have a mutuality of interests, then you can agree there. We're not going to change their beliefs, they're not going to change our beliefs, but we can work together to get what each one wants, I believe.

I don't know that I learned any great lessons. You always do, but I'm not one to sit and question what I've learned from this experience.

I also did learn a lot about myself, that I had always been a very strong individualist person who said, "Any problems are your own," but I was having some problems within that made me unhappy. For the first time I was not happy in my work. I did not want to get up. I did not want to get up and go into the office. I liked the work but I did not want to go into that work atmosphere. I had some feelings that probably were like depression. It made me more understanding of people who have problems, nervous problems and depressions, and how people who are discriminated against can be cowed very easily. I think that probably the most important lesson was to myself. My own recognition of fallibility and how other people feel when they cannot cope. I've always been able to cope.

Q: This was your first feeling of...

JOHNSON: That was my first feeling of not liking where I was. And as I said, that was why I said to David, "I'm not happy and I'm going to do something," and he tried to help and I said, "No, I'll do it myself." Persis said it was the microwaves [It was believed by some that the microwave listening devices used against the embassy and the residences of embassy employees by the Soviet spy services were a source of cancer and other serious illnesses]. She thought that the microwaves were influential."

PERSIS: She had all of the symptoms.

Q: Is that right?

PERSIS: Yes. She was completely unlike herself. She would say, "I can't think, I can't think, I can't think." The symptoms were just there.

Q: Is it an unhappy post, generally speaking?

JOHNSON: Yes, it was a very unhappy post.

PERSIS: People were miserable there.

JOHNSON: Everybody was so ambitious. I've always worked where people worked together. Each one is doing his or her own thing. But there everybody was wanting to make his mark and this is what bothered me.

Q: All wanted to be George Kennans?

JOHNSON: That's right. They don't care whom they step on in order to go [first]. We had the ticker tape. They would rush in in the morning to see what was on the ticker tape and to read the traffic so they could report on it before the other officer could. That's a miserable way.

Q: Is this always true, do you think, of that post?

JOHNSON: I think it's known as that. It's known as an unhappy post.

PERSIS: It's ambitious people and they also think they're the elite. They think they're the bright ones that are chosen, and they're going to make their mark.

JOHNSON: There are some fine people. Now Bill Brown, who is now ambassador to Thailand, came in as political officer. It was his third term. He is a sweet man, very nice.

PERSIS: And Jack Matlock.

JOHNSON: Jack Matlock was a hard driver, but he was a fine honest man with integrity, too. He could see through a lot of the veneer of other people. There aren't many fine people but there are many people there that are ambitious and they only want to be known.

Q: Does it matter what cone they're in, or do we find most of them in the political?

JOHNSON: No, You found it in the political cone, you found it in the economic. I think I saw some of the science attachés out in...

PERSIS: Pakistan?

JOHNSON: No, China. We were talking about the consul general. He said it ruined his career there. As you mentioned, it was an unhappy post. People were always griping. And poor Mo Morin, who does everything for everybody and tries to make people happy, I guess he had a terrible time there.

Q: I can see where he might.

JOHNSON: He and Anne are people that are easy to get along with.

Q: Administrative work is a thankless job anyway.

PERSIS: And yet, I would love to go back.

Q: Really?

PERSIS: I would love to go back. I know we never would go back, but I would love to. People are just... and they have such courage. They did things for us that...

JOHNSON: That got them into trouble. There was one case of somebody that we knew that was convinced of the party [motives]. No question had ever come into her mind: Everything that they did was for the good of the people, and intelligent, and what you read from overseas were lies. Her party people were looking out for their best interests. She wanted to invite us to her home. We said, "No, because of my position." I knew what had happened to these friends who were up over last week with us. They had come to visit us in Moscow and met a girl on the subway. She said, "Come to the house." I went to deliver something and I could see that the girl in all innocence had invited them but the parents knew that there were problems, if it's somebody from

the embassy, too. So we told this person, "No, we would love it, we appreciate the gesture but it's not good for you." But she went on and then they let it be known to her that they knew what she was doing and she'd better cease and desist.

PERSIS: She wasn't doing anything.

Q: It must have shocked her.

JOHNSON: Just becoming sympathetic to us. I was supposed to meet her and she had to call and say that she couldn't. We were going to go to a bookstore or something. Then she just couldn't. It's a very sad thing because it's breaking somebody's faith. It's almost like a religion to them, you see. Here has been the ultimate, like a god and, you're finding out that it's not what you believed.

PERSIS: It wasn't we who were trying to chase her in any way. It was her own system that showed her. I remember she wrote me a note right in the house. She had heard of these things but never believed them before. But never mind, they're marvelous people.

JOHNSON: They're very good people. Those who are not working for the KGB don't know what's going on. They hear only one side of the story.

Q: They're spoon fed, of course. Did you see people from other embassies much?

JOHNSON: I think probably less in Moscow than anyplace else. I did have to see the West German cultural attaché who lived in the same building and we became quite friendly with her. The DCM of the German embassy had been in Niger before. I had known him slightly through an artist there, so I was friendly with the West Germans in the cultural and some French, not too many. British and Australian, I knew some of the Australians through tennis. I played tennis with the Australians.

Q: Don't they have the usual national days?

PERSIS: Yes, they do.

JOHNSON: Yes, but I didn't go to them.

PERSIS: Life there at that time was so pressured with activity that you had no time. Even though Eva lived right below us we saw very little of her, much as we liked her and she liked us. It was a continual pressure...

JOHNSON: There was always some delegation coming. You have to prepare for them.

PERSIS: Everybody wants to come to Moscow.

Q: Oh, yes.

PERSIS: Which makes it very interesting. You meet all kinds of people.

Q: Were you able to go to the ballet?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes. Persis was, too. Persis loves ballet. That was magnificent. Then we went to the opera and Tchaikovsky Hall. They had marvelous contests at Tchaikovsky Hall. They had a ballet competition and there was a Japanese-American [who] won silver. For some reason she came to the house to telephone.

PERSIS: You see everybody wants to come to Moscow. They're always the top people in their field. Marilyn was in a very interesting position because of all these cultural people came through her. We met all tremendously interestingly people.

Q: So you had to get ready for them.

JOHNSON: Alex Katz came.

PERSIS: Larry Rivers.

JOHNSON: Larry Rivers and then George Segal. I traveled with George Segal to Tashkent and Samarkand. Then Louise Gore, who was opening an exhibit in Uzbekistan. I went up to Alma-Ata with her.

Q: So you were able to travel?

JOHNSON: Yes. We also had this large international exhibit program of exchanges, that went off the track after Afghanistan, I think. And now it's just opened up again. Just beginning again under the new cultural agreement.

RICHARD M. MILES
Russian Language Training, Army Russian Institute
Garmisch, Germany (1975-1976)

Political Officer, External Affairs
Moscow (1976-1979)

Ambassador Miles was born in Arkansas in 1937. He earned an associate degree from Bakersfield College, Bachelor's degree from University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign service in 1966. His overseas posts include Oslo, Belgrade, Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia. Ambassador Miles was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Where did you go?

MILES: I went off to the Army Russian Institute at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, for advanced Russian studies. You had to have an ongoing assignment to the Soviet Union in order to be selected as the one State Department officer who would get that training for the year, the academic year, and so I had my ongoing assignment to the Political Section in Moscow to do Soviet foreign policy. It was a bit like winning the lottery.

Q: How did you find that?

MILES: Oh, I thought it was excellent training. First of all, of course, it's an idyllic place to live. I mean, I give the Army full credit for selecting some of the best sites that the SS had owned. The SS was declared a criminal organization at the end of World War II and the American occupying power seized a good deal of SS property for its own use. We still had some of that property, including the facility used for the Army Russian Institute and the housing for the administration, the faculty and the students. You had to have a 3-3 level in Russian language to be accepted at Garmisch. The instructors were all émigré Russians and the classes were all taught in Russian; there were no classes in English. The Institute administration tried to conduct business in Russian, at least as best as they could, because you had some Germans in there and also some American officers and staff NCOs with only fair Russian. You were supposed to speak Russian 100 percent of the time, even in the appropriate extracurricular activities, until you were home, off duty. And the classes were—there were some actual language classes, but generally you were studying Soviet and Russian history, geography, economics, literature and so on, and those were all taught in Russian, so it was a fantastic experience. There were a few special sessions on Soviet military terminology, structure and weapons but more as a language acquisition tool than as professional military subjects. Anyhow, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I thought it was a fine program. The Army guys who went there, mostly captains and majors, had come out of a two-year course at Monterey, California, at the Defense Language Institute, which is why we civilians had to have the 3-3 in order to go to the Institute. Everyone except the State and USIA officers—there was one of each—stayed for two years at Garmisch, some of them going on to become defense attachés, most of them going back and supervising listening posts or DIA analyst positions. A very few people went to Detachment R, the so-called Potsdam Mission in East Germany. Later as we moved toward serious arms reduction agreements and monitoring with the Soviets, many Garmisch graduates were used either as members of our negotiating teams or as examiners out in the field. At this later stage in our relations, we had U.S. military officers stationed at weapons facilities in the Soviet Union just as the Soviets had their officers in the United States. But back in the 70s, there were only so many billets in the Soviet Union itself and that is one reason why the Army officers got this training. It was an effort on the part of the Army to bring them up to snuff on the real Russian language that they would be required to work with for much of their career. There were a few officers from other services and agencies there as well but mostly there were Army officers. So it was fascinating, really, plus the experience of simply living in Garmisch, one of the world's most beautiful places. As a family, we skied, skated, hiked and biked for a whole glorious year.

Q: Well, I think this is probably a good place to stop.

MILES: Yes, it probably is.

Q: And we'll pick this up in 19—

MILES: Yes, when I left in '76.

Q: Seventy-six?

MILES: Right.

Q: And we'll pick you up going to the Soviet Union.

MILES: Yes, that's good. Fine.

Q: Okay, today is the 22nd of March, 2007. Dick, you were in, what was it, Moscow?

MILES: Yes.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MILES: From the summer of 1976 until the summer of 1979.

Q: What sort of job did you have there?

MILES: I was in the Political Section. At that time the Section was divided—I think it still is divided—into two halves: an internal section and an external section. I was in the external section, which meant I was doing ordinary diplomatic work, trying to figure out what the Soviets were up to in the Middle East, Africa, Central America and a little bit with the United Nations—we didn't really focus on that very much—and then trying to explain U.S. policy in those parts of the world to Soviet colleagues and also to foreign diplomats. There were so many diplomats in Moscow; it was one of the few places where I have served where there truly was an international community.

Q: How would you describe, when you arrived in '76, relations between the Soviet Union and the United States?

MILES: Well, "arrived" is the operational word. This was still détente, the period of détente, and you heard good things about the relationship. For me, it was not an overtly hostile atmosphere in which to work. This was not true for many other members of the Embassy staff, of course. There was the usual skullduggery on the part of the KGB, the GRU [Main Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet military], and so on and you were constantly running up against the internal controls which the Soviet State had for decades imposed on its own people so you could not have close relationships, really, or if you did, you endangered the people that you were trying to have that relationship with. I'll give you an example of that later on. But '76, '77: this was pretty much a normal, reasonably benign period during the Cold War. In fact these were the waning days of détente, but people didn't quite know they were waning yet. The cooling of the relationship was

just over the horizon. And then toward the end of detente, in '78, '79, when a number of things happened, the relationship went downhill fast.

Q: We'll come to that.

MILES: Yes. So this is what changed while I was there.

Q: Okay. Firstly, who was the Ambassador and who was your initial chief? Sort of describe your impression of the Embassy and personalities there.

MILES: Well, Walter Stoessel was the Ambassador when I first arrived and I forget when he left but he wasn't there very long while I was there. A very nice fellow, I liked him. Very much old school but also with those wonderful, old school qualities of politeness, dignity and style. We've lost much of that in modern times. And then Mac Toon came. Toon was also old school but rather more aggressive, I would say, and more vocally opinionated than Stoessel, if I may say so.

In the Political Section, let me see, Marshall Bremont was Section Chief but only had a few months to go when I arrived. He was later Ambassador to Iceland. Then Tom Simons came as the Section Chief. He then went on to be Ambassador to Poland and Pakistan and is now retired, up at Harvard. And, gee, I'm trying to think who the external section chief was. Ted McNamara, who had a fine career afterward, was the head of the external section for a while.

Q: Yes, I'm interviewing Ted now.

MILES: Are you really? Well, give him my regards.

Q: I will.

MILES: And I'm trying to think who—he wasn't there the whole three years I was there, but I can't for the life of me recall who the other fellow was.

Q: Well, who—this was Brezhnev?

MILES: Yes, right.

Q: How was Brezhnev and some of the Politburo viewed at that time?

MILES: Well, Brezhnev was considered sort of a joke almost and we used to try to listen to his speeches; we'd hear them live on television or whatever and they were very hard to understand. I mean, he mumbled so and his words were slurred and it was clear that he was really losing it.

He was a smart enough fellow in the early days and powerful enough, but, boy, he was certainly beginning to lose it by the late 1970s. But in the external section, we were all pretty busy there in Moscow, and so we didn't wander off into each other's areas very much. In my work I hardly paid any attention to what Brezhnev did or didn't do or said or didn't say, but rather spent time with the Foreign Ministry people, with a few Soviet media people, with the academics in the

think tanks and so on. Quite a few people were accessible to us in that strangely closed world. You had to wait to get an appointment but almost always you would get it; there were very few people who wouldn't actually see you, and I met some interesting people at that time. I remember waiting almost three years for an appointment to see Aleksandr Dzasokhov, who was head of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization. By the way, that meeting was disappointing when it did take place. Years later, when I was in Georgia, Dzasokhov became President of the Republic of North Ossetia.

I tried hard, and quite unsuccessfully, to cultivate a relationship with a few experts in the Central Committee apparatus because there was a parallel structure in the Soviet Union at that time. There was a governmental apparatus and then there was the Party apparatus, which sort of paralleled it, including in foreign affairs, but I was never able to gain access to the Central Committee. They kept themselves aloof except for diplomats from the so-called "socialist camp". Anyhow, part of the fun of living in Moscow at that time was that you could eventually wear down the resistance of some people who really didn't much want to see you. Some Western visitors would just pop in for a few days, pop out again, and would never have a chance of seeing some of these people. But if you worked at it, cultivated people, developed a reputation for discretion, then, after it became known that you were a sensible person, in time, you could see some rather interesting people.

Q: Well, let's take a look now at how things were at the beginning and how they changed.

MILES: They did change; they did change.

Q: How did we view the Soviet Union? I mean, by hemisphere or by policy or what? I mean, as far as the international side?

MILES: Well, I think that all American government experts—the diplomats, the defense attachés, the Agency analysts—considered the Soviet Union to be a hostile power. But we didn't spend a lot of time talking about the communist threat or international communism or anything like that and we didn't see very much of the 1940s and 1950s style of subversive and violent activity. But we certainly followed and were sometimes concerned about what these people were doing abroad, especially in Third World countries. I didn't follow Soviet policy in the member states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Someone else did that and that was an interesting area too, but I was following Africa so I did the best I could to determine what the Soviets were up to in Africa. Well, they were very active in Africa at that time. And we fretted about that and we sent our reports back to Washington and then the experts in Washington fretted about it. Cuba at that time was sending medical people and military people into Angola and so I wanted to know what that amounted to, who was behind that, what were they thinking and doing, was this planned or coordinated with the Soviet Union, how effective were they, what were the South Africans doing about it, etc. It was all pretty heady stuff, really.

And we had good access to people who knew a lot about these things. Gromyko's son—a decent fellow although not nearly as bright as his father, the Foreign Minister—ran the African Institute and I used to hang out at the African Institute all the time. And the African Institute had responsibility, in an academic sense, for the entire continent of Africa, so it wasn't just Sub-

Saharan Africa, but it was North Africa and even the Middle East up to the Suez Canal. And then there was the Oriental Studies Institute which was then led by Yevgeny Primakov, who later became head of the intelligence service and Prime Minister, a very powerful person. He's still around, by the way. I saw him several times subsequently so we established a kind of distant relationship at that time because I'd also hang out in his institute and he'd see me in the hall sometimes and we'd say hello. I didn't have much to do with him personally but I met him and got to know him and that was very useful. And these institutes had very good people. The Oriental Studies Institute followed the Palestinian question and also what was happening in Iran. And of course as Iran became more and more tense and in turmoil because of the overthrow of the Shah, I began to focus more and more on Iran.

I also got to know, Sergo Mikoyan, the son of Anastas Mikoyan. Sergo was head of the Latin American Countries Institute and Editor in Chief of their scholarly journal. A very sweet man and one of the very few Soviet officials I dealt with that I would consider a friend.

In the external section, we then divided the geographical world up—sort of like cutting an orange into halves. And so I took Iran and everything to the west and Dale Herspring and, later, Peter Tomsen, took Afghanistan and everything to the east; then we kind of met somewhere around the globe, which was a pretty good division, to tell the truth. Always reminded me of the Treaty of Tordesillas. As time went on we also began to be more and more concerned about Afghanistan and what was going to be happening in Afghanistan. And we had big arguments within our own group but also with Embassy Kabul and with Washington about what we thought the Soviets might do vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Those were pretty heady times.

Q: Let's talk about Africa. Cuba seemed to be sort of the surrogate Soviet Union in Ethiopia, Angola and all. Did you see the Soviets or did we see the Soviets having a major policy toward there or were they just fishing in troubled waters?

MILES: Well, I personally spent a fair amount of time trying to figure that out, to try to determine to what degree Cuba was acting independently. For sure there would have to be some vague coordination at the top but what kind of coordination? Would it just be informing each other what the other would be doing or would it be closer: "Why don't you get involved with the Angolans and we'll stay involved over here somewhere else?" Or, "Can we help pay for the transport of your people across the Atlantic Ocean or whatever?" We never figured out the degree to which Cuban activities were coordinated, if at all, by the Soviet Union. We assumed that there was this basic level of information sharing and an implicit acceptance of burden sharing in what they were trying to do but it was never clear to us the degree to which this was really worked out by the big shots and a plan drawn up of "You do this at this time and place and we'll do this at this time and place and we'll help you do this and you can help us do that." That was never clear to us and we tried hard to find out more about it but we were never very successful in that.

Q: When you went to the African Institute, what sort of answers were you getting?

MILES: Well, they weren't very forthcoming on what the Soviet Union was up to. They were totally unforthcoming on what anybody else might be up to—the Cubans, for example. They, of

course, focused to a large degree on what we and the British and the French were doing, and so they imagined or professed to imagine all sorts of nefarious plots and conspiracies there. So I did spend a good deal of time trying to bat some of that down and put it in perspective. I spent a fair amount of time working on Horn of Africa issues and of course Egypt fell within the sphere of the African Institute too. There was a great shift, you recall, at that time, when Egypt ceased to have the Soviet Union as a patron and turned to us as a patron. And a very similar thing happened in the Horn of Africa with Somalia and Ethiopia. These were seismic shifts, so I tended to focus more on things that were actually happening rather than trying to ferret out what the Soviets might be up to in a particular country or in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example. They were active and they were spending a fair amount of money. It was something we did try to keep an eye on, but in a general way.

The African diplomats, by the way, at least at my level, were pretty much worthless in trying to help us scope out some of these activities. They just—they either knew nothing or they were busy selling icons or dabbling in black market currency exchange, or they were indeed doing things with the Soviet Union that they didn't want known and they certainly weren't about to tell an American diplomat about it. So while they were friendly enough, and Sharon and I attended some fantastic parties at the homes of these young African diplomats, it was all pretty much a worthless exercise in terms of actually learning anything.

Q: Let's turn to the Middle East. Did you sense an unease or discomfort in the fact that the Egyptians got onboard? It was Camp David and all that sort of American diplomatic energy. This must have been quite a shock to them.

MILES: The diplomats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were more guarded, but people in the African Institute had long since been disillusioned by Nasser and Sadat. My Soviet colleagues simply felt they were being taken for a ride. By Soviet standards, they were spending large amounts of money on the Egyptian military and some grandiose economic assistance projects and they were getting precious little in return for it. So I don't think the falling out with Egypt was a big shock to them. What they expressed to me was a considerable annoyance at the Egyptians for doing this so abruptly, just walking away from them. And they also expressed a kind of cynicism about the degree to which we would be willing to spend the kind of money that would be necessary to keep the Egyptians on our side. I remember one of them saying to me, "Do you Americans really have so much money that you can afford to have Egypt as a friend and an ally?" And I said, "Yes, you bet! Egypt being what it is and located where it is; yes, we can afford it and yes, we will spend the necessary money." That proved to be very true although my Soviet colleagues were right: it does cost a lot of money to have the Egyptians as friends.

Q: Okay. You were there; the Shah was going downhill rapidly and went down. What were you picking up about the Soviet view of Iran?

MILES: Well, that was some of the most interesting work I did, I think, and I really liked the Russian diplomats that I dealt with at that time. I felt they were serious people and not particularly ideological, and they had a dog in the fight because of their geographic location, you know. They had a long common border with Iran, and they were interested in Iran because of that and also because we were interested in Iran. But it was not an ideological struggle. There

was not really any kind of a Communist Party in Iran. The Shah was as anti-communist as anyone on earth, and Ayatollah Khomeini was close behind him if not ahead of him on that score. So ideology didn't really enter into it; the Iran problem was one on which they could be a little more objective and a little more willing to enter into discussions. And so I had some good discussions with them.

The fear was, and I shared that fear, one of misapprehension on either side. For example, the Soviets feared that we would intervene militarily to prop the Shah up. We already had a strong military assistance program in Iran. We had military and other advisors and so on, but we didn't have any particular troop presence in Iran, so the Soviets were afraid that we would try to insert a troop presence in some way right on their southern border, which they didn't like. They wouldn't like it now—the Russians wouldn't like it now—and the Soviets didn't like it then. Our fear was something of a mirror image of that—that they might think we were going to intervene and would pre-empt us by inserting a Soviet military presence. And, as you know, there was a precedent for that back during World War II, when Stalin sent the Red Army in and occupied northern Iran for quite a while. They later declared a government there and only withdrew under a certain amount of pressure. So there was kind of a precedent. And it would be easy to do, logistically. The terrain is such that you can in fact do that relatively easily. And so my Soviet colleagues and I spent a certain amount of time trying delicately to feel each other out and in a way wanting to be able to reassure our respective bosses that there was no such planning—that there was sensitivity and unease, but that there was no real planning for a pre-emptive move on either side. I don't overestimate the role that I was playing. For one thing, I wasn't privy to any plans that we might have had to help the Shah militarily. But in my reading of the tea leaves, this was not something that we were gearing up to do. So maybe to some degree that objective dialog at a working level helped to keep the two sides calmed down and helped to prevent any hotheads from doing something we all might later have regretted.

Q: Well, in a way, when you're a diplomat in a situation like that—I mean, obviously your antennae are out trying to figure out what the hell the Soviets are up to. But somebody at the Soviet Embassy had to be trying to figure out what the Americans were up to, you know, back in Washington.

MILES: Oh sure, yes.

Q: And were you comfortable in assuring them we wouldn't put troops in or were you—?

MILES: Well, I wouldn't use the word, "assuring". After all, I was just discussing the situation with my Soviet colleagues. I wasn't delivering demarches or anything. But these were serious discussions albeit at the working level. In preparation for them I did read all the traffic I could get my hands on and I had to our defense attachés and others in the Embassy. Of course, real war planning is something you don't get into at the working level—or even higher than that. In my experience, only a small handful of people know precisely that offensive military action is about to happen. I did experience one exception to that rule. When we were about to go to war with Serbia in 1999; I did know that military action was imminent. In fact, we used the steps toward war which NATO was taking as a form of pressure on Milosevic to do what we wanted him to do vis-à-vis Kosovo.

However, I can also remember when we had the invasion, or whatever you want to call it, of Grenada. I was in the Politico-Military Bureau at that time and a Marine colonel who was working for me called up one of his military friends down in Florida who had some commanding role in that part of the world. His friend was out on the golf course at the time and it turned out in this guarded telephone conversation that he knew absolutely nothing about the imminent intervention in Grenada. The fellow from my office said something like, “John, are you aware of anything special that’s going on in your neck of the woods right now?” And “John”, whoever he was, a general, said, “No, no. I’m out on the golf course—a beautiful day here in Florida, and everything seems to be quiet.” My officer said, “I think you’d better look over your shoulder at the Atlantic Ocean and see if you can see or smell some stack gas over there, on the horizon. You’d better get back to your headquarters and do some looking around.” And so that was the first that this general, who had some responsibility for military operations in that area, found out that we were about to invade Grenada. So you don’t always know.

And events, as you remember, events in Iran happened very rapidly. I remember getting a copy of a cable that Embassy Paris had sent out because Ayatollah Khomeini was living in Paris at that time, and the reporting officer very nicely described the Ayatollah’s ideas and his thoughts and plans about getting ready to return to Iran because of this turmoil. And my boss at that time circled the subject line about the Ayatollah and sent it down to me with a little note saying, “Dick, who or what is an ayatollah?” And I wrote back and said, “Well, you know, we all probably should start learning these things.” And I was more prescient than I thought. I didn’t know, of course, that within about two weeks the Shah would flee the country, the Ayatollah would return, and a whole new chapter of Iranian and world history would begin to unfold.

There is an interesting denouement to my comments on Iran. At that time, when we shredded classified documents, the shredder cut them into long, narrow strips. They were not shredded into tiny, unreadable bits of paper the way they are nowadays. So, after the radical students had taken over the Chancery in Tehran, they gathered all these piles of shredded “strips” and laboriously matched and pasted those strips together, and they reconstructed quite a few of the classified cables and reports that had been in the Embassy files. Then they issued a set of books—14 volumes, actually—called “Documents from the Nest of Spies”. Several of the classified cables that I wrote from Moscow were in there, recounting my conversations with Soviet diplomats and other Soviets about the situation in Iran. I had, of course, sent copies to our embassy in Tehran and these had been duly filed away. I bought a set of those books and I can tell you that I read those cables very, very carefully to see if I had burned my Soviet colleagues in any way or if I had said things that were over the top. And, I’m very happy to say, they held up quite well.

Q: Well, you had left, I guess, by the time the hostages were taken? No, no, that was—

MILES: Yes, the students took over the Chancery in November 1979 and I had left earlier that year, in the summer. So I missed that and also the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December. However, my wife Sharon and I were in the Embassy in Moscow when Spike Dubs was killed in Kabul. That happened in February 1979. Before Ambassador Dubs went to Kabul he had been the DCM in Moscow so he still had a lot of friends in Moscow.

Q: Did people like the Syrians and all—did they play much of a role? Not in the Iranian thing but just in the Arab-Israeli conflict?

MILES: We were very interested in what the Syrians thought. They had good diplomats; it was a professional foreign service and they were among the people that I stayed in touch with. I also stayed in touch with the Yemeni diplomats, who were very knowledgeable about regional events. I really liked the way the Yemenis made coffee. Often I would see the Yemeni Ambassador. Moscow is such a big place that our ambassador just didn't have time to pay attention to everyone and many of these foreign embassies were small. The Yemeni Embassy probably had no more than five or six people in it, so when I'd go over, I'd often be received by the Ambassador and it was usually the deputy that I saw in the Syrian Embassy. He was a very sensible person. This was an interesting time in Moscow because, while I was there, the situation turned 180 degrees around with regard to our relationship with the Egyptians and also with our relationship with the Ethiopians and the Somalis. So when I started my assignment in 1976, I was on reasonably good terms with the Ethiopians and not with the Somalis. With the Egyptians, prior to the shift, I had not had much of a relationship at all but, after the shift, I developed a very close relationship with the Egyptians, including the Egyptian Chargé, Farouk Shelbaya. He later came to Washington, was deputy at their embassy here in Washington, a very nice fellow. And I remember being in his apartment in Moscow when we both listened together to the famous speech when Sadat had gone over to Israel and had addressed the Israeli Knesset. Truly, that was a dramatic moment and it was an honor to be able to sit there with the Egyptian Chargé and listen to that speech.

Q: Were the Soviets concerned about what was happening at Camp David, you know, our strong involvement in the Middle East peace process?

MILES: I just don't recall the Soviet reaction to Camp David. I'm sure it was high on my agenda at the time, but, unfortunately, my memory is blank. I expect the Soviets were going through a confusing period trying to construct a revised Middle East policy from the wreckage left after they were ousted from Egypt. Egypt is such an important place, and to suddenly be replaced by the United States, that was quite a blow to their prestige. Of course, they retained their influence with the various Palestinian liberation organizations. But, in terms of state to state relationships, the "loss" of Egypt was a body blow.

Q: In a way, when you look at it, what would be in it for the Soviets in the Middle East?

MILES: Well, depending on which country you're talking about, the Middle East was either on or very close to Soviet borders, so there was a security angle there. We seem to have difficulty understanding Soviet and, now, Russian, sensitivity to their borders. The Middle East also provided the Soviets an increased capability either to keep things stable or unstable, depending on how they wanted to play the issues. Tension kept the West off balance and it also promoted the prospects for arms sales. An enormous quantity of armor, artillery, aircraft and air defense systems and small arms and ammunition were sold to the Egyptians. Training was provided as well. And of course Egypt is a strategically located country, sitting on the Suez Canal and on the Mediterranean Sea the way it is. It's had a strategic location for five or six thousand years.

Politically it meant a lot to the Soviets. Egypt was still important in the Non-Aligned Movement. But mainly, I think if their influence had been replaced by that of France or Italy, it wouldn't have bothered them nearly as much as it did to see their influence replaced by that of the United States. They do tend to think in terms of a zero sum game.

Q: This was your first time in the Soviet Union?

MILES: Yes.

Q: What was our—I realize you weren't dealing in internal affairs, but what was your impression of the system and how things were being handled? Did you get around at all?

MILES: I made a few trips, but I didn't travel a lot in the Soviet Union at that time. My work was pretty much in Moscow. My wife Sharon worked for the Information Agency while we were in Moscow and, actually, she traveled quite a bit. I remember going to Dushanbe in early 1979, down in Tajikistan. I was trying to ferret out what the locals thought about what was happening in Afghanistan which was only—the border was only about 150 kilometers from Dushanbe and Dushanbe was only 450 kilometers from Kabul, itself. Now, to a man—from the party and republic and city officials to the Grand Mufti of the Islamic community and on down to the taxi drivers and the market vendors—the Tajiks professed to have no knowledge of Afghanistan whatsoever. “Afghanistan?” they would say. “Is that where...,” with the meaning of, “Is it on the moon or something?” They absolutely did not want to talk about Afghanistan with an American diplomat. Well, this ubiquitous silence was itself cause for concern. Clearly there was tension in the air. But as far as specific information was concerned, the trip was totally worthless. Of course, it was very interesting to be there as a tourist, but that was not the purpose of my trip.

I remember one of those lovely Foreign Service moments from that trip sitting outdoors on a “*topjon*”—a raised wooden platform—under the “*chinar*” trees. We call them plane trees. I was the guest of the Grand Mufti. The mosque was there, snowcapped mountains in the background—a beautiful day sitting there with our shoes off on Oriental carpets with lamb stew and tea and melons and so forth, just beautiful. And, of course, I wanted to talk about Afghanistan and also about Islam in Tajikistan. However, the first question the Grand Mufti had was whether the Senate would ratify the SALT-II agreement once it was reached. He had been primed by his KGB masters just as I had been primed, but unfortunately we wanted to talk about totally different subjects. Would have made a good movie scene.

One had the impression before going to the Soviet Union that it was a very formidable place, a world power, a nuclear power. After you were there a while, you could appreciate the resources and the power of the State and the size of the country. I remember being impressed just with the size of Moscow. Moscow is an enormous city and has a great subway system, very broad streets, tall buildings and so on. Some people thought that the massive size of the streets and buildings was to make people feel small and intimidated; I simply think that Russians think on a grand scale. But then, living there in those days—the mid-1970s—you began to see things that made you realize that things were not as they seemed, that this was not as powerful a state as they would have you believe. I remember early on, taking my kids out to the Park of National Economic Achievements—this was a permanent fairground near the outskirts of Moscow. Each

of the member republics had a pavilion out there and they would display their wares. There would be a display of melons from Uzbekistan or a display of textiles from Estonia, whatever, and also exhibits of technical things. They had a model of the first satellite, the Sputnik, and so forth. So it was kind of exciting. OK, fine. And then the kids had to go to the bathroom, of course, so we took them into the public toilets there, and beside each toilet was a little stack of torn up squares of *Pravda*. I mean, they didn't even have toilet paper. An old Russian lady was actually snipping up the back copies of *Pravda* into little six or eight inch squares that she stacked very neatly next to each toilet. Well, at least the little squares were there. In many parts of Moscow and all around the Soviet Union, there were no little squares even of *Pravda*. I mean, everyone quickly learned to bring their own Kleenex or toilet paper in their pocket or purse when they went out traveling. And so, little things like that made you realize that this place was maybe not the industrial giant it was cracked up to be.

It was not easy to just travel freely in those days. We diplomats had to submit a diplomatic note if we wanted to go further than, as I recall, 25 kilometers from the center of Moscow. Because of détente, there had been a tiny liberalization in this travel regime. If you didn't get a negative answer to your dip note back from the Soviet travel people, you had permission to go. This actually did make travel easier although sometimes not. Sharon once took a five or six hour plane ride out to Akademgorodok to deliver some mail to a couple of American scientists out there. When the plane landed a guard armed with a sub-machine gun came on board and told her to stay in her seat. Everyone else got off and then the guard said that she did not, in fact, have permission to make this trip and that she would have to return to Moscow. The plane then returned to Moscow with her on board as the sole passenger. Admittedly this didn't happen very often.

There were a couple of spots near Moscow including one nice stretch of river bank which were available to the diplomats for recreation. The Embassy maintained an old dacha and grounds within the travel circle, and there were a couple of other spots available for picnicking. Except for our dacha, we found these places depressing because Soviets were excluded and we tended to avoid them. In short, one felt very hemmed in by the Soviet travel restrictions.

Because of the restrictive nature of Soviet society, Sharon and I had very few relationships that approached friendship. Sharon had more than I did because of her work in the field of exchanges and of culture but even then, we were careful about who we invited to our apartment. In the three years that we were there I don't suppose we entertained more than a handful of Soviets. I think the only Soviet that we had a real friendship with was a young radio announcer for what was called Radio Peace and Progress. It was kind of the Soviet equivalent of RFE or RL and technically was separate from the Soviet government. But I found out through him that when he lined up to get his pay, he got it from the same people that paid the employees of the ordinary state radio, so it was all just kind of a sham. I met him at one of the seemingly constant parties thrown by the young African diplomats. He was there because he was one of the broadcasters in English and Swahili over Radio Peace and Progress. And somehow we got to know each other. We'd be invited to the same parties and we enjoyed talking to each other. Sharon and I gave parties too, and we invited him over a couple of times. That turned out to be a mistake. For him, getting close to my wife and me was an unauthorized relationship. Because of his work, he was allowed, even encouraged, to have a relationship with the African diplomats and to go to their

apartments and parties but he wasn't allowed to have a relationship with American diplomats. So at first his boss was warned by the KGB that this fellow was seeing me, an American diplomat, and that this was not desirable. His boss, who seemed like a decent person, although I never met him, was told to tell my friend to back away from this relationship with the Americans. He didn't back off. Then my friend was called in and asked whether or not he liked his job. If he wanted to keep it, he should back off. Nonetheless he kept our friendship going and then he was told something like, "The next step for you could be prison but what we probably will do with you is just send you out into exile somewhere 'beyond the mountains', as we say, and you can think about your sins out there. You will not be coming back to Moscow the rest of your life and so, if that is what you want, just go and see this American diplomat once again." So at that point he decided he would have to break it off. And I remember very vividly the last time he came to our apartment. He was crying; this grown man was crying. He came just in order to say goodbye to us, and it was a very sad business. He was visibly unhappy, was crying, thought he lived in a lousy system, and what kind of a place was this where you couldn't have a normal relationship with a foreigner. I forget how we had come together for that last meeting, but I remember distinctly driving him back to a place near his apartment in the early morning, it was like 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning after a night of drinking and crying in our apartment. I actually had him hide in the space between the rear seat and the front seat of the car so he wouldn't be seen by the building guards at the exit from our apartment parking lot—probably I brought him in the same way, I don't remember—and then I drove in a kind of a roundabout way through town and dropped him off quickly at a metro stop where he scurried down into the metro and went on his way. I never saw him again, but I heard from my African friends that he had been removed from the radio station and was working as a translator for fishing talks between the Soviet Union and West African coastal countries. That was the kind of a place that it was, even under Brezhnev.

There is an ironic twist to that story. At that time there was an American government program in which officers could buy books to give to Soviet acquaintances and you could get reimbursed for it by one of the information agency officers. I did this fairly often. Well, at one time my friend told me that his sister, who didn't live in Moscow, was studying the works of the American author Thomas Wolfe, the North Carolina Thomas Wolfe, and how hard it was for her to do her graduate work because all his books were in the "closed collection" and she had to get a pass signed and stamped in order to go into the closed collection. She could read the books there, take notes and then leave the books there, but she couldn't take the books out. Of course, this was a hellishly slow process for someone trying to write a dissertation. And I said, "Oh, we can fix that." So I bought him every paperback Thomas Wolfe novel available—it made a handsome, heavy, big box of books—and handed them over to him. He was absolutely delighted and, of course, his sister was more than delighted. Then I went to get my money back from the information agency's book procurement person, and this snotty woman, I will never forget it, sent me a note back saying, "We are unable to reimburse you for these books because Thomas Wolfe does not present a positive picture of American life." Isn't that ironic? And in the Soviet Union, too. Bureaucracy everywhere.

Q: That pretty well wipes out a whole generation of writers. I mean, you know, Dreiser, F. Scott Fitzgerald.

MILES: Or Mark Twain. I mean, good lord, I'm not quite sure who you'd have left if that's your criterion.

Q: Did you have any particular problems with harassment by the KGB or anything?

MILES: Not really. Once I was held under—I don't know what you'd call it—office arrest, I guess. It was innocent and, in retrospect, was kind of funny. Sharon and I were fairly active in getting around in Moscow. I enjoyed the hell out of it; I just thought it was a wonderful thing to be an American diplomat in the Soviet Union. Anyhow, I had an appointment. I was successful in getting an appointment over at the Soviet bureaucratic equivalent of USAID—GKES, they called it, *Gosudarstvenniy Komitet po Vneshnim Ekonomicheskim Svyazyam*, or the State Committee for Foreign Economic Ties. It covered a building about the size of the Pentagon. I mean, it was an enormous building and no American that I knew had ever been over there before. So I went to where I thought I was supposed to go. The drivers didn't know either. They had never taken an American there so they didn't know which entrance I should use. So I went to this enormous two block square building, went in one of the entrances and the guard there—you had to announce who you were to the guards at all these official buildings, show him your pass and say who you were there to see and so on. Well, in this case, the guard looked at me like I had crawled out from under a rock. He was armed, of course, and he said, "Sit here!" Then he began a long series of phone calls. Meanwhile I kept noticing my African and Middle Eastern and some Latin American military friends from the various embassies come strolling in wearing their uniforms and looking at me very strangely like, "What are you doing here?" And then I found out—I really didn't know—that there were two halves of GKES, this Soviet aid organization. There was the civilian half and then there was the military half. Needless to say, I was in the military half and I was definitely not supposed to be there. So the poor civilian bureaucrat that I was supposed to be meeting had to come all the way around the outside of the building—I guess there wasn't a connection between the two halves of the building inside. He had to come all the way out and around the building to get me. He was a little bit pissed off because he thought I had done this deliberately. Anyhow, he escorted me back around to his side of the building where we had a fairly short and uncomfortable conversation. I hope that poor fellow didn't get demoted for my mistake but, still, this was kind of funny.

But no, I personally wasn't bothered or harassed much. Others were; some severely so. At that time, you'd have to call the Soviet Union a police state. I mean, it wasn't terrible like the times of the political trials in the '30s, '40s and '50s. That period of severe repression had ended. But the KGB and the other police and "competent organs", as they called themselves, did keep an eye on things. They had so many people and they were so fearful of contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners that you kept running into them. Sharon worked in the cultural affairs section, and she would be out with poets and jazz musicians, free spirits who in those balmy days of détente were not so concerned about the police and their contacts, and she was constantly being hustled out of an apartment or a, I wouldn't call it a nightclub, but a club or some equivalent because they had heard that the police were on their way to check IDs and it would be better for everyone if she were not there.

And then I remember one incident with our son Richard. He was then about 12 years old, I guess, and he had developed a good friendship with a number of Soviet boys and maybe some

girls too but mostly young boys, because when we first were assigned to our apartment we were in the middle building of three identical, brand new buildings. They were 16 story buildings, probably with 40 or 50 apartments in each building. Foreigners and diplomats mostly were in the middle building, but in the other two buildings there were Soviet managerial types, military officers, upper middle class people by their standards, which is sort of where we would fit in. And because the buildings were new when we moved in, the parking lot was not finished and they hadn't completed the fence around our building yet—a fence designed to keep people out. So, children being children, the kids proceeded to make friends without regard for citizenship and so on. From Norway and Belgrade, our son had learned that one way to make friends was to take his Matchbox cars outside and just begin playing with them. For the other young boys in the neighborhood, this was like exposing flowers to bees. The process did play hell with his Matchbox collection since the cars tended to disappear, but it was a good way to make friends. Russians are inherently friendly and hospitable people and Richard would be invited up to the Soviet kids' apartments for tea or soup or whatever and we didn't try to interfere with any of that. We didn't try to exploit it; we didn't try to interfere with it. So he quickly developed a number of friends and they had a lot of fun together, including some weird Soviet-type experiences. He told me once later, I didn't know it at that time, but some drunks who were sitting outside one of the nearby apartment buildings to play chess and drink decided to build a fire. Then they put an old door on top of the bonfire and would lift the little boys up and have them dance on top of the door. I'm glad I didn't know anything about that at the time.

But one incident that I did know about was this. Some of the boys had been used to coming into our building, and a couple of them had been up in our apartment, so they continued trying to do it even after the fence went up. They would climb over the fence or under the fence or through the fence or whatever, and they would come on in. The police, the KGB basically, who stood guard in front of our apartment building, kept trying to chase them out and would talk to their parents to keep them out of the building where the foreigners lived. And so at one point the police actually conducted a little boy raid. They blocked the doors and conducted a kind of raid through the stairwell and the hallways of the building. They rounded up about 10 or 12 of these little boys and took them off to the police station. Then they systematically called their parents, one after the other, to come down and pick up their kid and get a lecture about keeping their kids away from these foreigners. By then our son spoke fairly decent Russian; I mean, he learned it all from these Russian kids so it sounded Russian. Well, they finally got around to him and they said, "Where does your papa work?" And of course he was scared out of his wits; he said his father worked at the American Embassy. The cop probably thought, "Uh, oh! Somebody's going to get it for sure!" And then he said, "Well, what does he do?"—thinking he was one of the Soviet local employees of the Embassy. And our son said, "I don't know; he's a diplomat." Oh boy! All of a sudden they sat him on the desk; they went out and bought him ice cream; they asked if there was anything he needed; they drove him home. And they asked him if he would please not tell anybody about it. Of course he did tell us, but they had treated him very well; there was no rough stuff or anything so we never raised any fuss about it. But that just shows you the extent to which contact with foreigners was controlled.

There is another amusing story involving our children and their close relationship with Soviet society. Moscow was so safe in those days that we let our kids ride the public transportation all around the city. The trolleybus that connected the Chancery and our house ran by Gorky Park

and our children would often get off there and explore the park. Our son Richard became friends with the fellow who ran what we would call the bumper car concession. Now in Moscow, people didn't bump into the other cars during their ride; they just drove around clockwise in a big circle. Anyhow, the concession manager let our son stay on the public address system and call out every few minutes, "*Na levo, na levo, tovarishchi, na levo!*" Imagine! The son of an American diplomat urging the good Soviet citizenry and their children to "Stay to the left, comrades, stay to the left!" This was our son's first "job" and, even though he was only paid in "*ponchiki*" [Russian donuts], he was very proud of his job.

Here's one more story. Embassy officers used to go to these Znaniye [Knowledge] Society lectures. These were held frequently and what they were was a public meeting in a public building. There would be an announced speaker on a particular topic. All sorts of different people would give these lectures: sometimes someone from the Central Committee apparatus, sometimes a professor from a university, or maybe someone who had just written a book or had come back from living in Ethiopia or Somalia or some place. He or she would talk about it and then would answer questions from the audience. Since these lectures and especially the follow-on question and answer sessions gave us a rare glimpse into Soviet public opinion, someone from the American Embassy would try to attend each one of these lectures. We didn't ask questions; we tried to be very quiet and discreet. After the lecture, people would write their questions on a piece of paper and pass them up front where a moderator would select those that the speaker would then try to answer. Sometimes the questions were quite blunt, even provocative, and sometimes the speaker would answer in an equally blunt way. Sometimes the moderator, who was, after all, a Party official, would look at the slip of paper and say, "Comrades, this is a very provocative question and not suitable for this forum," and he would toss it aside, wouldn't even read it out loud and so you thought, "What the hell was that? I would love to know what that was." But anyhow, it was the closest thing in the Soviet Union to a public forum, so we would sit there and take notes of these questions and answers, and they always made an interesting cable.

I was sitting there one evening at the main building used by the Moscow Znaniye Society, which, incongruously or maybe deliberately, was located cater-corner from the KGB headquarters, the famous Lubyanka building. There were maybe 200 people in the hall. People would be assigned to come to these lectures from their apartment building, their block area, or they would be assigned to come from the organization or from the factory shop where they worked. They were supposed to take notes and report back to the organization which had sent them in the first place. It was part of the required political work that everybody had to do from time to time. Well anyhow, I was sitting there taking my notes and this young kid sitting next to me, he was probably 16, 17 years old, was just fascinated with what I was doing. I don't know, maybe he just realized I was a foreigner, dressed like a foreigner or whatever, and so at the end of the event he asked if I were a Russian? And I said, "No, I'm not. I'm a foreigner." And he asked, "Well what kind of a foreigner? Where are you from?" And I said, "I'm American." And he asked, "What are you doing here?" Not hostile but just curious. Anyhow, there was no secret to it. I said, "I'm from the American Embassy. We attend these affairs and I'm interested in what's going on in your country." So he said, "I am really interested in America. Can we go somewhere and talk?" I said I really didn't think it was a good idea for him to do that: his teachers and his parents wouldn't like it and the authorities wouldn't like it. He said, "No, no, it's okay, times

have changed, and it's not like the old days." I said, "Well, in many ways it's still like the old days and, no, I'm not going to go and talk to you somewhere." Then he asked, "How are you going home?" I said that I would take the trolleybus and he said, "Can I get on the bus with you and ride to your home? We can talk on the bus." And I said, "Well, I can't prevent you getting on the bus if you want to do so." So he did and we had a fairly good chat. He was just curious: how much does a worker make in the United States? Does everybody have a car? What does a car cost? Can you have a cow? You know, that kind of thing.

And then we got to where I was going, to where I lived, and I said, "Now I'm going to say goodbye to you here and thank you for the conversation." I never did tell him my name. And anyhow, he said, "Can I come up and see your apartment? I would really like to see an American apartment." And I said, "Look, I hate to be the one to tell you these things but you don't live in a society in which this is tolerated. This kind of curiosity is just going to get you in trouble. I'm sorry but, no, I'm not going to take you in and show you my apartment." He got very upset and said, "You don't understand our society. We are changing; we are not like we used to be." I said, "I'm sorry. I think I do know enough about your society to know that this would not be good for you and, no, I'm not going to do it." Well, that was not a very happy encounter. So you kept having experiences like that all the time in the Soviet Union. Restaurants and trains were just about the only places where you could have a conversation with an ordinary citizen. That was because everyone knew that these were chance encounters and most unlikely ever to be repeated.

Now, people who were trying to ferret out state secrets, like our defense attachés or whatever, or the people who were doing the internal affairs work, where they were in touch with the so-called "*otkazniki*" or refuseniks or the dissidents and so on, they were harassed a lot by the authorities. I mean, to the point of people breaking in, well, entering their apartments and making sure they knew that they had been entered, using the toilet and not flushing it or leaving a cigarette butt in an ash tray or even in a cup and saucer of coffee which they had made for themselves. They just wanted our people to know that they were there. But that kind of a thing, well I don't doubt for a minute that our apartment was searched periodically, the telephones tapped and all that. We assumed all that and it just didn't bother us a whole lot. This was the Soviet Union, after all. But while other people in the Embassy absolutely were harassed, we were not. Because we knew that the apartment was bugged, we had to warn our children not to talk openly about their Russian friends—to call them by name or to mention what their parents did for a living—to protect their friends from getting into trouble with the Soviet authorities. That was a real hardship because we, like most American parents, wanted our children to share their experiences with us and to be open about discussing their activities.

This was also the time when the Soviets bombarded the Embassy with microwaves and we and others in the Embassy were rather concerned about that. The microwaving of the Embassy had been going on for several years but it became public knowledge only while I was still at Garmisch. There were two of us who were going on to Moscow from Garmisch: Marilyn Johnson, a senior USIA officer, and me. The Department gave us the option of backing out of the assignment if we wanted to, but neither of us wanted to do that: we both wanted to go on to Moscow. Sharon wasn't happy about it, but she went along with it and so we did go to Moscow. I don't think our family ever suffered any health problems as a result of the microwaving that was still going on, but there was a big fuss in the State Department about this because a lot of

people—particularly pregnant women—felt that their health was impaired by that microwaving and even Ambassador Stoessel’s health was felt by many to be impaired by the microwaving. When the Johns Hopkins study, which the State Department paid for, came out and in essence said there was no real evidence of a direct link between the microwaving, which definitely had gone on, and the health problems, which definitely had occurred, there was great skepticism among the Moscow Embassy veterans. I’m skeptical about this study myself, to be blunt. Sharon and I attend an annual reunion of people who were in the Embassy at the time of the big fire there. At this gathering people still talk about the health problems which they firmly believe were caused or at least exacerbated by the microwaving.

Q: At the time you had left, how had things developed with American-Soviet relations?

MILES: Well, by 1979, things had begun to deteriorate. I can’t point to any one thing that would provide clear evidence of the deterioration of the relationship or even a cause of the deterioration but, with hindsight, you can see that the impending invasion of Afghanistan was a major factor. As you remember, the Soviets went into Afghanistan in a big way in December of ’79, five or six months after I left, but the turmoil in Afghanistan was such that we all felt that there was an increasing possibility of Soviet military intervention long before that. Actually, in the Embassy in Moscow, we didn’t think that way at first and we used to have stiff arguments about it with our colleagues in the American Embassy in Kabul. But by mid-1979, when the objective situation in Afghanistan was seriously beginning to change for the worse and when you could see that the Soviets were increasingly concerned, the chances for intervention had clearly increased rather than decreased. Up until 1979 or thereabouts, Embassy Moscow felt that the Soviets probably would not intervene because it would destroy détente, which was very important to the Soviets and because intervention carried certain risks. Any military adventure of that sort carries its risk, as we know—or should know. It does seem to be a difficult lesson to learn, doesn’t it? Embassy Kabul had been saying all along, “Well, that all may be true, but we see the signs here of serious and worsening internal difficulties and commensurate Soviet concern and we rate the probability of intervention as high.” The Soviets had already sold some armor and other equipment to Afghanistan; they had quite a few military advisors there, plus there was the fact that Afghanistan was on the Soviet border. The significance of that last point also seems to be something that Washington policy makers have a very hard time absorbing. So without being able to say that Embassy Moscow saw this clearly in, let’s say, 1978, we did come around in 1979. So the Soviet invasion in December 1979 was probably not a great surprise. And we were right about one thing. The invasion certainly tore détente in half and it never really recovered after that.

Q: You were in Moscow, I believe, when Spike Dubs was killed.

MILES: That’s right. Yes, I was.

Q: Of course Spike had been a Soviet hand.

MILES: And my predecessor in my job in Embassy Moscow was down there with him in Kabul, although, happily, not in the hotel room where Ambassador Dubs was killed.

Q: And I heard talk through interviews that many people point a very firm finger towards the KGB as far as the killing goes.

MILES: I've read several accounts of that incident and they perhaps could have restrained the Afghan authorities from all that shooting and saved his life. I mean, they were shooting into a closed room so—

Q: Yes, but also that he was shot by what appeared to be a Soviet weapon. But you know who knows? But the point being, while you were there, what was the—was there any sort of supposition about the killing of Spike? Why he was killed?

MILES: Well, of course, Soviet weaponry is all over the world. I wouldn't read anything into that. And certainly the Soviets supplied the Afghans with weapons. But, no, I don't recall much speculation about the Ambassador's death. We did wonder whether it was a deliberate act or a bad accident or just recklessness on the part of the KGB or GRU or whoever was working with their Afghan friends. Anyhow, I'm not aware of any inside information that would indicate Soviet complicity in his murder or death.

RAYMOND ELLIS BENSON
Press/Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Moscow (1975-1979)

Raymond Benson was born in New York City in 1924. He served in the U.S. Army between WWII and the Korean War. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin and attended the Russian Institute at Columbia University. He joined the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1957. His overseas posts include, Zagreb, Belgrade, Hamburg, Turkey, and Moscow. Mr. Benson was interviewed by Robert Daniels in 2000.

Q: Then after Turkey in 1975, you finally got to Moscow.

BENSON: Yes, via a direct transfer. My predecessor had to leave, because of his next assignment, prior to my arrival. My availability for transfer was keyed to the arrival of my successor in Turkey, so there couldn't be an overlap in Moscow. So, they sent me to Moscow under TDY (temporary duty) orders for a week, 10 days. I went up in April, I guess it was, of 1975 and spent a week there, getting briefed and talking to my predecessor. Under my official transfer orders I went directly to Moscow from Ankara in June arriving June 21st--a day that will live in infamy, right?--to find Moscow in a state of great excitement because the Apollo-Soyuz link-up, they were about to blast off [Ed: launch for Apollo and Soyuz 19 was July 15. The two craft docked July 17; last undocking was July 19. Soyuz landed on July 21 and Apollo landed July 24, 1975] . So the place was full of newsmen, NASA officials. It never happened again, but it was appropriate to the time. It was a time of euphoria. Most people now, I suspect, wouldn't know it, and I think that we would forget it.

Q: You mean détente was flourishing.

BENSON: Well, 1975. You know who was in office here. But this was an event that was both literal and symbolic, the link-up and *stehofka*, handshake, in space. We had a space art exhibit opening soon after I arrived. They had one arranged by the Smithsonian--and they had one at the Smithsonian probably years later--as part of the NASA agreement. Of all things, it was put into some paragraph, and everybody paid attention to that one. It was a very interesting show.

It was a time of great confusion in the USIA office, I should say USIS office. Of all of the officers at USIS, Moscow and Leningrad that summer all but one were transferred. This is an absolute disastrous personnel upheaval. It's just all wrong. It included secretaries, I mean American secretaries.

Q: It just happened by coincidence?

BENSON: There's nothing coincidental about it. It was just bad, careless personnel planning. In the Foreign Service this cannot happen, should not. Two years prior somebody should have been calculating when peoples' tour expired. So during that summer the one person who would be returning to the post was on home leave, in Vermont, by the way.

Q: Who was that?

BENSON: Lynn Noah. He lives in Eden in the oldest asbestos mining area. He was gone that summer. And as my staff melted away and new ones came in, we literally didn't know where the files were. We would call Washington at the end of the day and ask them to find in the area office something that we thought might be there, because we couldn't find it in Moscow. Well, we got a good staff soon and put the place in order, but it was something else. The ambassador then was Walter Stoessel [Ed: who served from March 1974 to September 1976].

Q: What was his style of operation like?

BENSON: Well, I sensed it immediately, because of my unique security clearance situation. The arrangement with the Security people back to Washington again, I told them that this was something that I had to do; they didn't ask me to do it, was I would go into the Ambassador and say, "Have you read my file? Have you been informed? Do you know who I am?" And if not, I would tell him everything I could, and I would tell him, you know, "I have a sister here in Moscow, half-sister, whom I've never seen, never been in touch." And the Security people were very relaxed about that, and I said, "I do not intend at the beginning of my tour to look her up. I know the address. She lives in the same house I lived in when I was there from 1931 to 1933." The return address was on that envelope I got in Bethesda.

Q: Where was that address in Moscow?

BENSON: Well, it's the street that's the first street past Prospekt Mira heading in the same direction. It's (Name of Moscow Street). If you're heading toward the railroad station square, you go past the turn-off to Prospekt Myra. The next block you go in about 300 yards and there

are these high-rises, and she lives in one of them. So anyway, I told them, “Your attitude is relaxed. You’ve cleared me. I can go in and do whatever I want. If anything happens, you trust me to report to the embassy, to the security officers if there are some pressures being placed on me. I don’t think I have the nerves during my first tour there, during my tour there--I didn’t know how many I would have--to have a nice, warm relationship with my half-sister. I don’t know her family; I don’t know her mother, my father’s second wife; and I don’t know her husband. I don’t know anything. And I just sort of think I can handle that, and I would so tell the Ambassador.” They said, “It’s up to you,” and that’s what I told Stoessel. Well, it turned out that he had heard, and he had a few questions to ask. I don’t remember what they were, but he was clear in his mind when I had been there as a child, and what my father did. He was interested. He was a substantial expert in the field, went to school at Stanford, very bright. He was one of those, though slightly younger, who with Bohlen, Thompson and Kennan...

Q: This is Monday, May 8th, 2000, and we are returning to our conversation with Ray Benson. We are now coming back to chronological consideration of Ray’s career with his first arrival in Moscow in 1975 and his work under Ambassador Stoessel and Malcolm Toon.

BENSON: I think, Bill, we spoke a bit about my arrival as the Apollo-Soyuz mission was about to be launched, in a period of euphoria in Moscow at that time. Fill it in a bit when we get the final text about that early period. You asked, I think, when we were at the conclusion of that interview session, about Walter Stoessel, his mode of operation and so on. Now, Walter Stoessel was an old Russian hand, or Soviet hand. His knowledge of Russian was good, it was very good, and he worked at it. He got up early every day, he read the newspapers, and every day he read a bit in The Master and Margarita by Bulgakov. He spent a lot of time at it. He didn’t read very much every day, but he read every day. He was a very calm and very soft-spoken person, very gentle, very well mannered, and really a pleasure to work with. We spoke, maybe I’ve already mentioned this, we spoke soon after my arrival about my security file and I asked him if he was aware of all of the complications. He said he was. And I said that I would, of course, report anything untoward if I ever was aware of anything untoward--we were all expected to do that--but that I had not changed my mind since my last interview with the security people--I didn’t know if he knew about it, and it turned out he didn’t--in which I told them that I would not be looking up my half-sister until toward the end of my tour. He said, “Fine,” and I said, “When I think I might want to do that, I’ll speak with you first.” He said, “Fine,” and that’s the way we proceeded on that issue. He left, was transferred, replaced by Malcolm Toon [Ed: who presented his credentials on January 18, 1977 and served until October 1979], before that came to pass.

Malcolm Toon, who arrived--bless his heart--on New Year’s Eve of 1976, was a very different kind of person. His knowledge of Russian was, if anything, better than Walt Stoessel’s. It was really very good. I don’t think he read in Master and Margarita, but before he came to the office, he’d look through Pravda and would have Izvestia, which was an afternoon paper, read the evening before. He was well informed. He was a very aggressive person, could be irascible. His relations with the media were very, I shouldn’t say “in your face,” but were less gentle and genial than Walt Stoessel’s. The reason I mention this is because it was a tradition in Moscow to have a once-weekly press conference for Americans, Americans only, and we had a press corps of some size. So attitudes to the American press were quite visible almost immediately.

Q: When you say that Toon was confrontational, this was dealing with the American press or Soviet press people or both?

BENSON: Well, I was thinking of the American press, but Toon was extraordinarily confrontational in dealing with the Soviets period, not only the press corps.

Q: But wasn't that a period, as I recall, when détente was at its warmest?

BENSON: Détente is a *modus vivendi* which doesn't change its practical pragmatic conclusion on which you base an easing of your policy of confrontation, but it doesn't change the basic nature of the Soviet regime and the fact that they posed great danger to us--I would be quoting him here--there is very much of this that I believe in myself. You have to get along more easily. Détente would have us do that. We would trade more, we would exchange more scholars, we would increase money to exchange of cultural groups and have more exhibits and all of that sort of thing, not to have a congealed relationship.

Q: Let's leave the Front Office and talk about the grunt work of USIS in the Moscow environment.

BENSON: Well, thinking about it now, you know, the way that we've been working, what happens is that I'll go along here and then I'll go home and I'll remember other things and we'll pick it up. It's just the nature of remembrances of things past.

USIS in the Soviet Union at that time was called the Press and Cultural Service, P&C. For some reason or other which escapes me now, USIS was not allowed into the Soviet Union. The Soviets did not want to have the American Information Service propagandizing its people--God forbid--and so we didn't have a USIS in the Soviet Union until many, many years later. We had a Press and Cultural Service. It was divided in the embassy into two parts. One was upstairs, and one was downstairs.

Downstairs was theoretically unclassified, and upstairs was behind the Marine guard in the classified area of the embassy. In the downstairs there was a little library there. Theoretically the Soviet citizens could come in and use the library or come in and talk with USIS officers without--at that time in the history of the American embassy--without being cleared by American officers or Marines. You recall yourself--you were there at your time--you went under the arch. There are two archways which open onto the street you walk through. You walk past the Soviet militiamen, but then if you took the first door to the right, you were in the Press and Cultural Service, P&C down. We had an active program of trying to interest the Soviets, who would not come in, in loan books. We gave books away. We had a film program; we tried to lend them to Soviet institutions. They would be less propagandistic than the films I referred to that were ferried around Yugoslavia after World War II in that film unit. These were didactic, but they weren't pedantic. They were information on aspects of the United States, its history and so on and so forth. We prepared the wireless file. You may know what that is. It came in by teletype, and it was a series of news items and information on the personnel and management of USIS, which were for us only, and we would produce this in many copies for the embassy--it took quite a while--and for other embassies and for certain Soviet offices as well. We had a very active and

very worthwhile program of contacts with cultural and media people. The kind of contact I refer to that we had in Yugoslavia was also the case here.

Q: Where you were able to have personal political discussions with people from the Soviet press and intelligencia?

BENSON: Yes. Well, with the intelligencia, especially on the cultural side, they were less interested in the political discussions. With the media people it would be at lunches, and though they weren't confrontation in the 'up yours, Mac' kind of way, they were not as free flowing, quite obviously, as was the case with the Yugoslavs.

Q: Where did you have these lunches and other meetings?

BENSON: Well, they would be in restaurants or at our embassy quarters occasionally, although that was generally in the evening. The cultural affairs officer lived off campus, if you want to call it that, as did the press attaché. There was a woman on my staff who lived in the embassy, but she lived there because she was married to the chief security officer, and he had to live, had to live, on campus.

Q: When you had Russians for groups like this at lunch, was there anyone who clearly appeared to be a security officer who tried to blend in with the group but didn't quite.

BENSON: No, no. We had a certain number of lunches at the embassy, because we had a staff, cook and so on, to help, so it wasn't a great burden. If you had people from Pravda, Izvestia, or Tass, you were not really worried about somebody else who would be along who would be watching them. These were all people who were perfectly capable of reporting on us and these lunches.

Q: Did you have anything to do with the make-up of Soviet delegations coming to this country for various purposes?

BENSON: Well, let me pause and say parenthetically--we'll come back to that in a minute--one of our main points of contact was the Institute for the Study of USA and Canada, the Arbatov Institute.

Q: Was Arbatov the head of it in your time then?

BENSON: Arbatov was the head of it in my time. His deputy was Radimir Giorgiovich Bogdonov, who became a rather good friend, he with his rich GRU history. GRU is the intelligence arm of the Russian military [Ed: the Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet Army General Staff of the Soviet Union].

Q: Right. And, of course, the USA Institute, like the other Russian regional institutes, was presumed to be somewhere between an academic enterprise and a research branch of Soviet central intelligence.

BENSON: Well, it was attached, as all institutes were, to the Academy of Sciences. You knew that. The Latin American Institute, the African Institute, and so on and so forth were all separately located and they were institutes administratively within the Academy of Sciences. The institutes had graduate students assigned to them. Graduate students of substantial promise from Moscow State University and a few other academic institutions, who would, as they were preparing their articles after the Candidate degree and were working toward the time when they would publish *the* book and become true Ph.D.s, do work at the USA Institute. Later on, when I worked at Middlebury--which at the very end of this we should talk of very briefly since it's outside of the purview of being in the diplomatic corps--we developed an agreement, I did, with Bogdonov by which young scholars of the USA Institute, i.e., those who were working both substantively there to earn their bread and trying to complete their work for mostly Moscow State University, would come to Middlebury and use the Middlebury library and so on, and Middlebury faculty would go to the Soviet Union on a month-by-month equality basis. These were interesting young people post-1987 when I came here and prior also. There were people in the USA Institute who clearly worked for the factory over there, the KGB [Ed: abbreviation for Committee for State Security, the premier Soviet internal security, intelligence, and secret police organization], and others who were less clearly directly involved with that sort of thing.

But let me return to the Soviet media. Some say that contact with the Soviet media was essentially hopeless because any attempt to be convincing was really quite useless. Therefore the more productive relations with Soviet media would be by political officers, because messages could be passed through some of the media people, when one didn't want to go to the Foreign Office to pass a message. Going to the Foreign office was a much more formal act, to ask for an appointment at the Foreign Office, and to go over, and make a statement, leave a paper and that sort of thing.

Q: So it was assumed these messages transmitted to Russian media people would be passed along through their own channels.

BENSON: Oh, yes. And that was not my function at the embassy, you know, that sort of thing. I had, increasingly in my time in Moscow from 1975 to 1979, a reporting function on cultural matters. But that's different from handling the media quite obviously. Here I was led by Jack Matlock. Matlock lived two floors down from us. He was the Deputy Chief of Mission. You know him well. He is totally bilingual and bi-cultured and loved to have cultural people, especially literary people, coming to his apartment for lunches.

Q: He had in fact taught Russian language and literature at Dartmouth before he went into the Foreign Service.

BENSON: Precisely right. He was, in fact, an editor of the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, and he left off being that--we've talked of that before--he left off being that, I believe, a half year before I joined it. He and my wife, present wife, then still a translator at the Current Digest worked together and were very fond of each other as colleagues. He had an amazing library of materials on Russian culture and Russian literature. His weekends were spent very often going through the old bookshops looking for that book by Turgenev which he didn't yet have, and that sort of thing. He steered me to several stories which were breaking in the paper on cultural

events, suggesting that, especially in the theater world, the concert world, where, strange as it seems to the ordinary American, there were political implications, there were great political implications, to what was happening in the new production of Tchaikovsky's Queen of Spades, a most amazing thing. He did read a story about a fracas going on in Pravda, called me in and said, "I want you to follow up and report on this." Without necessarily going it all here because this may be too much detail, it took a lot of terribly interesting work for me to get to the bottom of what was going on, and I did, and reported it. He thought it important for the Department to have this even if ultimate implications were not drawn but just as evidence of how these matters, a new staging of the Queen of Spades, for heaven's sakes, were being handled by the Ministry of Culture.

Q: You saw some signs of a certain thaw in Soviet cultural controls, say allowing more experimentation?

BENSON: Well, you could see things happening, a certain loosening and a certain greater freedom, let us say, in theater life, but it would not be possible to say that this was going on, with the approval of the party, or that there were articles which recommended it. What was happening was that there was a gradual absence of the ultimate sanction, which was to close a play down or to throw somebody out of the party; or to have a critical article which would blast it, which would be a mark against the director, the stage designer, everybody connected with it. So you had more wiggle room, and you know that area well and you know that they, the creative intelligencia, were always on the border pushing and they could sense and feel that more would be possible and more was happening. So there were more theater pieces which were critical of life in the Soviet Union. There were not many critical pieces, except by two people I'll come to, of party *control* of life in the Soviet Union. The two people were (Mikhail) Shatrov and (Alexander) Gelman. Shatrov was an unreconstructed Leninist.

Q: He's the author of that play about the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the 1980s where Trotsky reappeared in literature for the first time in decades.

BENSON: Yes, precisely that, and he and Lenin were friends, Trotsky and Lenin, which fact had been ignored in history and certain in the theater. The name of the play will come to me.

Q: I think the play is "The Peace of Brest-Litovsk," about the unfavorable treaty that the new Soviet government signed with Germany to extricate itself from World War I, was written in 1962 but not staged until 1987 because its characters included Trotsky and Bukharin.

BENSON: Yes, that could be, but the point is that here was an alternate way of organizing things or thinking about things in the mouth of Trotsky, who was a nonperson, and suddenly there it was. However, it was in the context of describing Lenin as wise, prudent, collegial, a good leader. Later under Stalin, this wisdom and collegiality was done in, so later what we had was a travesty of Leninism that was Shatrov.

(Alexander) Gelman wrote a series of plays which were really very, very good on the relationship between the party and what was going on in real life, for example, putting a factory into production before it was really ready, because the plan had to be fulfilled here, in this place,

in this town, because we all need bonuses, don't we; and for reasons we had no control over, the factory can't be put into production; but if we don't put it into production, no one is going to believe us about all these reasons, which are not our fault, so we've got to put it into production. So they put it into production, and catastrophe ensues. It's the fault of the system. No individual fingers are pointed. The Protokol Odnogo Zasedaniya, or the Meeting of the Party Committee, was a beautiful play, again on party life and the difficulty of maintaining sensible, again collegial, productive human relations. Misha Roshin wrote a series of plays on the social effects of life out there. These were milder, but critical. They were terrifically popular, the Russian plays especially. They were played all over the country in various translations.

Q: So as in 19th century Russia, literature became a vehicle for smuggling in a certain degree of political criticism?

BENSON: Well, yes, even more than smuggling. Once you allow the creative intelligencia, especially the literary types, to move five feet ahead, they'll do it, and within limits which they are clever enough to see, they do magnificent things. You had (Yuri) Lyubimov, the director of the Taganka Theater, who adapted many literary works--including Master and Margarita and Crime and Punishment--for the stage, and collections of short stories, which were critical of collectivization, for the stage, in very sharp productions with very modern stage design.

Q: The meetings, lunches and contacts that you and your colleagues had with people in the Russian intelligencia--this is perhaps hard to answer--do you sense that these meetings had some value in giving the Russian participants new perspectives, a sense of assurance in where they were going? What kind of effect did you think you had on them, not necessarily immediate, but were you laying the groundwork for anything?

BENSON: Well, the short answer is yes, there was value. but that's not really quite enough, because the implications of 'yes' to the question as you pose it are rich. A Soviet intellectual had to make the choice to come to the lunch. Having done that, welcoming that, having looked forward to that, and now it is coming, the time is here where I can accept this invitation.

Q: You presume that they were vetted by their respective organizations and given to understand that it was okay to participate?

BENSON: Well, you know how it worked. Some would timorously inquire; others would go without timorously inquiring and wait to see whether there would be any spin-off. Somebody would visit them, somebody from within the theater who was in charge of the party committee of the theater. The theater's political commissar, who could be five layers down from the head of the theater, visits him, closes the door, and says, "Hey, guy, you're being invited to," let's say, the American public affairs officer or the German cultural affairs officer or whatever, and the commissar and theater notable have a discussion, and the fellow, the director of the theater, in the course of two, three, four, five weeks realizes that nothing has happened other than the commissar's visit. And he, being a citizen of the Soviet Union and having been over this before, says to himself, "Ah ha, a tiny little corner I've gone around, and everything's all right." And that's the way it happens. Word gets out. He talks to people. And that was going on. After all, Brezhnev died in 1982, so we're talking about years before he died during the time when no

controls were really officially loosened, but it was the time, as they said, of stagnation. Nothing was happening. Of course, some people, who went really too far, would go into the concentration camps and there would be trials, but basically things were imperceptibly loosening up. Again, quantity and quality: they loosened up imperceptibly until it became apparent that, by golly, much has happened in the last year or two that we were not aware of really.

Q: However, this was the time of the rather dramatic efforts to repress dissidents or even expel them from the country. Such as (Aleksandr Isayevich) Solzhenitsyn, or the story of Zhores Medvedev being put in a mental hospital, which he wrote a book about and then lost his citizenship after he had been allowed to visit London. Did you have any contact with dissidents or direct experience in how dissident were being treated?

BENSON: Well, there are dissidents and then there are dissidents. There was a whole artistic community, I mean artists, painters, sculptors, who were suffered. Some were members of the artists union; some were not members of the artists union. Some made their living essentially by selling their works to foreigners. They didn't live well. They may have another job; it could be firing boilers. They didn't challenge the regime the way Solzhenitsyn did writing about the *gulag* or Yuri Smenyenev and others ended up in prison. You see, if you tried to create a movement of any kind, a social grouping, an association, or to develop a program which would threaten in some way the established order, you could be really taken care of and away you would go. Sakharov ended up in Gorky in internal exile. Before they sent him to Gorky Sakharov was holding constant press conferences. Sakharov was visiting the American embassy.

This was at the time I was there, but I never met him. He left various statements and various letters to the American media which ended up in the offices of the American media. Sakharov pulled up in front of the embassy in a car with chauffeur which came from the motor pool of the Academy of Sciences. You knew this? He did. He, as a senior academician, member of the Academy of Sciences, had the right to call the motor pool and say, "I would like to have a car for two o'clock today," and they would say, "Yes, sir, academic Sakharov." He would get in the car and tell the driver to drive him to the American embassy, and the driver would say, "Yes, sir, academic Sakharov." And there he would be, big, black Volga parked in front of the embassy with Sakharov inside.

Q: In your first tour there were there any dramatic troubles of the American press in Moscow with the police? I'm thinking of, for instance, what happened to Nick Daniloff, I think, later on in the 1980s. He was arrested and accused of espionage.

BENSON: Well, we had several cases that I can remember. I may be confusing first tour and second tour, but it wouldn't matter significantly, and I'll try to straighten it out in the final draft, but one was George Krinsky, George Krinsky in the AP, who--this was first tour definitely--who was accused, as he was packing to leave, by a cleaning lady. You know, all the cleaning ladies, the cooks and bottle washers, what have you were all hired from one office. The businessmen, the journalists, and all diplomats hired all the people whom they wanted to hire, be it a tennis coach or a cook, from the office which was a unit of the Foreign Office and, you might say, intimately connected to the KGB. These people came from that central office. So this cleaning lady reported to her folks, they said, that she was suspicious that Mr. Krinsky was

selling things on the black market, and George Krinsky was forbidden to leave the country. George Krinsky came to us and said, "I have this problem."

In cases like this, the media, I would be the action officer representing the embassy if we chose to be helpful. We always chose to be helpful. We had no statutory responsibility for such people. He wasn't a diplomat; he had no diplomatic cover or, should I say, diplomatic rights. So I went to the spokesman. The spokesman of the Foreign Office also was responsible for liaison with foreign press. His office was a big office. At that time his name was Sofinsky. In any case, I went to him and I said, "This is all wrong," and I won't go through all the conversations if I could remember them literally, but finally George was allowed to go. They made him absolutely miserable. I think he went off to Cyprus and we ended up sending him some of his personal books and things like that. These things take an awful lot of time. Craig Whitney of the New York Times and Hap Piper from the Baltimore Sun were accused of writing articles which were slanderous to the Soviet state because they reported that as they were viewing and taping a TV program--do you remember the name (Zviad) Gamsakhurdia?

Q: Oh, yes, a noted Georgian dissident who became its first elected president.

BENSON: Replaced by Shevardnadze, in opposition to Shevardnadze, led a revolt against Shevardnadze, and he is now buried in Georgia. But at that time he was a dissident, and at the end of June 1979, Gamsakhurdia was released from jail and pardoned in controversial circumstances after serving only two years of his sentence. The authorities claimed that he had confessed to the charges and recanted his beliefs; a film clip was shown on Soviet television to substantiate their claim.

Craig Whitney and Hal Piper made a tape of this interview in their news offices, and they played it back and they played it back, and they became convinced that it had been cut and spliced--and they reported that it had been cut and spliced and, therefore, from the Soviet point of view there was a sequential story but something was missing and there was something rotten in the state of the Soviet Union, and the American reporters were visited with a suit, but criminal suit for slandering the Soviet state.

Goodness gracious, this was a substantial offense. There were hearings. There were depositions taken. You just can't believe what a back and forth there was about this. The New York Times and the Baltimore Sun supported their man obviously to the hilt. They wrote editorials about it and so on.

Again, I was the action officer and hung in there with them is really what I did, you know. I visited with them, they would visit with me, they would tell me what was happening, reports would be written by me, and the State Department was terribly concerned about this. They were not ultimately expelled. Their wrists were slapped, and that was that. Now, one of the reasons is that we handled such affairs very properly. There was a *quid pro quo*. Had they expelled Whitney and Piper, we would have kicked out two Soviet journalists. There's simply no question. It would have happened fast. Their journalists were, to a man, employed by the KGB. Ours, to a man, were not employed by the CIA. So there's something very unequal about their loss, and they chose not to take it.

Q: Did your relations with the Soviets, in terms of contacts with the press and intelligencia or pressure on our press people, get noticeably worse after the Carter Administration took office in 1977 with the conflicts that were developing over the Portuguese colonies in Africa or the Horn of Africa?

BENSON: No. I suppose the Portuguese embassy had two extra guards in front of it to keep out the unruly mobs if they would ever appear chanting "Down with Portugal," but no.

Q: I wonder what impressions may have filtered down to you about working with the Kissinger State Department up through 1976 and then Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski under Carter.

BENSON: Well, it really didn't affect our work at all, USIS's work or the Press and Cultural Service's work. Cyrus Vance came in, and he visited several times with his inevitable press corps and his new press secretary, who was Hodding Carter. I obviously had, and my press people, information people, had an awful lot to do at a time like that just on the level of care and feeding of troops. But the effect on our work on the exhibits which were traveling the country and the cultural groups which were exchanged according to the cultural agreement, no, it wasn't that major.

Q: I've forgotten the dates as to when these cultural agreements were concluded that allowed for the exchange of the performers and the exchange of academics.

BENSON: Well, January 1958 was the first one. It was the so-called Lacy-Zarubin Agreement. [Ed: the Agreement was named after its two chief negotiators, William S. B. Lacy, President Eisenhower's Special Assistant on East-West Exchanges, and Georgi Z. Zarubin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States, September 1952-January 1958.] Zarubin, by the way, died within the year the Agreement was signed. After Washington he became a deputy foreign minister. He was along in years then, so he lived to be a ripe old man. These cultural exchanges were renewed regularly and changed, expanded, expanded as a totality and yet the interior texts in some cases became more general. See, the old agreements would be contracts for the exchange in part, contracts for the exchange of specific cultural events.

Q: Such as the contracts with IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board) that allowed for the exchange of a specified number of scholars each way each year?

BENSON: That may have been in the early days in the agreement. I think it was actually; later it was a matter of outside parameters and negotiated by us with the help of Allen Kassoff and Dan Matuszewski of IREX. But back to the first contracts or agreements, that's when Sol Hurok was beginning to bring to the United States these big things, the Bolshoi Ballet.

Q: He did some of that entirely apart from these agreements, didn't he?

BENSON: Yes, he did, sure he did, but he had to have the help of the United States government to facilitate it, and the United States government felt that, if we were going to have in the United States all these high profile, famous cultural groups with such wow, we would like to have ours

over there. The Soviets were not about to pay--they perhaps couldn't really pay--to bring over the huge American troupes with American wages and all of the travel costs, and so on and so forth, so the American government had to pony up a subsidy to get this reciprocity, and it did. Later as the agreements matured over the years, it would be specified as reciprocal subject to the financial and scheduling capabilities, etcetera and so forth, much more general, allowing, I can tell you, for an awful lot of negotiation. On my staff, on the staff of P & C down, was a staff member whose sole reason for being was to negotiate with Gosconcert, the state concert agency of the Soviet Union.

Q: That job had to with negotiating the terms both of sending the Soviets out and bringing Americans in?

BENSON: Yes, exactly, and if you wanted to have the St. Paul Philharmonic or whatever it was called, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, visiting and you thought it might be a good thing, we would, that they visit the Baltic States and the Soviets would think, as they would, that it would not be a good idea for them to go to the Baltic States, you have a negotiation which has politics at the basis, never mind the costs, which is also going to be there.

These cultural agreements were both fun, took up a lot of our time, brought us into close contact with various ministries, the Ministry of Culture--interesting people there--cultural groups who were going to go, organizations and places which were going to host our groups coming over, and maximized the contact possibilities, the talking, the lunching, back and forth immeasurably. The agreement--and this comes to my second tour, and we should proceed, I suppose, *seriatim*, but I should say that the umbrella agreement lapsed in 1979. By then it was three documents, the overall principles, the program, and then so-called implementing principles. It lapsed in 1979 because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. I was out of the country already, having been transferred.

Q: When did the Fulbright program extend to the Soviet Union? Was it in place during your first tour in the 1970s?

BENSON: Yes. When I got to Moscow in the 1970s, in 1975, the--I should be precise here, but it's not a question of drenching things up from memory, because I just don't know--the agreement was reached in a very different way from Fulbright agreements with other countries, because this was the Soviet Union and the thought of having a bi-national commission, a selection commission, was preposterous. But some sort of agreement had been reached, and we provided opportunities for a certain number of Soviets to go to the United States, as faculty people. The program was at the university level at that point. The other many possibilities inherent in the Fulbright agreement were never thought of as far as the Soviet Union was concerned. It was just faculty, never mind students or lawyers, or what have you. Some few Soviet faculty could go and do research, and we provided to Moscow State University every year a historian.

Well, it worked very simply. They came and they taught in English. They were housed well on campus in Moscow State University and tried to behave as if they were teaching in Frankfurt, in Germany. In a certain sense it worked just that way. The students were overwhelmed, favorably,

at having an American instructor. (E. David) Cronon of (the University of) Wisconsin, I think, was the first. Cooper of Wisconsin came later. There were others.

Q: I met a historian from Missouri. It was in 1984 when I was on the Fulbright Committee, and he was having a great time because all these children of the higher-ups who were taking his course. They could get him tickets to things that he couldn't get into any other way. When did study-abroad programs for undergraduates begin? Or, should I say, did you have any experience with programs for undergraduates during your first tour in the 1970s, like the Middlebury program?

BENSON: There was that program. There was the ACTR program, American Council of Teachers of Russian, which had somewhere around 10 people. Had the Pushkin and Student Moscow. There was a CIEE program, the Council for the International Educational Exchanges. They were in Leningrad. There was a SUNY (State University of New York) Albany program, which was reciprocal.

Q: And these exchanges were operating by your first tour in the 1970s?

BENSON: Yes, the SUNY Albany program was signed into being by the chancellor of the SUNY system, Ernest Boyer, in 1975 just as I arrived. There was a program which was run by Leon Twarog--you may have known him--from Ohio State/Purdue Consortium. Those were not reciprocal. The SUNY program was reciprocal, the only one. All of them had a resident American in Moscow to look after their students. They were always getting into some kind of trouble.

Q: That's my next question. What did your office have to do to help them with their problems?

BENSON: Our office was again the action office, where anything could happen between these groups and Soviet institutions, as we were for the press insofar as these exchange programs wished to call something to our attention. The same as with the media; the media has no obligation at all to tell us of any of their problems. We ourselves would have been very irritated with them if they had not, because we would like to be able to extract some kind of reciprocity.

Q: Continuing the afternoon of Monday, May 8th, 2000. We are finishing up the discussion of Ray Benson's tour in Moscow between 1975 and 1979. We were talking, about American student groups in the Soviet Union and what you had to do to help them get out of trouble.

BENSON: Well, there were all kinds of incidents, which were inconsequential in any other country except the Soviet Union. I'll list a few little things, lest we go on forever. My contact point was the Ministry of Education, and one would go there to complain or ask for an explanation. The students did various things they shouldn't have done, such as urinating on Soviet money with the likeness of some of the Soviet leaders of the past. This is literally what happened at the end of a party. They were found, and this was *lese majeste*. A young woman in St. Petersburg--and was in Leningrad--was discovered to have on her bookshelf many books which were not considered proper in the Soviet Union, literature, you know, printed by Ardis, printed by the YMCA Press in Paris.

Q: Were these translations of America literature?

BENSON: No, no, I'm talking about (Andrei) Platonov, I'm talking Solzhenitsyn.

Q: Oh, these are émigré editions of Russian work that they didn't like...

BENSON: Yes, all published in the meantime but not then. Ardis did a lot, Ann Arbor. I could go on and give a rather anecdotal scope, but the point is that the students would get into trouble, and there would be great criticism. Either the student, in this case, herself, in Leningrad was about to be thrown out of the country, it was thought. We would go over and say, "What is going on?" Of course, she wasn't thrown out of the country. There were other incidents when students would get in trouble because they would be accosted by Soviet men. This was not purposeful, this was not a provocation, this was bad stuff. One near rape was interrupted simply by happenstance. We would ask for an investigation. They would say they will do what they could. We would revisit, and they would say, "We don't have any more data," and on and on and on.

Q: But did you find sometimes that you would get American students or other exchangees out of trouble simply by showing that you were watching the situation and were interested?

BENSON: Well, there was this woman in Leningrad who I think was going to get into real trouble, certainly her program might have. You see, there is concern about what books they have. There is surveillance of the books. There is a complaint. All of this is being done at the level of the people who were watching this exchange program.

Q: Like Vladimir Kutin in Leningrad.

BENSON: Much lower. He was in charge of foreign relations at St. Petersburg state.

Q: But before that, before he went to Germany, he was doing something like this in Leningrad, surveillance over foreign students.

BENSON: Could very well have been then, you know. Brought to him, let's say, by somebody even lower than he. He says, "Ah ha, we cannot put up with this," and the thing begins to stew and begins to be a problem. Everybody begins playing a role, and no one is willing to say at that level that this is really not useful for us, comrades, because it doesn't get us anywhere. And they don't know what to do about excessive low-level vigilance, and the issue is defined, the lines are drawn, and it becomes very, very difficult for anybody one or two steps outside this little circle to change the direction of this, let's say, process. At this point in the process in the 1970s I go to the Ministry, and there somebody could say, "Oh, for heaven's sakes, what have they done?" The ministry has the authority and the power, because they're that many steps higher, to call Leningrad and say, "For goodness sakes, stop it, leave her alone, put her books back on her shelf"--literally what happened, by the way. She had books on her shelf. Yes, we did useful work.

Q: What about your relations with Voice of America in that period?

BENSON: Well, the Voice of America both was and wasn't jammed, you know, depending on the period. We listened to it. I didn't listen to the Russian much. I listened to the English, because you listen to it for the news, and everybody at the embassy really did listen to it. Some people at the embassy listened to the Russian and critiqued it for substance to make sure that they didn't get too carried away with the message, which was that the Soviet system was terrible. But the true listenership, I believe, at that time that was important for us--this is sort of betraying my organization, the USIA--was Radio Liberty. Radio Liberty broadcast out of Munich.

Q: That was my next question.

BENSON: Well, they go together. I knew it would be, but they do go together. Radio Liberty was jammed all the way through. In fact, most of the time we were in the Soviet Union, the Voice of America was also jammed. You know, this cost extraordinary amounts of money and power, huge towers to jam, but in the suburbs of Moscow you could listen to Radio Liberty freely. There are some people, for example, in Piti Yeltin, the artists' colony, which is a suburb not far out of Moscow, came in clear as a bell. They didn't have a jamming tower there. There were some people who spent hours on the weekends listening out there to VOA, to Radio Liberty, and both VOA and Radio Liberty knew that. Weekend programs were very rich. Next time we'll talk about the Metropol Almanac. You know what that was? The literary almanac published by Vasily Aksyonov and other writers who got together. We're talking about something that was in 1978/1979. It became quite clear once. I was having lunch with them, with the editorial board, in Aksyonov's apartment. I'll talk about this more when I'm with you next time. This came into the New Yorker recently. Anyway, I'll put it together coherently then. And somebody knocks on the door and came in. It was one of their friends, and he had just driven in from Piti Yeltin--this was during the week--and said, "Do you know what has happened? Yuri Shanokovski"--I think he's teaching at Wesley now--"is in Munich, and he gave an interview, and he said the following." It had to do with the Metropol Almanac.

Q: So that's the way the word would come in and get around.

BENSON: The word really did get around, and they decided, I should say, at that time that they thought he ought to shut the hell up. He was leaving the country, it was clear, and he didn't sort of appear in Munich, to their surprise. I didn't realize that he had gotten exit permission and he was going away. But they did not want him at that time to sit there and blab away, so we wrote a telegram to Munich, and they stowed his interviews for later use. But that's the way word would get around.

Q: Did VOA have a correspondent in Moscow at that time?

BENSON: No, VOA had correspondents who lived in Munich, who would apply for short term visas. Mark Hopkins was one who came in for years. He did all sorts of other things in Munich. But he knew some Russian, more than casually. VOA correspondents were not allowed to be permanent correspondents. That came later, after my day.

Q: What do you think of the general impact of VOA and RL on the opinion of the Russian intelligencia whom you knew at the time?

BENSON: Well, it was, from one point of view, profound; from another point of view, unnecessary, because the point of view of the intelligencia whom I knew was not in the making. That is to say, it was established. They were Westernizers. Of the intelligencia whom I knew, only (Vladimir) Soloukhin among the writers and a few more who didn't declare themselves would be considered Slavophiles and not friendly to the West. So these people didn't need, as far as forming their opinions, the VOA or the RL, but for information on political events and social events there was nothing else.

Q: This is Robert Daniels interviewing Ray Benson on June 8th, 2000 on his USIA career, and we are adding some additional points about his experience in Moscow from 1975 to 1979. We have begun to touch on some questions about the cultural life and various incidents that you were involved in or knew directly about, starting with the so-called Metropol incident.

BENSON: The Metropol Group, gathered around Vasily Aksyonov, who began putting together what became an almanac, a compendium of works by the Metropol group in 1978. It was their idea that they should be able to produce a work, this compendium, of literary pieces which would be in a sense nonpolitical. They would not be critiques of the sociology of the Soviet Union or of its society except in the sense that they would be informed. They would take literature beyond that which had been approved or had previously been published. There would be more explicit sexual references. The style would be modern or post-modern. This was not socialist realism. There were no articles which were specifically critical of socialist realism. It was as modern in form as was being produced at that time in the Soviet Union. Some of the works were produced by writers who were not members of the writers' union. Some were produced by writers who were very well established in the writers' union, like Aksyonov or Vaznisenski Achmedulina. Their idea was to produce the work in a certain number of copies below the number above which you had to get official permission to produce them. I think it was 12; it may have been 13. If you produced above that number of copies and gave them out, you were violating Soviet law about having published a work without official permission. Below that level, 12 or 13, you could do it without violating the law against publishing a work without permission. But you're then subject to prosecution for producing works which were pornographic, or were inciting racial or ethnic or religious antagonisms, or espousing war. There were a whole host of other criteria by which this would be evaluated within Soviet law. They thought they were beyond criticism for those purposes or those accusations. They tried to avoid them, not that they self-centered, and off they went to produce this group work. It took them months to put it together, and they did it in a most interesting way. We had no computers in those days, and so everything had to be done by typists. It was "secret" as they didn't publicize it. It was quite clear, as matters went along, that the writers' union knew all about it and that certain people, who were friendly to the writers' union and not to this group which had gathered, knew all about it. And there were some people in foreign embassies who were told what was going on.

Q: This was essentially a Samizdat publication?

BENSON: Yes, it was Samizdat, but it was to be up to that level. See, Samizdat earlier would have one or two copies, three.

Q: Oh, I thought as many carbons as you could get in the typewriter.

BENSON: Well, six or seven, but not 12 or 13, which required two or three typists.

Q: They did it with carbon copies or mimeograph?

BENSON: Carbons. They did it with carbons and they had several typists. What they did was take a--I have a funny feeling that some of this we have already gone through--they took a sheet of paper rather thick and large, large enough to have pasted on it four typed sheets, and they would paste onto this sheet of paper or cardboard or whatever you call it four typewritten sheets, turn it over, they would paste another four. So this large, I'm searching for the word, it's not cardboard, but anyway it looked like thick blotting paper, the kind of paper you have in a photo album. If you held one up, you had eight pages on it, four on one side and four on the other. They involved in their work certain graphics artists: (Anatoly) Brusilovsky was rather a pornographic; Barice Maserer, who was Achmedulina's husband, was a very famous set designer and graphics artist; and other people who chipped in who were never given credit because of putting all this together it took an awful lot of people. Barovsky, who was Lubimov's stage designer, set designer, and now lives, I believe, in Boston, also contributed some of the graphics. In early 1979, having produced this enormous volume--you can imagine something--it's now between boards. It's between, as I recall it, plywood covers, each the size of four sheets of paper front and back. Inside are innumerable sheets, each with eight pages pasted on them, four front and four back. They have 12 or 13 of these monster volumes. This is Metropol. And they had a credo, which I won't attempt to paraphrase now. I have it at home, and it may not be relevant here. But the point is that they very specifically said that they had no intention of violating the law.

What they were trying to do was live free and produce freely as creative artists and writers. The representatives of the group went to the writers' union and presented them with at least one copy of this now finished volume. At the same time they tried to hold a sort of press conference which announced that they had finished their work and had done this. They hired a Moscow restaurant in which to do this, and they sent out invitations to an awful lot of people in the cultural world of Moscow. Of course, this became known, obviously. It was a very public act. Preparing for it was a public act, and they were preparing to mount a public act. People who received the invitations were very important, for example, Oleg Yefremov, who died two weeks ago. They sent them to the Moscow art theaters. Lubimov, the head of the Taganka Theater, and others were called by various official bodies and told they best not appear at this event. And, in fact, the event never took place, because other officials thought it would be too risky to let it happen, even if some of the people invited would not appear, and so the authorities went to the manager of this restaurant and said, "On this day you will close and we will have a sanitary inspection of your kitchen facilities, count the cockroaches, what have you." When invitees appeared at the restaurant in the afternoon, they found a notice on the door saying that the restaurant was closed. It was what they call in Russian *sanitarnyy den*, the sanitary day, day of examination of their *bona fide* cleanliness of the facility. The event never took place.

Many correspondents were invited and went there and found it closed. In the article in The New Yorker that you and I have discussed by Victor Erofejev, he paints the picture of practically a cordon of officers and other clearly visible persons from various control organs. I don't know if they were there or not, or whether this was off-putting or not. I myself did not go down to that event. I was the person at the United States Embassy which was following all of the trouble, run up the months and months of their meetings and so on, and reporting on them. Jack Matlock, who was then the Deputy Chief of Mission, was keenly interested in having as much as possible on the record of the State Department's, the Soviet office (Eur/Sov), on this effort. He knew all of the participants as well as I, some better, some not as well, but he was the other person at the embassy who was really forceful in getting me to report on this. What happened at the writers' union is indicative of just how these things were done in the Soviet Union at that time. What I mean, Bill, is that, at that time, one was beyond the period when five or six or eight of these persons would have been...

Q: This is June 8th, 2000 and we are continuing our conversation with Ray Benson's Moscow assignment, 1975 to 1979, focusing on cultural matters. We were still discussing the Metropol group and then DCM Jack Matlock's interests in the cultural sector.

BENSON: I think we got to this point. The Writers Union--you have to imagine such a thing--took this volume, which I described as being as large as it was, you know, and pretty darn heavy. They put it on a table in a small room in the Writers Union Building, which was very large indeed, and they locked it up. And they then invited a series of members of the Writers Union to enter the room and to read in Metropol in this volume, perhaps not all of it but to read some of it anyway, and to offer their judgment of the suitability of this material for publication. This was not censorship. This was judgment by one's peers. And these verdicts or judgments were then published in the internal newspaper of the Writers Union, which all members of the Writers Union got. It was a weekly publication, Literaturnaya Gazeta.

In this house organ, which obviously was given to all members of the union including 90 percent of the members of Metropol--and therefore we got a copy, and therefore I read every issue at that time--there were judgments. Perhaps not every judgment was printed, but many were considered worthy, and of course they were all very, very negative. It was then announced that, according to the judgment of this peer group, this *Almanac*, this compendium was not worthy of publication and the Writers Union would, therefore, not support its publication and, therefore, it would not be published, and it wasn't in the Soviet Union at least.

At the same time a copy was given to a gentleman who worked at the French embassy and a copy was given to me one Sunday at Vasily Aksyonov's girlfriend's *dacha*. I won't pause to go into who she was or what kind of *dacha* this was and all of that. As I had said that I would be willing to take it--please let me have it--and we would see what we could do about having it appear in the United States. I did not say it would go out by pouch. One didn't say certain things. So I put this great big thing in the trunk of my personal car and drove home. My car was parked inside the embassy, and I took it upstairs and put it in my office, which was behind the Marine guard, meaning in the classified section of the embassy, and on the next day I called Ambassador Toon and said, "I have something to show you." He said, "Come on up," so I dragged this thing

up to him and I told him what this thing was. Now, he had, of course, been reading the cable traffic and he knew there was such a thing as Metropol. I said, "Can we move this on?" and he summoned into the office the head of security of the embassy, and he said, "Have the CBs (Navy unit-Construction Battalion) build a box to fit this into so that it isn't damaged." A box was built--I didn't see it--and Metropol was fit within the box, sent off to EUR/SOV, the Soviet office, from which it made its way to Ardis Press. [Ed: Ardis Publishing (the name of the original company is Ardis Publishers) began in 1971, as the only publishing house outside of Russia dedicated to Russian literature in both English and Russia.]

Ardis Press was located in Ann Arbor, Carl and Ellendea Proffer ran it. Carl now deceased, soon thereafter actually--marvelous man. It was published in the United States, it was published in France. It was published in Russian first and then in translation and later in the United States was given over, some arrangement whereby I think Norton & Company published it as a hardback book. It was published finally in Russia, most recently, or recently after--I don't know the dates--but after all that nonsense was over with.

Q: Under Gorbachev or under Yeltsin?

BENSON: I don't really know. But by then the Metropol gang had scattered. Aksyonov was living in the States. (Yuz) Aleshkovsky was living in the States. Some were in Germany. They were gone. There was no need any longer for such an elaborate effort. You could have published whatever you wished, whether it was post-modern in style or very explicit sexually, and one could say a great deal more of the individual fate of the individuals involved.

The New Yorker article that you and I have discussed separately outside of the context of this interview project refers to the effect on Victor Erofejev [Ed: Metropol editor] himself and on his father, who was a senior and most respected member of the Soviet foreign service of ambassadorial rank, the effect on him of the fact that his son was involved in this project. When we review the text later, if you feel it would be useful to put some of that in here as an aside, we could do it, but let me proceed, as you wish, to other aspects of the situation.

I think it worth mentioning, though, and there is a place here--I've said it a few minutes ago--a place to single out and praise the understanding of the Soviet situation, not quite in quotes, by Jack Matlock and Malcolm Toon, both true Soviet hands. Where the political and social effects of what was going on in the cultural world were fully understood, and to the extent possible, they tried to get embassy reporting to cover this aspect of life in the Soviet Union so that the interested people in the Soviet Bureau and other readers in Washington. You understand that the CIA analysts would also be reading this, as far as the evaluation of trends within the Soviet Union is concerned, since there was a broad range of analysis going on in town. These were data which were interesting, and they made sure that, insofar as possible, the embassy acquired the data and reported with that encomium to my colleagues of the past. I think it should be, here anyway, a matter of record.

Q: Would you want to add anything more about your work with Matlock in 1975 to 1979 when he was DCM? Was he there the whole time with you under both Stoessel and Toon?

BENSON: Yes, he was there. He was a tough task master, very pedantic and very didactic and very appreciative and very learned and extremely knowledgeable--I've said this--and it never seemed to me that this toughness and didacticism and pedanticism was personally directed, though there were many people who felt that it was. I never did. He guided me and directed me and encouraged me to follow certain events, one of them being the Metropol case, if you will, that we've referred to.

There was another occasion that was very close to him intellectually and to me, when one day Pravda had an article by a man named Juritis, who was a conductor at the Bolshoi Theater, which was very critical of Yuri Lyubimov and Gennady Rozhdestvensky and Alfred Schnittke, who were preparing a new version of the Queen of Spades for the Paris Opera. They were going to change a bit the original score by Tchaikovsky, and they were going to produce, I think Barovsky--I've mentioned him--who was David Davidovich, who was Lubimov's chief set designer, was also producing the sets, and they were going to lay heavy hands on Tchaikovsky on this great work in the canon of Russian musical history and presently on the stage in Moscow. They were out of the country going to violate all of the traditions, the norms, etc., etc., etc. So Jack asked me if I had read it, and in fact we were reading it practically at the same time that morning, and he said, "Well, you know Lubimov." In fact, I did. "Why don't you go over to him and ask him what in heaven's name is going on, and see what you can find out, and we'll see if this is of any interest." So I did. I visited Lubimov then, I don't know 15 or 20 times as this episode played out. In addition, there were newspaper reverberations, that is to say certain aspects became public and I included that in my reporting on what I could find out from Yuri Lubimov. At the same time the American press, especially Craig Whitney, bless him--he's now one of the managing editors of the (New York) Times--he followed the story, and we would run into each other there. Others did too. It was very interesting to see that newspapers could afford coverage of such an event. For the embassy, the interesting aspect of it was the degree to which the Ministry of Culture, the Central Committee's Committee on Culture, on Music, the Composers Union, you know, which was then under the control of Tikhon Khrennikov. You may remember that Tikhon Khrennikov was appointed by Stalin in 1948.

Q: He even hung on under Gorbachev.

BENSON: He left practically in his senility, you know. He ran a very conservative with strange bursts of freedom allowed in certain contexts, which I won't go into here. In any case, in this matter one was trying at the embassy to find out whether it was freelancing by Khrennikov, whether it was the Ministry of Culture, in which case it would have been Lemechev, who incidentally changed the ending of Swan Lake. He ordered the Bolshoi Theater to change the ending of Swan Lake because he did not think that the Soviet people wanted this great piece of music, this great ballet, to end tragically. So the ending, it was ordered, would be happy. He and his committees of review absolute tortured poor Lubimov every time before a Taganka production would be released for the public. A committee would come to Taganka, the most advanced Soviet theater of the day, view the work practically in-camera, and suggest revisions. There would be a violent scene. Sometimes Lubimov would win; usually he wouldn't. And he was watched like a hawk, so was Schnittke, by the Composers Union. He's recently deceased. Lubimov is still alive. Rozhdestvensky lives mostly outside of Russia. He's a conductor. And we sort of figured out who was calling the shots in the Queen of Spades dispute. It was Lemechev

and the Ministry of Cultural and the cultural committee, I suppose it was, of the Central Committee. Beyond that Jack and I had fun finding out what was going on, and we hope other people are interested in it. In any event, the Paris Opera did not put on the production.

Q: Due to Soviet pressure on the French?

BENSON: There was Soviet pressure on the French, by the way. I'm glad you bring that up. Thank you for flagging my memory. The Paris Opera was told by the Ministry of Culture, i.e., Lemechev's bailiwick, that they could forget about any cooperation with the Bolshoi Theater or any musician, singer, dancer, or troupe from the Soviet Union coming there, or any one of theirs, coming into the Soviet Union--not going to happen. Gosconcert, the official booking agency impresario of the Soviet government, sent a parallel message which said exactly the same thing. So there were pressures put on. Now, I don't know if this is the place to speak about various productions of the Queen of Spades, which had become controversial within the Soviet Union at that time, but if you think we should later, I can do so. But the Queen of Spades strangely became the focus of attention in Moscow, and now, for heaven's sakes, look what's going on in Paris.

I spoke later to a person at the Ministry of Culture and I said, "What in heaven's name is going on?" and she said, "Well, we didn't know what in heaven's name was going on, but the way these people were handling a new staging of the Queen of Spades, we didn't know whether the countess after all was going to kill Gherman in the second act." This is what she said and, of course, it's absurd. It's just another example--and we'll touch it up a little in the final draft--of the degree to which Jack Matlock felt that a manifestation of central control over all aspects of Soviet life could be made literal by focusing on a cultural event. For me it was sheer joy and a pleasure to be asked to follow up, and increased and enhanced measurably my credibility and the embassy's credibility--and Jack knew that--among these people who were in the advance guard of the cultural elites.

Q: There were a couple of other episodes in the cultural area during that tour. You spoke about the bulldozer incident.

BENSON: Well, the bulldozer incident occurred just before I came or before I came. It's the incident in which a group of Soviet artist, most of them not members of the Artists Union, tried to erect an outdoor exhibit--I think it was in the Smilevski Park--and they found a clearing there and they brought pallets on which they put various of their works and very quickly erected their exhibit. I don't know how many works were on display, I repeat I was not there. Now the event had been generally advertised, certainly by word of mouth and maybe 200 people, including newspaper correspondents and representatives of embassies were there. And then, around the corner came a couple of bulldozers, and they leveled the playing field. It might very well have been a playing field. That was the bulldozer incident, and it was widely reported. Let's say there were newspaper reporters there besides Moscow, and they reported on it. It was terribly embarrassing. By the time I came to the Soviet Union in June of 1975, they had decided, the authorities, that they had to handle this a little differently. There was an outpouring at that time of creative energy among the plastic artists, the graphists, sculptors. Moscow was alive with creative energy. What they did--and they couldn't continue having bulldozer incidents; it was

just not useful--so what they did was give--you're not going to believe this--the beekeepers pavilion of the Vedanha [Ed: Pchelovodstvo pavilion of the VDNH (Beekeeping Pavilion of the Exhibition of Economic Achievement).] It's an ongoing permanent exhibit in the grounds given over to it. It's located a little bit out of town, but there's a big subway stop right there.

Beekeeping is a big deal in the Soviet Union, and they had a beekeepers pavilion, which they emptied out. It's permanent exhibit, you see, which they emptied out, and they allowed a group of artists and individual artists. I'm not certain the administrative niceties of this, but the Artists Union was officially empowered to be helpful, and they did, so that a variety--it was a huge exhibit--could be shown. Press and TV came from Scandinavia, from France, from Germany, Austria, to cover the opening and to cover the crowds which lined up. There were police officers, KGB out there. You couldn't get in for the crowds. People would wait. We're talking about an art exhibit. Bill, both of us are smiling. We know what this is political art.

Now, as opposed to Metropol, which we've already talked about, which occurred several years later, the images in the art which was depicted in the beekeepers pavilion, many of them anyway, had certain political implications. Some were not approved. Others were narrowly approved. And they bore the same relationship to the control apparatus that Yuri Lubimov's Taganka Theater productions did. They pressed against the line of what would be allowed in substance, which the Metropol Almanac, which have already discussed did not really do. In the Metropol there was form; content, yes, but it was mostly sexual, which was troubling to the authorities.

But the beekeepers pavilion's exhibit did have images which were not very explicitly but certainly implicitly very, very critical on one's solitude or aloneness, or the use of colors to emphasize certain gestures. Works of art, as you very well know, thinking back to early Christian art, offer powerful messages and images. It was fascinating. There were, I think, two of these. There might have been three, one here after the other. By the time they had had the second, I guess, the authorities had decided that there had to be another way of handling this phenomenon, which was the creative energies of the Moscow artists, the interests of the public, foreign publicity, a stir within the Artists Union, and so the graphics section, it was called, of the Moscow Union of Artists spun off an unofficial, I guess you'd call it, a unit.

A man, whose name I now forget, became the manager of what became known as the Malaya Gruzinskaya Gallery. Malaya Gruzinskaya is a street not far from the American embassy. There several rooms on two, or where there three, floors in a building, which was owned by Moscow City. There rooms were made into exhibit halls, and a group of artists, some of whom were members of the Artists Union and some of whom were not, were allowed to exhibit. These were phenomenally successful--you know, lines around the block, police, order was being maintained in the line. Obviously we could go in because we had diplomatic identity cards, became very friendly with the artists, very friendly with this guy who ran the outfit. He had an office in the back. It was always suspected that he told the artists that he would encourage them to sell but he thought that a gallery director usually got about 30 percent and that he would not mind being treated as a gallery director. Once again, Matlock thought this was terribly interesting, and once again we reported on it. I was helped in this case by Jack Harrod, who was on my staff. He knew some of the artists, and Ray Smith, who was a State Department officer, also became interested in this phenomenon; remember it was not too far from the embassy. He became very friendly with some of the artists, he and his wife. It was, of course, a fascinating aspect of our years in the

Soviet Union. The exhibits here were endless. There was one after the other, one opening after the other, good stuff. You see here in this, of course, an outlet for energies that the Soviet authorities were now more intelligently trying to release slowly and in a controlled way as opposed to putting a total damper on it.

Q: So in a way this is a foretaste of Gorbachev's perestroika, culturally speaking?

BENSON: I think very definitely, very, very definitely. But, you know, as the phrase goes, the appetite grows with the feeding on it, if you know the reference, which we won't go into, but it percolated about and around. It was a time of stirring. It was a time of movement from below and accepting of it from the middle and above.

Q: Did this movement get any protection from some of the younger and more intelligent elements of the party hierarchy?

BENSON: Well, obviously or it wouldn't have happened, but I cannot tell you who would be distinguished in this matter. I do know that--you will find this cute--before the exhibits, *vernissage*, people from the various organs would come down and look at the works, and even suggest that they might like to buy. '*Vernissage*' is the French word for 'opening'. As it was being hung, there would be representatives of the cultural organs, just as they would visit Yuri Lubimov's theater in the pre-dress rehearsal to see whether this would pass, so too would these exhibits be visited. And many people were, we heard, collecting these works on their artistic merit. Yes, it was a period that prefaced or presaged Gorbachev's *glasnost* very definitely, and followed Khrushchev's thaw.

Q: Right, with the support of the so-called 'men of the '60s'. Anything else in general about the experience in Moscow 1975-1979 or the circumstances of your moving on in 1979? What about the USIS exhibits that were touring the Soviet Union in the late 1970s?

BENSON: Bill, I'll have to look at my records, my little pocket calendars, to see what were the names of the exhibits and give them credit in the form of this interview, and I will do that in that in a post-scriptum. They visited six Soviet cities, each of them for a month, each with a month between cities, so it took a year for them to play their way through the Soviet Union. Then there would be a bit of down time, and then would come the next one. During the life of the first one mentioned, there would be advance work on where one would place, and how one would place, the next exhibit. It was a permanently ongoing effort. It cost millions of dollars of USG money. It was an extraordinary effort, and we should speculate a bit later on the effect. But it came to be a traveling USIS program effort which was very broad in its approach. We would have an exhibit on a given subject. There would be people who would be visiting the exhibit and they would see the exponents on the wall. They would get an enormously attractive, really beautifully done, brochure, which was really a magazine, on the exhibit, four color printed, so on. There would be certain handouts that commercial exhibitors would have given to USIA, and some of their machinery or some of their tools or whatever would have been part of the exhibit. There was a library in the core of the exhibit which had books and materials on the theme of the exhibit, to which the general public had no access, but important people and institutions, other libraries in the city in which the exhibit took place would be invited. We had experts on the subject of the

exhibit who would be sitting within this library and who were hosts to the people who would come.

Q: Would you make copies of this material available to the libraries, assuming that they could accept them?

BENSON: Sometimes we did and could. The USIA had a budget, separate from the exhibit budget, for the presentation of printed materials, and we could “take orders” or offer a list to USIA and procure materials and, yes, we could do that. Further, as the use of the exhibit as a venue for programming developed, we would use this library as a conference room. The library would be configured so that it had conference tables. Again, the USIA would recruit and bring in people who were expert on the theme of the exhibit, and we would have a person from my staff who traveled with the exhibit. There was always a person from the P&C staff in Moscow, the USIS staff in Moscow, Press and Cultural Service, who traveled with the exhibit. It was a Foreign Service Officer, and this person would make contact in the city with groups presumably interested in the subject of the exhibit, and informal meetings with experts from the United States, and rather more formal seminars would be developed.

An agricultural USA exhibit, for example, in Kiev had some of Iowa’s, Indiana’s, and Illinois’ greatest experts in growing of hybrid corn and the raising of pigs, hog raising, brought in to meet in very formal sessions with their counterparts from the Republic of Ukraine. Finally, as we developed this program extension, we would have the cooperation of the host organizations. The seminars were held outside of the exhibit and were very extensive. The ones in Kiev were exemplary. I learned more about the genetics of hogs and how much cholesterol you can ingest from pig meat as compared with cow meat and became convinced that it was better to eat pork. And then there was feeding. These were experts, true experts. The United States Department of Agriculture contributed some, as did American agricultural schools. In fact, we found out in this particular exhibit that they knew of each other because they read each other’s scholarly scientific literature.

Thus, these exhibits, as they moved through the Soviet Union for a month in each city, if we did our work right and energetically, were extraordinarily impactful. It is my feeling that we got our money’s worth, considering how closed the Soviet Union was at the time. We went to Tbilisi, Odessa, Irkutsk, and Kiev. There were many cities, of course, which were closed at that time, as you know. We were in Tashkent, we were in Baku later on, we were in the Baltic States, which offered special problems. In fact, I think we decided not to go there finally. You know, we couldn’t fly the flag in the Baltic States.

Q: Because of the American non-recognition policy.

BENSON: That’s right. And the question then was can we have an American exhibit which doesn’t fly the American flag, and the decision was no. So we contented ourselves with very low-level programming in the Baltic States. We went to Minsk and St. Petersburg, which were proximate, and tried through VOA to advertise the proximity of the American exhibit, which led to terrific, let’s say, crowd control problems for the Soviet organs of authority, especially in Minsk. Busloads would be chartered from the Baltic States. We always advertised on the VOA

that here's this exhibit in Minsk, for example, and that there would be Estonian speaking, Lithuanian speaking, and Latvian speaking guides, who also spoke Russian. Come on down and you will find people who speak your language. So, busloads would come. Now they had control apparatus up in the Baltic States too, but, nevertheless, somehow or other, busloads would arrive.

Today is June 19, 2000, and this tape is to provide some addenda to the general discussion of Ray's experiences in Moscow. We have some additional topics to look back on. First would be the microwave incident that occurred, I believe in 1976, shortly after you began your first tour in Moscow.

BENSON: A little less than a year later, yes. It was under Ambassador Walter Stoessel. The decision was made that the fact that the Soviets were beaming microwaves at the embassy for over a decade--may have been closer to 15 years, I can't recall exactly--that this was in danger of leaking, and rather than having it leak, it would be announced. Our side knew about this from the very beginning whenever they started it, because we measured. We had apparatus at the embassy that would measure--don't know how to put it--would react to, be aware of, such waves. This goes back at least to the early 1960s and there was a whole record of protests to the Soviets about this, who say they cannot imagine how this could have happened. The embassy would point out that our apparatus had measured the locations--1, 2, 3, 4, whatever they were, they had names--and the strength of these microwaves. The Soviets will say they can't imagine how we could be in such error about what was going on, and this went on for that length of time.

Q: What was the presumed purpose of the microwaves they were beaming?

BENSON: The presumed purpose, as far as I know it--there may have been a final determination at one point but I don't know that--the presumed purpose was to interfere with our (a) transmissions and (b) monitoring of ambient messages in Moscow.

Q: In a sense it was jamming of your communications?

BENSON: That was one of the possible, if not even probable, uses of the microwave. The third possibility, which was mentioned, is that it can be very damaging of health and that it was an attempt to sicken the embassy. The microwaves were directed at the upper floors of the embassy. That's where our communications were. That's where the attaché's office was with its communications, and that's where, it was presumed, our inward communications, i.e., our listening on the Soviets, was located.

Q: Was there any evidence of people actually being sickened by this?

BENSON: Well, that's a very, very big and long story. There were data which showed that the females, women, who worked in the upper floors of the embassy, notably in the Defense attaché's office, where spouses, who had clerical skills, would be employed. Among this group there was an unusual concentration of breast cancer among such women, if you took the data back awhile. There were other more anecdotal--the breast cancer could be determined statistically--but there were other, more anecdotal, evidence from people who had served in the embassy. For example, my predecessor, David Nalle, reported, as this was made public, that he

felt headaches, insomnia, tension as you were trying to go to sleep--therefore insomnia--restlessness. This was, of course, public information as one of the effects of microwaves, and he reported that he had suffered from just that in the last two years of his tour. He had a four-year tour prior to mine. He had my office, and his desk, as mine, was across the wall from one of the major sources. It was a shack on the building across Tchaikovsky Street...

Q: Which was the main drag out in front of the embassy.

BENSON: Yes, that's what it was called at that time. There's a new name now, don't know what it is, but it was Tchaikovsky Street, and there was a shack on the roof of the large apartment house across the street which was, we had determined, one of the sources of the microwaves.

You might as well put on the list of things you want to ask about, the tunnel. These were exciting days. This was the second tour. We had a great deal of concern expressed by the people at the embassy and by people who had served there for many tours over the years. There were, of course, legitimate accusations that the State Department didn't pay sufficient attention to the possible health effects of these microwaves on the employees. There was research which was adduced showing that microwaves can be injurious to your health. In due course, there was a medical survey that the State Department initiated trying to get data from people who served in Moscow and from people who were in Moscow on the effects on them, what ailed them if anything, what was their medical history. There were experts whom the State Department hired who came out to Moscow to talk with us. The basic message of all of this was not quite that microwaves were good for you but it was almost that. Some of us at the embassy were rather furious at the whole effort, and yet what could one say? Are we right? Are they right? What do we know? This went on for a long time. We were all subject to very frequent blood tests. We all became amateur hematologists. We would sit in the snack bar and ask each other, "How are your eosinophils [Ed: white blood cells that are one of the immune system's components] today?" There was all manner of testing. We were encouraged to have blood tests more frequently for years to come. Leukemia was a possible effect.

Q: Was that only feared, or was there any evidence of it?

BENSON: Well, you know, all of us got finally some paper or other on--I think it was Johns Hopkins, the epidemiological folk, were hired to collect all the surveys, collect all the data that could be collected, and to come up with a judgment. And the judgment that we were allowed to see, I suppose--let's not say there was any other--but the result of the survey was the there is nothing they can lay their hand on. [Ed: see <http://www.scribd.com/doc/13616226/The-Moscow-Embassy-incident>]

Q: How did this come to a head in February 1976?

BENSON: Well, all I know is that there was good evidence that it was about to leak. It could have been to a Congressman or the press, I'm not sure, but a door was about to open.

Q: And then there would be a scandal because the State Department presumably hadn't taken the problem seriously enough.

BENSON: Well, had taken it seriously, you could show there was evidence of how many times they had complained, but they hadn't made it public and tried to use the weight of that revelation as a pressure against the Soviets and, therefore, to help terminate it. In fact that's what happened in February 1976. In fact, I did not attend that first press conference. Ambassador Stoessel called me to his office and said we were supposed to go off this evening to Minsk with Senator Ed Brook to open the USIS exhibit there. "I'm going to have a press conference tomorrow. I will not go to Minsk. You probably have some remarks." I did." He said, "Expand them by a paragraph, introduce Brook, and you two will open the exhibit." Brook was the honored speaker. We would just do the introduction. And then he told me what was going to happen, and it did happen. I wasn't there for the outcry which the press made. "How come...?" and so on and so forth.

Q: Shall we go on to the next little crisis you had in 1977 with the fire at the embassy?

BENSON: That was an interesting one. It happened in the summer, I think July, of 1977. A fire broke out. It was on the upper floors down the hall from my office on a Friday evening. The economics counselor, who had a large office at the end of the hall, left his coffeepot on. He left the electric coil-wire heating unit under the coffeepot on, and it burned a hole in the floor and started a fire. The embassy was essentially closed and empty. And as you know the American embassy there--we're talking about the eighth floor--the flames went up the eighth, ninth, tenth, and then you have the mansard or the attic in which there was a lot of equipment, and then you have the roof on which there was a lot of equipment. The fire went up, which is a normal thing. It burned down too, but basically it went up. The Soviets had in Moscow some extremely up-to-date equipment. The fire department in the Soviet Union--I have no idea what it is now--was a unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Q: The Ministry of Internal Affairs, of course, was the uniformed police.

BENSON: The uniformed police, yes. Very serious business, the uniformed police in the Soviet Union, and they had an amazing, it turned out, amount of data on the interior construction of the American embassy. These were the days when the char force, Soviet char force would clean the eighth floor and the ninth floor, not the tenth or the attic--no, seventh, eighth, and ninth.

Q: They'd clean the secret area, but not the top secret area.

BENSON: Well, we had top secret in our safes too. But accompanied on their rounds by Marines. But the location of every piece of furniture and every safe and who sat where was available to the Ministry of Interior on a map, or a plan. Well, the fire broke out, the fire was hot, and the fire moved down the halls of the embassy, moved down the hall of the eighth floor away from the economics counselor's office. The hall had just been refurbished, with plywood wall panels which were separated from the old wall by one-by-two boards, so there was a hollow space between the new plywood wall panels, which had a wood-grain veneer. There was a one-inch space between this plywood panel and the old wall.

Q: Just right for the fire to move through.

BENSON: Precisely what happened. It roared down the hall. This was *post factum* analysis. Well, pretty soon the flames were licking out of the top floor windows. The police cordoned off the street. Muscovites gathered. People were evacuated from their housing areas, like we from the north wing were all on the sidewalk, were all in the street, looking up. Water was being poured in enormous quantities into the embassy. In fact, cascaded down the inside of the building. As you are aware, half of the damage of a fire is the water damage. It took out the seventh, the sixth, and the fifth floors, which were at that time residences for the senior attaché staff. All of their clothes were ruined, all of the furniture ruined. There was a point here with Ambassador Toon had to make a decision about whether to invite the Soviet fire fighters into the embassy. They told him that the building was going to be devoured totally if they were not allowed to go in with their pickaxes and do the right thing, break it apart. They would go in with hoses, up the staircase all the way. After a bit he decided to let them in, which he was quite criticized for later, because the floors affected were all the classified floors.

They went in with representatives of the embassy's security staff and chief administrative officers and did not go into the tenth floor and the attic. They did go into the lower floors, seventh, eighth, ninth, and kept the fire from going down. They shot a lot of water up above, and they shot water from these enormous stepladders they had, also up above, that came down so the top floors eventually the fire was put out leaving gaping holes in the roof. As soon as daybreak came, lo and behold, there were helicopters hovering over the embassy taking pictures of everything they could. It was amazing, Bill. As the fire was put out and they evacuated the area, several of us went up to the top floors, those of us who were not earlier escorts of the fire folk. It was carnage. I have pictures of my melted typewriter. I was one of the persons at the embassy who reported losses. On the left top desk drawer I had a series of small address books and appointment books which went back to my previous tours. I always did that because I could keep up with my friends and things like that. The top two books were missing; both covered contacts from my Turkish tour. They were gone.

Q: Oh, do you presume they were lifted by one of the Soviet fire fighters?

BENSON: Oh, yes, of course they were lifted. They were there earlier Friday, and they weren't there in the wee hours of Saturday morning. Toon took a certain amount of guff but not seriously. I was unaware that anything of true classified worth was missing. Saturday morning we had no communications. By Saturday night we had communications. It was the most amazing thing I ever saw in my life. Where they came from, I think Frankfurt, with a--I forget the name of the kit, something like 'go ready' or whatever.

Q: Oh, you mean some American personnel came flying in that day?

BENSON: Absolutely, either that day or the next, but I think that day. They set up--it was an absolute miracle--in what used to be the basement mail room a jerry-rigged series of apparatuses that sufficed to put the embassy on line so that it could both receive and send encrypted material. Then we sorted out the problem of what to do. The USIS offices on the top, in other words those that were around my office, the classified offices, were totally unusable. So we moved down into the USIS downstairs offices on the first floor. We moved in eight Americans and two ticker machines, one the TASS ticker and the other the AP (Associated Press) ticker. We assumed we

were going to be there for four months. We were there for a little over a year. Our office moved out three Soviet employees which were crammed into closets and things like that. They read the newspapers and that sort of things, not very much more. Eight of us, including myself--I was a PAO--and seven others from the top floor moved into that space. It was absolutely unbelievable, and it was a fine hour for the people who worked under those conditions. They could not replace certain wiring until the whole building would be rewired. I never had a phone that allowed me to connect with my secretary for all those months. I had to yell through the door, "Matilda!" Several of the assistant officers worked on their laps. Amazing.

Q: But this illustrates how people in a difficult post like that under adversity will pull together.

BENSON: Absolutely. Whether it illustrates anything about the American character--where if a barn burns down the community rallies behind to help that farmer to put up a new barn--I would be willing to say yes. It was a fine period in the embassy's life, and we ended up with better offices.

Q: Now, the problems of security continued to plague the embassy. I recall one or more episodes involving Marine guards.

BENSON: Let me talk about that in a minute, but go back to the period under the heading of security, the period after the fire. We had one break-in that I will call immediately to your attention. It was of the Pentecostals.

Q: Oh, these were Russian Pentecostals who were seeking political asylum and camped out in the embassy starting on June 27, 1978.

BENSON: About eight of them. The embassy at that time had open arches, which you recall, for vehicular traffic. The Soviet guard would be walking up and down the sidewalk outside. With Marine guard under the archway, in the archway, not standing there looking out from the archway to the sidewalk. Eight of these people somehow or other got right by the Soviet and passed the Marine, took the first door to the right and, lo and behold, they were in the waiting room of the consulate. There were some doors to the right, and that was our offices where all of the USIS staff. As I said, three Soviets out, eight Americans in. That's where we were after the fire.

So there they were and they sat in the consulate on the leather benches, crammed next to each other, reading their Bibles to each other. We didn't know quite what to do, I mean 'we' the embassy not 'we' USIS. Various officers came down and tried to talk them out of the embassy: "This is no way that you're going to get to the United States." They wouldn't budge.

Q: However, having gotten as far as they did would mean immediate arrest if they left the embassy.

BENSON: They knew that, yes, and so they stayed there. Gradually some of the Evangelists, or some of those of the Evangelical Church persuasion in the embassy, led by the Baptists, created a duty roster to bring food and drink to these people and, of an evening when the consulate would

be locked up, to come down and pray with them. This went on for weeks and months. Ambassador Toon was terribly frustrated. He would not grab them and throw them out. He tried to reason them out. People from the consular office and from the political office would talk with them and reason with them. They didn't budge. Finally space was found within the embassy. There was a small apartment, a studio apartment, for the courier who brought in the classified pouch to overnight for a day or two. It had a tiny little gas stove, or electric stove, and it had a shower, and it had a john and a bed and an easy chair. And into this studio they moved eight people. It was called the dungeon because it had a small window opening onto the sidewalk about eight inches high and two feet long and bars on the window. So they were now out of the consulate, but here they were in the dungeon. State Department assigned a small amount of money to the embassy to pay for food, so individual officers in the embassy were no longer on a duty roster. They were fed by the embassy snack bar. Eventually the barber's office--there was a Russian woman who was the barber--next door to this apartment was taken from her and she was put elsewhere, and the apartment was expanded to be a little larger. To come to the end of the story, they did not leave until 1983. They were there for five years. When we came in on our second tour, they were gone. They had left that morning and immigrated to the U.S..

One could go into what one knows of the negotiations with the Soviets to let them out. An important role was played by Olin Robinson, again, of Middlebury. He was asked by the State Department, because of his Baptist Church connections, to come in and deal with the Soviet authorities who were, shall we say, in liaison with the Russian Church. He did that, and it was not to any effect.

Q: The solution to let them out of the country must have occurred before the Korean airliner incident in 1983, which would have soured relations?

BENSON: Oh yes. KAL occurred the night of October 30 to September first. This occurred in June and was the product of much diplomatic negotiation.

Q: Do I recall another episode of someone getting in the embassy and taking asylum, or am I thinking of another country?

BENSON: There were two incidents which occurred in 1979. By then we have now left our temporary quarters down there next to the consulate and were back up in the remodeled eighth floor. Somebody came into the consular section, now expanded in space, and announced that he had an explosive device attached to his belt, he flashed the device, and he would go to the United States through the courtesy of the embassy or he would blow himself and them up. Well, this went on for quite a while. The press somehow or other, bless their hearts, the American Press, heard about this. They gathered. We are getting calls upstairs in my office for a statement by the embassy on this. We were in touch with Ambassador Toon, who says, "For now, no comment." He was in touch with the Soviet authorities. I cannot say that I had then perfect knowledge or that I have now perfect recollection, but later in the evening--the weather was warm, the temperature's pretty summery--the press is gathered in the inner courtyard of the embassy. I and my staff are trying to hold them back. Looking straight ahead are the windows of the consular general. It's in the north wing, the first floor. Mac Toon invited into the embassy to that point either a sharpshooter or two sharpshooters from the Ministry of Interior, who crawled along the

protruding stone baseboard, of the embassy and fired into the inner room where this fellow was holding several senior officers hostage. They did not, to my recollection, kill him but they wounded him badly, and his apparatus went off, and wounded him further, but it was not sufficient to hurt other people. He was taken out and given to the Soviets. Did we know what happened? I certainly do not. The place smelled of teargas for a long time.

The second event was in perhaps May when I and the DCM, who was by then Mark Garrison, were going to go off to Novgorod. As he on the third floor and my wife and I on the eighth floor--or were we on the seventh?--were preparing to pack our bags, there were several sharp noises down in the embassy courtyard which sounded like backfires. We all looked out, and there was quite a scene there, so we tore down the stairs. In the courtyard was a taxi. There was a guy. He had come here in a taxi by placing a revolver against the back of the driver's neck, and he said, "Into the embassy you will go." The guy said, "I can't do that. What is the alternative?" So the guy came down Tchaikovsky Street, gunned his taxi, went right through the archway past the astounded Marines. Have to make a fast left there. He did and came up against the wall between the embassy and the other apartment building. As the car crashed into it, the guy jumped out of the back seat with his pistols and fired them at the wall of the embassy and waited to be apprehended. What he had was apparently a very valuable set of 19th century double-barreled fowling pieces, and he had shot a bunch of shotgun shells from these fowling pieces against the embassy wall. Well, Mark Garrison and I were standing around, and he called Mac Toon, and Mac, who was really very cool, said, "Have the Marines escort the man out of our building." Mark said, "We're already working on that, sir." And, in fact, the fellow very shortly, surrounded by the Marines who didn't lay a hand on him--I should say, everything having happened as it did--rather meekly walked out. Mark calls the Ambassador and says, "Sir, request your permission to continue with the trip with Ray Benson." And he says, "Go ahead. Novgorod's a wonderful city." So off we went.

DONALD B. KURSCH
Economic and Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1975-1976)

US Commercial Office
Moscow (1976-1978)

Office of Soviet Affairs
Washington, DC (1984-1986)

Donald B. Kursch was born in New York in 1942. He graduated from Harvard University in 1964 and served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1964 to 1965. His assignments abroad after entering the Foreign Service in 1966 included Zurich, Budapest, Moscow, Frankfurt, Bonn and Brussels. Mr. Kursch was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: Alright, you took Russian.

KURSCH: I took Russian.

Q: So, you were really in studies until '77, around?

KURSCH: No. In fact, I got shortchanged. There were openings in Moscow, and I bid on a Moscow job. I wanted the economics course—I felt I had to have it as an economics officer—so for the second half of the year they put me in a six-month Russian language course and assigned me to a job at the US Commercial Office that only required a 2S, 2R in Russian. This is how I managed to fit in the economics and Russian language training in one year.. So, I took six months of economics and six months of Russian, which wasn't enough.

Q: So you got out there in '76.

KURSCH: I got out there in August of '76.

Q: And, you were there from '76 to when?

KURSCH: I left in January '78 because I was declared *persona non grata* by the Soviet government.

Q: Well, we'll come to that. But you went to the... your job was what?

KURSCH: We had, under the US-Soviet commercial agreements that were signed by President Nixon and Brezhnev in 1973, a stand-alone commercial office in Moscow that was across the street from the embassy. We were part of the embassy, but we were a separate entity. It was actually quite a unique operation for the United States at the time there.

Q: When you went out there in '76, what was the state in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union?

KURSCH: Well, there had been hope for an improved bilateral relationship when we signed these agreements in 1973. Then you had the Helsinki Accords, that were signed in 1975. Nixon and Brezhnev had exchanged visits. I think that there had been hope for an overall increase in contacts. On the Soviet side, there was the desire for greater trade and technological exchanges. We were hoping to increase our export markets. The Soviets believed that they could isolate increased trade and scientific contacts from other elements, such as cultural exchanges and other infectious elements from the West. But, there had been some disappointment because of our inability to deliver Most Favored Nation trading status to the Soviets, which had been promised in 1973. As you will recall, we also had the question of Soviet immigration policies, particularly the problems particularly with Jewish immigration and the link between that and Most Favored Nation treatment. During the time I was there, I would say disappointment began to set in, although it got worse after I left.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

KURSCH: Walter Stoessel was Ambassador when I arrived, he must have been there about a month or so, and then Malcolm Toon was the ambassador afterwards. And Jack Matlock was the DCM. He was the person I answered to.

Q: How did you find ambassador Toon? Was he interested in the commercial side?

KURSCH: He was very much interested in our presence. He loved our events. He loved to come down and open them up. We had a good arrangement with the Soviet Chamber of Commerce and Industry. We would pick out eight or nine thematic events a year, and every month we would do a particular trade promotion event that we would organize on a thematic basis. So, we had something, for example, on equipment and technology for treating air pollution, water pollution, heart disease and even raising poultry. And we'd bring over companies that sold these products, and we had what we'd call seminar mini-exhibits. We'd give everybody a little bit of exhibition space, a translator, and then we would have an opening event. The ambassador would come over and open the event and he'd have to push his way through all these Soviets who were in our little trade office. For the Soviets, it was really a bit like a little trip to America, it was a very pretty office. So, when the ambassador would get back to the embassy, and then he'd turn to some of the other sections, particularly USIA, and say, "Why can't you pack them in like that?"

Q: [[laughter]

KURSCH: He liked opening our shows.

Q: You mentioned all this equipment, but did many sales result from these, or could there?

KURSCH: Well, we sold things, certainly, that were licensable, I mean everything that we dealt with were in the quote, "nonstrategic" area, so a lot of medical equipment, equipment related to agricultural production, anti-pollution equipment, these kinds of things. I think it was kind of hard to tell how much sales really resulted and numbers produced were a bit of a scam by the Commerce Department. At the end of each of our shows, we asked each of our exhibitors how much they expected to sell in the coming year, and they'd put a number down. We'd send those back to Washington, and Commerce would collect them all and add them up. But how much was really sold was pretty hard to verify. But what was extremely useful, was the opportunity to do some market research in the Soviet Union which at the time probably was next to impossible. This was a very inexpensive way for a company to come over, we charged them \$600-800, for this week in Moscow. We brought in an audience because we cooperated with the state trading companies who were the buyers and we would bring them into our office and have this intensive contact. So, if people were curious about trading with the Soviet Union, it seemed to me to be a good way to find out something about the place.

Q: I was wondering on this, a lot of our equipment requires... you know, you get a heart machine, or an anti-pollution machine, usually means there's an awful lot of equipment behind that piece of equipment, you know, a whole infrastructure to use. And for somebody to just get a particular piece of equipment really doesn't let it operate the way it should, because it assumes you have a whole series of knowledgeable people and equipment behind when there wouldn't be in the Soviet Union.

KURSCH: Well, I think that would have depended a lot on the industry concerned. Certainly in oil and gas we did a lot of business in the energy field in those days. The oil and gas equipment manufacturers were there big time. We even had large, specialized shows in Moscow for that equipment. The way the Soviet system worked Soviet companies or state organizations would say, for example “We need certain kinds of equipment for our hospitals, and we need this specialized equipment from the West.” If a Soviet organization, had the money, certainly the Kremlin hospital probably had the money, they would make an application to the appropriate state trading company which would then go out and try to buy that piece of equipment. So, how it functioned later would be, a question how well the supplier was going to service the equipment, after setting it up.. And in many cases, they bought the equipment because the money was there and it was a prestige thing. Such equipment may not have been used very effectively.

Q: Did you have much follow-through? I mean where people who sold the equipment saying, “They didn’t pay.”, “They’re not using it.”, or this sort of thing? Or were there problems on the Soviet side where our people were delivering?

KURSCH: The Soviet market was a difficult market to penetrate. Of course, they had a monopolist’s power, or only one buyer, so the buying companies, the state agencies could play off the various foreign suppliers against each other. Although what we did discover is once you cracked the market, the possibility of getting repeat orders was pretty good. So companies would take the chance. You had one outstanding example, I remember. Pepsi-Cola, which cracked the market ahead of Coca-Cola, was widely sold in the Soviet Union. Pepsi then concluded a big deal to bring Soviet vodka to the United States. They gave this vodka a spiffy image and put nice labels on the bottles and successfully marketed it to Americans as a premium product.. So we had those examples of success, I think it was certainly a fact that the Soviet Union fascinated people, and the market appeared to be sizable. And their needs were certainly there.

Q: How did the Soviet trade officials treat you? Were they tolerant?

KURSCH: I’d say on the whole, we were treated pretty well, because we had something that they wanted. In the Soviet eyes, there was this first of all fascination with the idea of reverse engineering our products. They felt that if somehow they could only figure out how we made this stuff, they might be able to copy it and grab secrets from our companies. Indeed, a fair amount of equipment was bought for that very purpose. The Soviets would buy a couple of prototypes, take it out to their laboratories, and try to figure out if they could make something similar. I don’t think they were ever terribly successful doing that. I even wonder how successful they were in the military sphere. There they seemed to solve problems in their own ways. On the whole, our relationships were certainly correct. Generally contracts were honored. If companies did sell things, they got paid. Specifications were important. But for most of the time, our relations were correct, if not, particularly cordial. It was very hard to make personal friendships there. And that was the great disappointment, because my wife and I, when we had been in Hungary, had figured out to make friends with young Hungarians. But we got to Moscow and it was a much more tightly controlled system. I guess that’s one of the things I guess I remember most clearly, how the KGB would do nasty little things such as when you would go away on a trip, they would turn the electricity off in your house, so all the frozen food in your refrigerator would melt and spoil.

But, they then would turn they would turn the electricity back on before you got returned home again so you wouldn't know the food was rancid until you tried defrosted it again and tried to cook it. Or they'd flatten the tires on your car so you'd get a flat tire about 200 meters away from the house in the freezing cold. That happened to me about five times during the first months I was in Moscow. There was a good deal of petty harassment like this. Russians were not allowed to your home. I tried to invite my Russian teacher to come and watch a movie. I knew that she would report on us, but she couldn't get permission to come.

One incident, in fact, with this Russian teacher demonstrates the paranoia that must have existed in the country at the time. We became rather friendly, because as I told you already, I had only six months of Russian before coming to post, so I took a lot of Russian lessons in Moscow in an effort to reach minimum proficiency. My teacher and I agreed that we were going to avoid political articles: instead I wanted to read humorous stories, , When we had these trade shows, she would try to help me out with specialized vocabulary. In this connection she was always asking me if I knew her father-in-law who had been a senior engineer in one of the Soviet industrial ministries. One day, she told me, that this father-in-law next weekend was having his 70th birthday and that she and her husband were having a big party in their apartment. She said "You probably know him because he used to be the senior engineer in such and such a Ministry. But I didn't know him. She said, "we're going to have a surprise gift for him. The surprise gift is going to be a case of Coca-Cola because we got this from the embassy as a New Year's present. We have kept this case of Coca-Cola, wrapped it up, and we're going to present it to him. We've also written this letter from President Jimmy Carter congratulating senior engineer Ivanov on his 70th birthday." Actually, she continued, "I even have the old translator from his ministry. She's going to come and translate the letter from English into Russian."

I thought, that is kind of cute. Maybe the Russians have some humor after all. After a couple of weeks, I'd realized I had forgotten to ask about the birthday party.. During my lesson I said, "You know, Tamara, you never told me about your father-in-law's birthday party?" She said, "Oh, it was a disaster." I responded, "What happened?" She replied, "Well, first of all the translator wouldn't translate this message because she thought that it must be an important message of state and her English wasn't so good any more." So, my teacher said, "I had to get up and do the translation myself." Then my sister started shouting, "Call the police. Call the police. See, Tamara you talk so much in your class that those Americans find out everything." So I said, "Well, does your father-in-law understand that this was a joke and that this message really wasn't from President Carter?" And she responded, "Well, it took my husband a week to convince his father, but he now understands that this letter wasn't genuine." But she added, "these people have never forgotten the terror of Stalin's times, and still remain so afraid of contacts with foreigners."

And I'm thought to myself, if someone like my teacher, a rather sophisticated Muscovite with a doctor's degree from Moscow State University, has a family that is so paranoid, what must it be like out in the country?

Q: Oh, boy, yeah. I'd think we'd want to put trade oil equipment shows down in Batumi, places like that. Were you able to get out and do these things?

KURSCH: I was able to get around the country a moderate amount.. It was true that most of the decisions at the time were made in Moscow because everything was highly centralized, and the in nominally independent Soviet republics, the ministries took their orders from the central authorities. But we did participate in some small shows in the Soviet hinterlands. I visited in Uzbekistan, we had a catalog show on heart disease in Tashkent. Then I went down to Tblisi Georgia, a favorite destination at the time, to a food equipment show. Interestingly, I went out to the Ural regions with the American delegation from the Tennessee Valley Authority that was studying pollution problems from coal-fired power plants. What I remember most distinctly is that the level of pollution from the Soviet plants after treatment was higher than ours before treatment. Their favorite method was blowing the smoke as high up in the sky as they could. But at that time, it was difficult to get out there because it was a closed area, and they almost never approved applications for our diplomats to travel into closed areas. The delegation from the Tennessee Valley Authority was not affected by this policy and could get in. Because President Carter had recently received the Chairman of the Soviet State Committee on Science and Technology, the Soviets made a rare exception and approved my travel. But their approval came at 11:00 pm in evening prior to the morning of my scheduled departure. I immediately packed and was at the airport early the following morning for the flight to Sverdlovsk (now Ekatarinaburg). It was the only time I was ever on an internal Soviet flight with empty seats and they must have kicked off ten people to make room for me. But I made it out there and was treated very well.

Q: How did this commercial enterprise fit with the embassy? I mean were you able to make contacts or were they asking you for information, or were you getting information for them, or what have you?

KURSCH: We did a limited amount of reporting, I think we could have done more. I'm not sure it was coordinated as well as it might have been. We were there to do trade promotion. This was in the day when the State Department, before the creation of the Foreign Commercial Service, had the lead on trade promotion. Our goal was to make contacts with businessmen, to offer businessmen who came into our trade center support, and to plan trade shows. The Commerce Department backed us up very well. They supported us materially, we all had our own little Russian cars to drive around. We acquired these cars so we would be able to support our participation at the annual Soviet trade fairs properly and cost effectively. But when I think of the traveling opportunities we had and our opportunities to meet people, we probably could have had more interaction with the rest of the embassy in terms of reporting.

Q: One of the big questions that one has to ask in light of subsequent events of anyone who served in the Soviet Union is how do we feel about the Soviet economy? Because the Soviet economy was probably the Achilles heel of the Soviet system. It just wasn't kicking through. But were we seeing that, do you think that it really wasn't working?

KURSCH: Well, the difference standards of living was obvious. I don't think we appreciated, first of all, how much the Soviet economy was distorted by the enormous inputs that went into the military. People estimate that 15%-30% of GNP may have gone to the military. So what was left over for the consumer sector was not great. But the inefficiencies in the retail sector were very obvious. There was a slipshod approach towards everything. Construction was terrible. The

quality of construction, the quality of apartments was very poor. There was a very negative, casual approach towards work by the majority of the work force. This dominant idea among Soviets was “They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work.” One of the interesting things that I had not appreciated until I got there was the informal black or gray market sector that existed side-by-side with the Soviet economy. I remember running into that in Tashkent where we were out for this trade show that I mentioned previously. I was in the hotel dining room one night with my wife.. We dined communally because of space reasons. Anyway, this young man sat down with an attractive woman next to us and began ordering champagne and caviar. He was pulling out hundred ruble notes, which was a lot of money then. We struck up a conversation, and I asked him “What do you do?” He replied, “I’m a trader.” I followed up, “Well, what trading company do you work for?” He laughed and said, “No, no. I’m a trader.” And then he explained. He said, “We’ve got a whole lot of us out here. We come from all parts of the Soviet Union, we come here every year and we trade excess goods from our home regions, goods that are produced over plan, and we trade them for cotton goods that are made here in Uzbekistan.” And he explained how they had to buy winning lottery tickets to show that they’d made money “legally” so that they could buy cars and other luxury products.. The potential for corruption in such a system was obvious. Indeed it was true, the room was full of people like him and he introduced me to a few of them. I thought of this afterwards because now, with the new economy, I mean, this must be where many of the “new” businessmen come from. There was a whole group of them. The Brezhnev period was a time of very high corruption.

Q: Was there a feeling that you were getting from your colleagues or from the Soviet side, concern about... you were approaching the end of the Brezhnev period at the time, I think.

KURSCH: Yes.

Q: His circle around him was practically using walkers. Did you get a feeling that this was not a very dynamic organization?

KURSCH: Yes, but you also had the feeling that they’d insulated themselves pretty effectively, because they gave off this façade of power, indeed from the military perspective, they certainly had it. If you looked at the balance of our conventional forces, the forces they had in central Europe, the Red Army was a very scary operation for us.

Q: Yeah.

KURSCH: The weaknesses in the system were obvious. One would not want to live in a system like that. Of course, the Soviet citizens were so isolated from the rest of the world, they were not allowed to travel, they were not even allowed to travel to Eastern Europe. We had a wonderful Foreign Service national who worked in our commercial office and we tried to get her to go to a conference that Commerce had arranged in Poland for Foreign Service Nationals. Not only did the Soviet authorities not let her go, they fired her. The Soviets terminated her contract with us. So people couldn’t get out and they didn’t know any better. They’d come up to say to you, “It really is better here, isn’t it?” I don’t know whether they really believed this, or whether they were trying to convince themselves, but the internal propaganda had a lot of effect at that time.

Q: Were you able to see any of the fissures in the nationalities group?

KURSCH: Yes, I mentioned my trip to Uzbekistan. What hit me for the first time is what a classic colonial situation it was. Because, of course, these colonies were contiguous to Russia, I don't think they registered in most Americans' minds the way the former colonies of the British and French empires did. But, certainly, going out there at the time and one could see and feel a certain tension between the indigenous people and the European Russians. I remember going to the market in Tashkent early one morning and walking around with my wife. We were the only European-looking people there and the local people were giving us some pretty dirty looks. The city of Samarkand had a clear European quarter that had probably been set up by the Russian military at the time of the czars, and you had a sense that these places were quite different from the rest of the city.

Q: Were there any particular events while you were there, before we move to the persona non grata business? Any great visits, or something happening?

KURSCH: Well, let me think, you're putting me on the spot here to come up with special events. I mean we had a very active trade promotion program.. The high point, I guess, that stand out were these trips I took around the country: to Georgia, down to Tashkent, out to central Asia, and out to the Ural regions. I can't remember being involved much in high policy making at the time. We were an action-oriented office. I did get a bit involved later, in a job in the State Department where I was the deputy director of the Office of Soviet affairs. It was a wonderful time though, in terms of being able to explore the country in a way that few Americans could, because while half the country was closed, the other half of it was open. You could drive out in the countryside on the weekends. We went out Vladimir and Suzdal, we went to Leningrad. We went to Kiev a couple of times. It was quite fascinating.

The other thing we discovered was when you got out of town, people were less afraid of you. People were more curious, they hadn't been as conditioned to be afraid of foreigners. They were more willing to talk to you. One thing I remember is we had a young assistant in Tashkent at this trade fair I'd participated in and he came to visit us in Moscow and snuck past the guard into our apartment. He had dinner with us. He started looking at the books on my shelf. I had the Gulag Archipelago from Solzhenitsyn, and he was eyeing it. I said, "Would you like it?" He said, "Can I have it?" I said, "Yes, you can have it. I can get another one." He took it as if it was a piece of gold. I do remember that. Actually those moments were quite nice. We had a couple of Russian friends, including this very interesting man who had married an American girl, who was also our babysitter and was in Moscow studying Russian. He was a very resourceful fellow who had been trained as an engineer and built his own house. But he had dropped out of the system and was living at its margins. He and wife finally emigrated. These were the kind of creative people, who if had they been able to prosper, might have made things turn out quite differently for the Soviets.. For all the trials and tribulations that Russia is going through, my sense is that these kinds of creative people are now able to do a lot more.

Q: Huh. Oh yeah. They're working their way through something. They haven't ever had essentially, ever had a real democratic society, and you know these things are still... arise like a phoenix. They take a while. Well, how did you get... what did you do that got you kicked out?

KURSCH: Well, the thing I didn't do, was that I got the chance to go after a year into the economics section of the embassy, and I decided not to do it because, of course, it takes a while for you to learn your job, and I was starting to hit my stride after about six or seven months, so I thought "It's kind of crazy to change jobs now." I'd actually taken Russian with the economic consular, Ken Skoug, and we were on pretty good terms, but I decided to stay in the commercial office a second year. We had only four American officers and two secretaries in the commercial office. We also had a couple of spouses as support personnel. However, under our agreement with the Soviets on the establishment of our respective commercial offices, each side was allowed to have up to 25 staff members. So the Soviets immediately sent to 25 people to their Washington office, and staffed many of these positions with intelligence officers, which we made clear we were not. We had no classified material at all in our office. We had a pro forma lock on the door, but no Marine guards, or any special security other than the Soviet policeman who stood at the front door. Anyway, in late December of '77, we had caught a Soviet here in the act of buying documents from an FBI agent. I didn't know about this, of course, but we caught the guy and we'd expelled him. Right after Christmas, the Soviets called one of our people in and with the request that I be removed for activities inconsistent with my diplomatic status. Of course, it came in kind of a funny way. It was on the day after New Year's, which was a holiday for us that year but not for the Soviets. Ken Skoug, the economic counselor called me up and said, "I have to see you right away. Can I come over?" I said, "No, Ken, I'll come over to your place." So I went over to his apartment,. First of all, he walked me into his study and closed the door.. He then showed me this Soviet diplomatic note requesting my expulsion.. Since we couldn't talk in the apartment, we then went out for a walk around the block. It was January, and more than a little bit cold outside, but since everything was bugged, you didn't talk in the apartments. He then explained to me, what had happened.

He said, "Jack Matlock (then the charge) is as mad as can be, and he's not going to take this. He feels that the Soviet action is outrageous given the large size of their Washington office. Jack is recommending to State that if you can't stay, ten Soviets from their Washington office should be expelled." Ken then added, "But, of course, you can't tell anybody about this because if it became public there's no possibility of making a deal with them" So I said, "Can I tell my wife?" He said, "Yes, you can tell your wife, but nobody else." So the next morning I went in to see the DCM who I normally didn't interact with all that much.

Q: Who was this?

KURSCH: Jack Matlock. He was charge at the time. And Jack is very, very competent, really one of the top Soviet expert of his generation; a superb Russian speaker. He wasn't normally that interested in our trade promotion work, but he got really interested in this. In fact, we got to know each other pretty well in the next coming weeks. So, he sent in his recommendation, and I sat tight. We waited for an answer. He said, "Actually, I think that if Washington accepts my recommendation, your chances of staying are about 50%. I think they'll back down." So, we waited, and a week later the answer came back from the State Department. They said "no, we're not going to throw out ten Soviets, but we'll throw out another Soviet, and if the Soviets then retaliate, then we'll get nasty."

So Jack looked at me and said, “Your chances of staying just dropped from 50% to 10%. But we have to continue to play the game.” But at that point, we started to make preparations to leave. We sold off a couple of things, including my wife’s ceramic kiln that never worked anyway, and we started getting ready to go. It went on for another week. The Secretary of State, who at the time was Cyrus Vance, used to meet with Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador, every week on Saturday morning. Indeed, in that second week Dobrynin was going to ask for my immediate departure, it was apparently among his agenda items, but before he could get to that, the Secretary raised the matter and said that he hoped that it could be handled amicably. Dobrynin said he’d look into it again but wasn’t too confident. So, Matlock saw that and said “Well, your chances of staying are still about 10%.

Anyway, Senator Stevenson, the son of the presidential candidate, who was then the chairman of the subcommittee that handled the Export Import bank, was in Moscow that week. The Soviets were interested in qualifying Export Import Bank credits.. Stevenson was there from Monday until Wednesday. The moment he got on the plane, the foreign ministry called up and said, “Get Kursch out of here immediately.” So, I had 48 hours to leave. I was right in the middle of preparing for this trade show, and I just said goodbye to the businessmen and said, “I have to leave now.” I went home and we started making our final preparations. Jack Matlock organized a the farewell party for me that Thursday night. Bill Brown who was the head of the political section, and who later became ambassador to Israel, led a whole team out to the airport to see me off. It was quite impressive. They had this big sendoff for me. My wife and I, our three year old daughter and our young Swiss nanny, all showed up in Frankfurt airport with our Russian fur hats. I looked like Nanook of the North. Somebody got a picture of us which we still have, and a little bit of publicity. There was an article in the New York Times.. But, yes, we were gone. I have to say, my wife hated the place. My wife was in the fashion business, and everything about the Soviet Union, the cold climate, and the lack of fashion was quite unattractive to her. She was not unhappy at all to leave. I suppose leaving in January also made it easier; it was not the best time of year to be in Russia. So that was the end of that. I thought I’d never see the place again, but quite to my surprise, I came back.

Q: Well, your final one was '84 to '86?

KURSCH: Yes, I came back to the office of Soviet Affairs, and I didn’t expect to do that because I’d been told that when I came back from Moscow, I could forget about serving in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. I was on this black list. Well, anyway, a colleague of mine from Moscow, Ken Yalowitz, who subsequently became Ambassador in Belarus and in Georgia, had that job, and he approached me. He said, “Are you interested in succeeding me?” And I said, “Well, yes.” as at the time I certainly didn’t have a better offer. I was looking around and had somebody who was trying to recruit me for a job in EB. I said to Ken, “You know, I’m damaged goods from the Soviet PNG action” We then went to see Tom Simons, who was then the office director for Soviet Affairs. Tom was later Ambassador to Poland and Pakistan and a very distinguished officer. Tom said to me, “Well, let’s see what the Soviets do. Let’s see what happens.” So, anyway, they hired me. It was a good time to be in that job, because after Ronald Reagan was reelected in 1984, he decided to try and improve relations with the Soviet Union, and particularly in the economic area. We actually won battles with the Defense Department. State and Commerce together actually seemed to be winning more often than we lost. I

remember going back to Moscow in January 1985 to a planning meeting for the US-Soviet Joint Commercial Commission whose activities had been suspended following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.. I was part of the State group in a large interagency team that included, USTR, Commerce, USDA and others. The leader of our group was Lionel Ulmer who was then the Undersecretary of Commerce. . I do remember coming into Moscow and seeing all those old revolutionary slogans on the buildings, except this time they were signed by Constantine Chernenko. When I saw that, I thought, “If a man from Mars came down and was looking for a revolutionary society, he’d put this country in last place.” The whole idea of Chernenko being a revolutionary leader was so patently ridiculous that, at that point, you thought, “This can’t go on much longer.” We did a number of things for the first Reagan-Gorbachev summit of 1985. As I recall, several of the agreements that were announced at the summit came out of our little office. We had an agreement on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), that involved the US Coast Guard. We had an agreement on safety of air traffic in the Northern Pacific, which was meant to try and deal in a small way with the Soviet shutdown of KAL 007, which took place in 1982.

Q: That’s when a KAL plane was shot down going over the Kamchatka Peninsula.

KURSCH: That’s the one. Well, we basically told the Soviets that they couldn’t again fly to the United States unless they acknowledged took some responsibility for that tragedy. Simons’ idea was that we would get them to apologize by signing this accord on North Pacific Air Safety, to put some system into effect that would make it impossible for something like KAL 007 to happen again. So, we put together rather interesting trilateral agreement between ourselves, the Japanese, and the Soviets to set up a monitoring station and something equivalent to a hot line. After a fair amount of negotiation, we were able to get that signed; at which point, then we said we would negotiate a bilateral aviation agreement, which we knew that the Soviets wanted. Typically they were somewhat difficult about working out the details for the aviation bilateral talks and only agreed at the very last minute to sit down with us prior to the summit. We then had to get Secretary Shultz to call up Secretary Elizabeth Dole, who was then the Secretary of Transportation. I remember writing a decision memo arguing the need to proceed and having my boss, deputy assistant secretary, Mark Palmer, go up to Shultz’s office. We persuaded Shultz to call Dole, and to ask for her cooperation. Dole had her people from DOT in my office the next morning with their Soviet visa applications. They clearly didn’t want to go like this and were visibly unhappy. Although this was very much a last minute thing, we got the aviation agreement completed just in time as the summit meeting was braking up. The other thing I remember when we were out in Moscow, was to tell the Soviets that their Aeroflot office could not have more than four Soviet citizens.. They didn’t like this but accepted our terms. The Soviets were great stallers and enjoyed dragging out the proceedings even for an agreement where they had been the demandeur. On Wednesday night we had 30 outstanding points. I’d sent a cable off to the Secretary’s party in Geneva where the Summit was being held saying, “I don’t see how we can wrap this up by the end of the week. We’re making no progress on the following 30 points.” The next morning, the Soviets caved in on every one of them. So we did get it done. That was an interesting time, and I guess it was also satisfying for me because I have never been a big fan of trade sanctions as a substitute for policy, and particularly the kind of sweeping trade sanctions that are often used much too often. I have a great respect for Secretary Shultz. I can recall, by the way, how the people in the Pentagon would battle even after interagency decisions had been made. Weinberger would try to go through the back door to send appeals to the President to

change his mind but the President did not change on the issues I handled. So we did make some good progress in those years. We also beat back attempts to put even more restrictions on trade. People wanted to keep out Soviet products because they were allegedly made with slave labor and things like this. DAS Mark Palmer, whom I later worked for in Budapest, was one of the few people that would take on these unpopular issues involving the Soviets, and go up and testify before Congress.

Q: You know, it does seem that trade sanctions, it comes down to if another, and I'm speaking from the American perspective... if a country is doing something we don't like, but we really can't do much about it... it's don't just stand there, do something, and trade sanctions seem to be one of the easiest things to do. It seems like you're doing something.

KURSCH: Well, it's a substitute for serious policy.

Q: Yeah.

KURSCH: If they're done unilaterally, they have no real impact at all, unless you're the sole supplier of the product. But at the time, you still had this sense, that we had much more ability to supply a product that others couldn't supply than was actually the case. Maybe in 1948 that was true, but it certainly wasn't the case true in 1978 or 1984.. And also, there was the sense that we should stand up for principle, even if we're wrong. We should stand up for principle even if others are going to make the sale, we shouldn't dirty ourselves. There's also this notion that trading is a privilege. Now, fortunately we've changed this unfortunate term of Most Favored Nation treatment to "Normal Trade Relations" and I think that this is an important change. Because the old term promoted the idea that we were somehow doing people a favor by trading with them. The appeal of trade sanctions seems to be much less strong today than it was then.

Q: Were you able to get industry to come and say, "Hell, they're not letting us sell our widgets and they're buying Australian widgets."

KURSCH: Industry was always a bit careful when dealing with the Communists.. You had certain businessmen like Armand Hammer, who had made his reputation doing big deals with the Soviets. But most US companies, and when I was in Moscow many of our biggest companies had representatives there, would be somewhat cautious in terms of being too much of an advocate for trade with the Soviets. They were fearful of how it might hurt them elsewhere. I mean there were exceptions to that. For example, Don Kendall of Pepsico was an exception. Behind the scenes quietly, I think they were certainly pushing. But much of the change of our policy then, from what I've read, was really President Reagan himself. He became fascinated with Russia. He had these well known authors, Robert Massie and his wife, who were giving him a tutorial on Russia. When he won his second term in office, there seemed to be this interest, "How can we increase communication between Americans and Russians?" And then the advent of Gorbachev, of course, really helped a great deal, when you had a new generation of Soviet leadership. As Margaret Thatcher said, "This is somebody I can do business with." That made a very substantial change.

Q: Well you mentioned the pipeline. Did this come up during this time?

KURSCH: No. I think the pipeline, as I remember it, was done and built by then. Rather this was at a time when we were trying to catch up to what some of the others were already doing in the Soviet Union. In terms of what kind of big business deal we did, I can't think of anything offhand. We never were able to give the Soviets Most Favored Nation treatment. Although, to a great extent, that was more symbolic than real because they didn't have that much to export.

Q: Yeah.

KURSCH: And, we also had restrictions on export/import bank credits. Those kinds of things.

Q: How about China? Did it come under, in those days, was it much of a player?

KURSCH: I was never really involved with China, at all. The only Chinese contact I've ever had were in Budapest. When I went back there, I did develop relationships with the Chinese DCMs because on my second assignment we could have contact with them. Whereas, on my first assignment, we didn't have any contact at all. What was a bit curious was that my common language with the Chinese in Budapest was Hungarian. What I did deal with in the office of Soviet Affairs was the effort to define our maritime border with the U.S.S.R. in the Bering Sea. We had these series of negotiations on this Soviet-US border, which I believe we may have finally settled. I dealt a lot with the office of legal affairs on that. We had some crazy Americans who were claiming Wrangel Island in the Arctic Ocean as US territory. That attracted the support of some extremist elements, even in Congress, who claimed we were giving away American patrimony. So I did have some interaction with those items.

Q: How was that? What did we do? Was Wrangel pretty much within the treaty... the Seward Purchase?

KURSCH: No, it's on top of Siberia. It's not even close. But there was some guy who worked in the agriculture department who had claimed to own the place and insisted that we'd given it away. His claims appealed to those individuals and elements who would believe ill of the State Department. But they were so far out. I remember Liz Verville, then the Deputy Legal Advisor and I went up once to brief a Congressman known as "Bullet" Bob Dorman, who was one of the more right wing members of Congress from California. Even he had to agree with us that these claims were far-fetched. But they were a nuisance, and the mail... we would get tons of mail on this from the hinterlands.

Then there was fishing. We had fishing problems, although not so many with the Russians. I do remember one, when I first came into the job, I was asked by the office of fisheries if I wanted to go to one of their regional meetings up in Alaska, and I did. I used it as an opportunity to consult with the Coast Guard in Alaska on maritime safety and rescue talks with the Soviets. We had this joint US-Soviet fishing venture out in Washington State. Anyway, I went up to this fisheries meeting in Anchorage, and there was a tough looking bunch of guys there. When the break came around, I cautiously introduced myself and asked if there were any problems they were having with the Russians that I ought to know about. The fisherman said, "Nah, no problems with the Russians, but get those Koreans. Or get the boats from Taiwan, those are the ones that are

causing the problems.” At least that was one Soviet-US problem we didn’t have.

Q: Now, during the Balkan initiative, you didn’t mention Russia. Russia’s always had this, these are Slavs, had this feeling... Did that play any factor?

KURSCH: I’m glad you asked that question. The Russians were original members of the Stability Pact as were all the countries of the EU, the countries of southeast Europe, the former Yugoslavia, plus Albania, Turkey, Hungary, Romania.. And Russia was an extra country. Interesting enough, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, and Japan initially were only facilitators. They were not originally members, and we tried to change that because the Swiss basically said, “You want our money, you make us a full member.” The French didn’t want them in because they didn’t want to empower the initiative. But, we isolated the French on this, so they finally gave in. (I found when the French were singularized, they usually would give in on something like this.) But the Russians were members, but they didn’t have any money, and they had to be a donor. Strobe Talbot initially wanted to extend the Stability Pact to Ukraine. But again, the Ukrainians didn’t have any money to give, and the Ukrainians had more people than all of the rest of the Balkans, so that didn’t go anywhere. So, that what we tried to do was avoid doing things that would give the Russians grief. A couple of times, we had to have some frank discussions with them. I remember something we did, this media charter for southeast Europe that they didn’t like much, but the Germans faced them down, and they basically said, “We’re going to do this anyway whether you like it or not.” But they weren’t active...Bodo went to Moscow a couple of times as a courtesy. Overall the Russians weren’t a problem.

KENNETH N. SKOUG
Economic Counselor
Moscow (1976-1979)

Kenneth N. Skoug was born in North Dakota in 1931. He attended both Columbia College and George Washington University. His career included positions in Germany, Mexico, Prague, Moscow, and Venezuela. Mr. Skoug was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in August 2000.

Q: So you were in Moscow from when to when?

SKOUG: I was in Moscow for three years, from August 1976 to August 1979.

Q: What was the situation in 1976, when you arrived?

SKOUG: Well, the big issue was the one that was frightening all the people studying Russian and frightening a lot of people who were on the staff. They had just discovered that there was radiation which seemed to emanate from Russian transmitters. In other words, in addition to bugging the embassy or perhaps in order to bug the embassy, they were radiating the place. And of course they denied it, but it was tested, and it was clear that radiation was coming in. Screens were installed on embassy windows. Art Hartman for a long time didn't want to concede that this

was an issue, but there was so much public outcry from the ranks that finally a study was made. There had been many people who had fallen ill. As a matter of fact, Walt Stoessel, who was the ambassador there and who left shortly thereafter, was very ill and when he came back to a senior post in the Department, he died soon thereafter. As to whether or not there was any connection between disease among our employees and what the Soviets were doing isn't clear. It was said that the screens placed on the windows reduced the amount of radiation that was coming in. To my knowledge it never was determined whether this radiation was really harmful or not, but it was thought to be harmful. A lot of people were unhappy, particularly those who lived in the embassy. Now those were not too many, because most of us did not live in the embassy. We lived elsewhere. But that was certainly the situation. Otherwise, the first thing of note, really, was that there was another election in the United States and Carter won it. Ford left office. The Soviets were always a little concerned at any change. They got to know people. I guess they knew Ford and Kissinger. There was an effort to maintain detente that had begun with Nixon. This had been offset somewhat by the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which made it impossible to give the Russians most-favored-nation treatment and raised the issue of Jewish "refuseniks" who were not allowed to leave the country. This became an issue between the United States and the Soviet Union. That was already going on, and then it became a bigger issue under Carter. Although the Soviets thought at first that Carter might be more agreeable, they found after the first visit by Secretary of State Vance that it wasn't going to be so easy to get along with him. But still, there were a lot of negotiations, in the political area in particular. Economically, the most interesting issue was Soviet oil production. I sought to get to know the Soviet economy - as well as an outsider can get to know something that was kept under wraps - by looking at what I could, making what visits I could, and developing contacts. The CIA made an estimate that Soviet oil production would peak and then start down, and Marshall Goldman of Harvard-MIT challenged this, and he was a frequent visitor. It was a lot of fun dealing with him dealing on his visits. Soviet officials didn't want to give out much information. Trying to get it was hard. You would request a meeting with a senior Soviet official, and they would usually delay it if they could for months. When you finally cornered them, they'd tell you at the last minute, all right, 9 o'clock tomorrow you have an appointment for an hour. And then the guy would have a prepared text which he would try to read throughout the whole time. You had to quickly learn that you've got to stop that; otherwise, all you do is hear a recitation of irrelevant statistics, you don't get to ask any questions - after you've been waiting two months for a meeting. It was sometimes easier to engage Soviet officials if they appeared at public receptions. You had to prepare yourself for unexpected opportunities to pose a few key questions.

Q: This is something that over the years, our people have gone to the Soviet Union and come back and said that the damn system doesn't work, and yet at the same time we were treating the Soviet Union as an economic colossus. You'd been in Czechoslovakia, but the Czechs are a different breed of cat. What was your impression of the Soviet economy?

SKOUG: There was a saying in my time in Moscow that were it not for the Red Army, the Soviet Union would be a joke. There was substance in that aphorism. The USSR focused its substantial human and material resources on building a powerful state with a formidable military establishment and a remarkable, goal-oriented space program. The military always had first call on production from the best Soviet factories. In my own factory visits, which were not to plants normally regarded as strategic, I frequently observed Soviet officers walking about to inspect

production. The civilian economy and especially the consumer goods industry were orphans by way of comparison. Although the Soviet Union could never have caught up with and overhauled the U.S. economy, per Nikita Khrushchev's vainglorious boast, it most certainly was a fierce competitor in terms of military strength. It was indeed not a joke.

The Soviet economy, which had undergone very little real reform, was still directed toward continually augmenting its output of basic commodities such as iron, coal, steel, and particularly oil and gas. The entire economy was based on central planning, and the Soviet leadership was very proud of this steady growth of output. Oil was especially valuable because it, along with weapons and gold exports, essentially paid for essential imports from Western Europe and Japan. Despite a CIA study correctly forecasting future problems for the oil industry, as it pressed deeper into producing areas and further afield for new supplies, the Soviet Union was in no danger of economic collapse. Some of my Soviet interlocutors even expressed appreciation to the CIA for having called attention to problem areas, which could be and - to some extent - were remedied. Its biggest shortcoming was the lack of market factors which might have identified the true economic costs and benefits of current production. Although the average Soviet citizen, especially those who did not reside in Moscow, Leningrad, or other "hero cities," lacked meat and many of the commodities available in even the more advanced Communist countries of Eastern Europe, he or she was normally warmly clothed and sufficiently housed. The low standard of living which we observed around us was slowly advancing, not contracting. Aside from minority groups, the average Russian took pride in his country's strategic parity with the United States and in the unchallenged dominance of its athletic teams. There was a deep sense of patriotism and a timeless capacity to endure privation. It was other basic problems, the most prominent of which was the war in Afghanistan which did not directly involve the Soviet Union until the very end of the 1970s, that caused the later collapse of the USSR. Repressed nationalism in the non-Slavic areas existed in the 1970s, but until Gorbachev allowed Eastern Europe to plot its own course a decade later, the breakdown of the Soviet Union was not on the horizon. While Gorbachev, who became a party secretary under the Brezhnev leadership, could never have reformed Soviet society or created a progressive economic system, there is no reason to suppose that the Soviet state would have collapsed on economic grounds alone.

In the 1970s, then, Soviet production was measured mainly in terms of quantity of output. There was relative inattention to quality, especially since there were no market factors by which to measure it. Distribution was poor, particularly because so little attention was given to transportation and roads. Agriculture was barely sufficient to feed the population. Importation of wheat and corn was a constant, with only the amount in question based on the adequacy of rainfall in Kazakhstan. This was one of the few areas where trade with the United States had become a necessity for Moscow, and it gave us some limited insight into one of the greatest problem areas of the Soviet Union, since we had a bilateral grain commission which met semi-annually to discuss trade. In sum, the country lived badly, but the population had no basis for comparison except for the horror stories its government told it about life in pre-Communist days. It was not an economic colossus and could never have become one as long as the military and space programs had top priority on national output, but it was not about to collapse until exogenous factors began to develop in the 1980s.

By the way, some latter-day academic critics in the United States have faulted the CIA for

overrating the Soviet economy. In fact, the guidance we received from that agency was, to the contrary, to seek out every indication that the economy was in difficulty. We devoted great energy to that task and hunted every sign that things were not as rosy as the Soviet authorities pretended. But the most diligent search for weaknesses in the economy would never have told us that the whole thing would collapse in less than fifteen years.

Q: You were saying you could see the lines in front of the Czech and East German stores.

SKOUG: Yes, because there they would have a chance to get some quality goods - in their terms. There was no hope of getting consumer goods from Western countries although all Western countries would have been very happy to sell them that sort of good, but the Soviets would buy only strategic heavy industry goods from say Germany and Italy and France. What they wanted was Western investment capital, to a certain extent ours as well, although to a much lesser extent, in return for which they would export oil and gold and not much else.

Q: Early on, when you were there they appointed Ambassador Watson, didn't they?

SKOUG: No, not during my tour. What happened was very interesting. When Walt Stoessel had to leave, President Ford named Malcolm "Mac" Toon, who had been ambassador previously in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Israel, to replace him in late 1976. Mac Toon had the reputation of a no-nonsense Foreign Service officer. He came from a well-to-do Eastern family. He told me his brother was president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. When Toon arrived in Moscow and the chief embassy officers met him at the airport, he greeted us all by name. He was a very, very impressive gentleman. But it was clear that he was Ford's appointee, and after Ford lost the election it was well known in Washington and in Moscow that Carter might pick this up and appoint somebody else, perhaps Watson. He didn't particularly want to appoint Toon, who had been ambassador under a number of Republican administrations.

The Russians knew that Mac Toon was no sucker - and they like suckers. The Russians really liked to have a businessman or a romantic come out there as chief of mission. They could pull the wool more easily over his eyes. They never could pull the wool over the eyes of the Bohlens and the Kennans and the Stoessels and the Toons. So they hoped that this would happen, and they didn't accredit him. And Mac Toon just stuck it out. It became an issue in the press as to whether or not the President would recall his appointment and appoint somebody else. Toon used to tell us that he'd had a very interesting and rewarding career in the Foreign Service; if it ended right there, that's the way it was. If it didn't, he'd be glad to be ambassador. And well, Carter lacked the nerve, I guess, to recall him, so he stayed. And he was ambassador throughout much of the Carter Administration. I don't think he got utilized in negotiations as much as he would have liked, particularly some negotiations that took place in Vienna and other places. But he was there as the main eyes and ears of the U.S. Government for all the time I was there, the rest of the time. I started with Stoessel, but Mac Toon was still there when I left three years later.

Q: Did you get involved in wheat sales?

SKOUG: Yes, I was present when the Joint Commission met to discuss wheat and other farm issues. We were very interested in knowing as soon as possible what the wheat crop was going to

be so we would have an idea of how much the Russians would buy because this had an effect on American prices. They might buy so much that it would cause a very substantial price spike. And knowing this, they wanted to buy wheat, naturally, at a lower price, so they would try to conceal the fact that they needed it. And yet we negotiated certain parameters where they would have to buy so much and they could buy so much more. And they had to do that because it could be that, you know, there would be a worldwide demand for wheat, and there wouldn't be enough wheat for them. So they knew that they had to have a floating scale in there. The guys from USDA came out from Washington to lead those negotiations. Some of the talks were back in Washington. I always participated in the negotiations in Moscow. I wasn't invited to go back to participate. The people in Washington would follow that. But of course we enjoyed that because it gave us access to ministers - or vice-ministers. We didn't get access to ministers. But those contacts were very important. Without contacts in that part of the world, you are dead.

Q: Well, what about contact? I would think you would just end up in that type of situation they would recite the figures to you.

SKOUG: That's true. They'd recite what you read in the press and so forth. There was a term, as a matter of fact, that we used. It was called "reading down to the *adnyaka*." *Adnyaka* is "however." I don't know what it is in Serb, but anyway, the column: "this was fulfilled" and so forth and so on, "this was beautifully done," blah-blah-blah, and finally, way down here, you'd see "*Adnyaka*..." and then you'd know that "However..." potatoes weren't so good or something like that. And so a lot of reporting was done from the press. I didn't do that because I had two guys who were covering - one on the foreign trade side, one on the domestic. It was easier on foreign trade, obviously, because you had Western countries which would give you some supplemental information, although even there trade, being competitive by nature, was a sensitive matter. We had a group of counselors who would meet - Germany (Ambassador Stulpnagel, who had been an ambassador in Africa), Italy, France, and Britain were included, and I think Canada got in. I happened to like the Canadian very much. I had known Ian Wood in Czechoslovakia, and he was a minister, of all things, a great big guy, about six feet six inches tall. So the six of us used to meet, but everybody would be holding back, and of course I had very little information to give anyway because our trade was limited by Jackson/Vanik, our strategic controls, lack of MFN, etc. We had less trade than any of them, except maybe the Canadians. The Germans had the most, and they were always competing for projects, and they were always trying to figure out what their rivals were up to. Of course, I also wore the economic defense hat, and we had to try to keep things from being sold that violated COCOM standards (COCOM being the international committee of Western countries which cooperated in maintaining such embargo as there was on trade in strategic commodities with the Soviet Union and other states). There was a lot of fun in that in dealing with your Western colleagues.

But you had to have the contacts with the production ministries. It was easier, for example, with the Ministry of Civil Aviation because we did have active commercial subjects to discuss. Pan Am went in there, and Aeroflot was flying to the United States. Constantly we were having problems. There was a standing commission which met periodically. That gave us entrée. We knew the people we were talking to, and that's a big help. You've got to know them personally in those countries, or the chances of getting anything are not very good. Then the same was true in maritime matters because theoretically we would like to have had the wheat carried in American

bottoms, but there never were enough American bottoms around. The Russians preferred to use their own ships or those of third countries. It saved them precious hard currency. And so we were always trying to see to it that we got as much as we could. And that involved discussions with Morflot, the Soviet merchant marine. I was able to draw, for example, on those good contacts with Morflot when I made a trip to Vostochny Port (East Port) on the Pacific Ocean, at the other end of the Soviet Union, in early 1978. Speaking of having to stay a week, this was a situation where you could take a flight to Khabarovsk, which is a city seven time zones from Moscow, and you still aren't there. If you've flown seven time zones and you stay in Khabarovsk, then there's a boat train that goes from Khabarovsk to Nakhodka. That's the town. Vostochny Port is the port area there, East Port. You get to Nakhodka and the next night train (for foreigners) is not going out for a week. So you've got a week to spend in Nakhodka. Well, since I and my colleague, Bill Farrand, my deputy who ran the Commercial Office, both spoke Russian - despite my problems I did speak Russian - they were not anxious to have us hanging around in Nakhodka for a week. We insisted that we be permitted to ride the day train back to Khabarovsk. They gave their consent although the train ran past Vladivostok, home base of the Pacific submarine fleets, where nobody could go. That was a closed area. Well, you couldn't see anything. I saw Vladivostok from such a distance. And then the train crawls along the Chinese border, but you would have to be right on the Chinese border, and even there you probably wouldn't see anything. They were just so super-suspicious. But anyway, I had a useful schedule in Nakhodka. We stayed there, I think, two days, saw a lot of people. It was all arranged because of our contacts in Moscow. Otherwise, you'd be frozen. You could go there and walk around, but you wouldn't be able to do anything.

Q: Well, were we having any problems about the quality of the wheat which was being delivered, because I've heard criticisms sometimes that the shipments of the wheat were... There was too much... Well, not edible stuff in the wheat. Was that an issue that arose?

SKOUG: Yes, the Russians did complain. I can't say that the complaint was such that they threatened to stop buying our wheat, but they did let us know when they got bad shipments of wheat, and I'm not quite sure what we could do in those situations except to promise we would try to police it better. Again, those talks, the agricultural talks, were very useful, and the civil air and the maritime. In other areas, you had to develop the relationship, stressing mutual interest. Again, management and technology were of interest to the Russians, as they were to the Czechs. In most discussions, the Soviet side was led by Gvishiani, son-in-law of Premier Kosygin, just as it had previously been Adzhubey, who was the son-in-law of Khrushchev. So it seemed to be a job for bright sons-in-law. Gvishiani had an office where he had all the latest technology which could be bought or produced, not much of it produced in the Soviet Union. What was produced in the Soviet Union was for military or space. Their best production was clearly going into the military.

Q: Well, did you feel you could over time establish a certain rapport, or was it all pretty official relations?

SKOUG: Well, it was not the rapport that I had in Czechoslovakia. In Czechoslovakia they called me the Czech equivalent of *tovarish*. They called me "comrade" because I knew them so well and we got along well, despite the fact that I was representing the chief capitalist power -

but I understood them and they understood me. That relationship did not exist in the Soviet Union. No one ever called me *tovarish*, and no one ever answered me by saying, "You know more about that than I do" or "You're better informed than I am about that." They didn't say that. But there were some good conversations. In particular, the Soviets had an official named Mordvinov in Gosplan, the economic planning bureau, who was really a wonderful guy. He had a younger deputy named Dvarets - and they were a joy to be with. It was always fun. Lunch with those guys was very pleasant. Even in the hard times - and there were some hard times when inevitably there were problems, and I'll get into some of these problems - our personal relations were excellent.

Q: Maybe this might be a good time to stop, don't you think?

SKOUG: Yes. I'll just finish with what Mordvinov told me. After one of those meetings when bilateral relations were exceedingly bad, he looked at me with a mischievous smile and he said, "Well, it can't be said that we exchanged information. We exchanged views."

Q: Well, I think we might stop at this point. If you'll sort of make a mental note to yourself, you were talking about some hard times. In our next session, I'd like to talk about the specifics of those hard times during this time in Moscow.

SKOUG: Right, right, one of them being the Crawford case, another one being the Korean airliner that was shot down.

Q: Great.

This is the 16th of November, 2000. Ken, in the first place, you were in Moscow from when to when?

SKOUG: I went to Moscow in mid-August 1976, and I served just about exactly three years - a few days over. I left in August of 1979.

Q: Okay, we were talking about the hard times. You mentioned the Crawford case, and what was it, CNN?

SKOUG: The KAL.

Q: Oh, the Korean Airlines.

SKOUG: Well, most of this period was the Carter Administration dealing with the - let's say - mature, even ageing, Brezhnev régime in the Soviet Union. Brezhnev had come to power in 1964, so he'd already been in power 12 years when I got there, in the twilight of the Ford Administration. Brezhnev in general was less adventuresome in foreign policy than Khrushchev, but as we know in Czechoslovakia he was quite willing to use military force. And at home, there was a tightening up, so that people began to go on trial in the Brezhnev Administration who

might not have gone on trial under Khrushchev. And the same people were in power in the Soviet Union for a long period of time, people like Brezhnev, Kosygin, Suslov, and Podgorny for a while, although he was forced out as president because Brezhnev wanted to be president himself and made himself president, and Podgorny became virtually a non-person for resisting his own demotion. Now when the Carter Administration came to power, it focused on human rights to an extent that the previous Nixon-Ford administrations had not. There was a human rights function in the Department of State-

Q: It had been mandated by Congress.

SKOUG: -mandated by Congress, but it was not applied generally as much as it would be under the Carter Administration. And early in the Carter Administration the Secretary of State, Vance, came to the Soviet Union, and at that time, and as I recall even in the period before he arrived, there was, of course, emphasis on human rights which would also apply to human rights in the Soviet Union. This new approach was very badly received in the Soviet Union. When Vance came, and the first meeting took place in late March of 1977, so Carter had been in power a couple of months at this point, and the Soviets were very angry. Gromyko made a toast at a lunch, which I attended, and said that - I'm not sure I can quote him, but what he said was, "Non-intervention in domestic affairs is essential in bilateral relations." In other words, it was quite clear that he would see emphasis on human rights as intervention in Soviet domestic affairs. And the Soviets quickly determined that this primarily, although not exclusively, concerned the Jewish question. They quoted triumphantly Senator Ribicoff to that effect, that human rights was the Jewish emigration question. This question was a little older than Carter, of course. It was in the Jackson-Vanik amendment, that as long as there wasn't freedom for Jews to emigrate, we would not give the Soviet Union most-favored-nation treatment and they would also not get commercial credit. So you had a serious economic issue already existing. There wasn't much trade between the United States and the Soviet Union. They were very bitter about that, but they had somehow been able to... They thought they were working around it under Kissinger, but with Carter and Vance they suddenly realized that they had a new administration they had thought would probably be softer in foreign affairs but was sticking on this question of human rights. That in itself didn't mean a crisis, but it meant a cooling of relations.

Q: By the way, at the embassy, did you all feel that human rights meant the Jewish question exclusively, or was it bigger than that?

SKOUG: Oh, it was broader than that. The people who were being put on trial were frequently Jews. There was an Orlov, who was on trial and, I think, unjustly convicted, and then the famous Sharansky case came up. That was clearly Jewish. Obviously there were Pentecostals and there were a lot of other people who were suffering from violations of human rights in the Soviet Union. You could say the whole Soviet population was denied the most basic essential human rights. It was a tight Communist dictatorship. But the people who seemed to feel it the most, at least the ones who were willing to do something about it, were frequently Jewish dissidents. They called them *refuzniki*. They had been refused permission to leave the Soviet Union. And that's where most of the issue came, although the question of freedom, if you want to put it in those terms, for the Soviet Union meant everybody. It meant people in Russia itself, people in the parts of the Soviet Union that were dominated by the Russians - the Ukrainians, the

Georgians, the Balts - everybody. Everybody was suffering. And we, for example, refused to visit the Baltic states at a senior level because we never regarded them as lawfully part of the USSR. More junior officers could go there, but nobody of senior rank could go there because this could be interpreted as acknowledgment of the Soviet claim that they were sovereign in the Baltic states.

The next incident was an arrest. I happened to get involved in it because I was the ranking substantive officer, and Toon had me go in with a protest. I helped write the protest. It was the arrest of a journalist named Toth, I think of *The Los Angeles Times*. And it turned out that he was accused of currency manipulation. I should explain that the Soviets had everyone who was living there under close scrutiny. There were a lot of American journalists and other journalists; there were a lot of American businessmen, perhaps 30, representing American corporations; there were American scholars over there, exchange students - there was a certain community - and they all were... many, I would say, not the exchange students, but certainly the businessmen and the journalists had maids and so forth, and the maids would be paid in rubles, but they also wanted to be paid in coupons, which would buy seven times as much as a ruble and didn't cost the American any more. He got a ruble coupon for the same price he paid for a ruble. You weren't supposed to give it to anybody else, but in practice everyone had to because that's the only way they could hire and retain servants. All of this was organized by and known to the authorities. So the KGB had a tank full of people swimming around, all of whom were somehow violating Soviet law because that was the only way to exist in the Soviet Union. And so whenever they wanted to spear somebody they could do it. For some reason they picked on Toth. Whether Toth was more indiscreet than others or whether they simply didn't like what Toth was saying or writing, he was arrested. It ended up that he was expelled, although there was a little go-around about it, where I presented a protest and they refused to accept the protest and gave me a counterprotest on something else. That's the way the Soviets are - or were. You never could pin them down and say, "I protest." You know: "I reject your protest, and I have this to say." They always would. They were fierce in argumentation, particularly when you had to do it in Russian. So anyway, there was this Toth case. That wasn't the last of the issues between us and the Soviet Union.

I can put the dates in perspective as far as incidents. There was a visit by Vance the following spring, that is, April of 1978, when things were perhaps a little better, but there was really very little progress, and I believe it was the first Vance visit since the one of March 1977, after which Gromyko went on television as soon as Vance had departed. We could observe him up at Vnukovo Airport as he was pacing around, pacing, pacing. He was preparing to meet the Soviet public on television, which he didn't do very often. In fact, we hadn't seen him on television very often. But he went on with a long presentation, without any notes that were obvious, about the perfidy of the United States and all the adverse things that could be said about the United States and bilateral relations. It was devastating, a devastating attack, and so that's what really set the tone for our relationship, because he revealed to the Soviet population this perfidious American administration which had so much to learn about how to deal with the Soviet Union as an equal and sovereign state and so forth. It was really a performance that most of us did not realize Gromyko was capable of. I happened to have sat with him at lunch about that time when Ambassador Stoessel was leaving, and a few of Stoessel's staff were there, and a lot of top Soviets under Gromyko. It was amazing how witty and sharp, but in a cool sense, this fellow

could be that Khrushchev used to refer to as their "donkey" who would go out and bray when they told him to.

Q: He was a survivor, of course.

SKOUG: Yes. He was about the only foreign minister the postwar Soviet Union ever had.

Q: I know.

SKOUG: From 1948 or so. He was indeed a survivor, and he had learned a lot, forgotten nothing, but it was always with a malevolent approach toward the United States. He could be debonair if he wanted to be briefly, but his attitude was not a warm one, and that's why I think when Gorbachev later came to power, Gromyko was one of the first to go. He got rid of that limitation on their foreign policy.

Well, anyway, Vance came for the second time, they were really talking about arms limitation. And I must say that I never got much involved in Vance's visits because they had nothing to do with business or economics, with the exception that on the first trip he came and he wanted to sign a couple of agreements - civil aviation and maritime - and there was no basis for a civil aviation agreement. Our relations with the Soviets in that domain went down steadily until Pan Am eventually was forced to conclude its operations. It couldn't make a cent. Maritime may have reached a formal agreement that I'll get into separately. It was very difficult, and this concerned mainly shipments of grain from the United States, on which bottoms they would go, and so forth, and marine insurance. There were special talks on that. But that was not what Vance was there to talk about. So my only connection to Vance was essentially, after inevitable lunches and arrivals and so forth that would take place.

Q: Did you all at the embassy get the impression that Vance, when he first arrived (I think it was March of 1977 or so), came sort of with a half-baked idea of maybe a new relationship or something and he came out with a bloody nose?

SKOUG: He came out with a bloody nose, yes, definitely. Gromyko totally rejected him and the agreements were insignificant. The maritime agreement, whatever it was, was totally insignificant. It had no real importance. And there was no civil air agreement, and there was no agreement on anything. When Vance came back the second time to talk about arms control, I suppose some progress was made, because they were moving towards an agreement which they reached the following year, but at this point there happened the first Korean Airline incident, the one that's generally been forgotten, but unfortunately was a harbinger of what happened later. In April of 1978, just as Vance was there, a Korean airliner coming out of Paris wandered over the Kola Peninsula in the northwest corner of the Soviet Union. It flew over the Norwegian border and into Soviet territory. The Soviets tried to warn it off. It kept on flying, and so the Soviets opened up with machine gun fire, and they killed somebody on the airplane. One person was killed by the machine-gun fire. So then the pilot and the navigator followed orders to land. It must have been a miraculous landing because they landed in an area not anywhere near an airport. They landed, I think, on a frozen field or something in Karelia.

Q: A frozen lake, I think.

SKOUG: A frozen lake, yes. It was a very difficult landing, and one person was killed in the landing. It's lucky that no more were. It must have been a very able captain. I always dealt with civil aviation matters, and there was no rivalry about this, because other people in the Political Section were dealing with Vance and disarmament. My first contacts with the Soviets-

Q: Wait a minute. There was obviously no South Korean representative.

SKOUG: There was no South Korean representative at all in the Soviet Union. I kept thinking back to the case I mentioned when I was in Prague, where a Korean journalist following a Korean sports team in Czechoslovakia disappeared, and I learned when I was in Korea with the National War College - I was at a small dinner - I mentioned the incident, and the man I was having dinner with said he knew that man very well, he was a close friend and he had disappeared and been turned over to the North Koreans, and that was the end of him. Or if he's still alive there, he's suffering, I'm sure. I had that in mind, and I said to the Soviet officials I was dealing with that we wanted everybody out, "passengers and crew." And I won his agreement. They either weren't focusing on this or the people I was dealing with were anxious to resolve a question while Vance was in the country. So anyway, I got an agreement over the telephone with the officials I was dealing with that everybody would be allowed to get out, and I was arranging the repatriation of these people. But then it turned out that they decided that the captain would have to be prosecuted. He had flown over Soviet territory and refused orders and so forth. And then they wanted the navigator as well, so we had a dustup with them about that. And I wanted to use Vance, and Vance was leaving that day. And Vance had been, as you know, head of Pan American Airlines. He had an interest in civil aviation. I tried through Marshall Shulman, who was with him, to get Vance to make some statement of his own concern or to take it up with Gromyko on their way out to the airport, but he didn't do it. He didn't, I guess, want to endanger whatever he was working on in the arms control area by bringing in this Korean question. So I essentially took the position - stretched my liberties a little - and told the Russians, in effect, that I assumed Vance was very upset about this thing. He wasn't going to raise it, but he was really, really concerned about it. Well, the result was that the pilot and the navigator got out. And so it had a happy ending, except for the two people who did not survive it. I felt that if the captain and navigator had been interrogated, they might eventually have been turned over to the North Koreans, who would only have been too happy to see that.

Q: Yes.

SKOUG: Of course, in the mixed up world of Soviet justice, they might have been executed for violating Soviet territory and then "causing" the death of two people. Well, that was that case. And then relations then took another downturn because of the connection between intelligence activities by the Soviets and the at-risk status of Americans in the Soviet Union. I'm not sure Toth's arrest was connected to any espionage, but I rather thought it was. I thought that Toth had been arrested pursuant to some problem with Soviets in the United States, but it was very clear in the next case that it was.

Just about the time of the Vance visit, as a matter of fact, just before it, a very senior Soviet

official, Shevchenko, who was the deputy under secretary for political affairs in the United Nations, defected to the United States. I was curious because Jim Sutterlin, my old boss, was his deputy. And Shevchenko was running an operation, and Sutterlin later found out they gave it the code name "Jim." He thought it was for him. But anyway, the FBI arrested a couple of culprits caught red-handed in May, about a month after this second Vance visit with Gromyko. And these guys did not have diplomatic immunity in our view, and so they were going to be put on trial, convicted, and sent to jail. I don't think they were allowed out on bail.

Q: These guys were-

SKOUG: They simply worked for the United Nations, you see. They were not on the Soviet delegation to the United Nations; they were employees of the United Nations, but like all Soviet employees of the United Nations, they worked for the Soviet Union, and they were engaged in espionage activities. So the Soviets did not like this, obviously. And a couple of weeks later - I think on about June 12, 1978 - an employee of International Harvester named Francis J. Crawford (he went by the name Jay), who happened to be engaged to the American secretary in our commercial office, had attended a function in the commercial office, and the two of them were driving to their homes. They came to a red light that stayed red. They couldn't go through it. The red light was there. And then the Soviets pounced on them. And they roughed her up, and they grabbed him and arrested him. And again, I believe they got him on currency violation or something - anything that they could have got him on. They also knew... They were very clever. They had this group of Americans, and they picked out one of the most vulnerable ones. Although he worked for International Harvester, they knew he was not very significant. He was the number-two man for IH there, and he was thinking of resigning, planning to resign or had quit. He was sending telexes out of the commercial office that revealed their plans. The commercial office let businessmen use our telex, and the telexes, or course, were monitored by the Soviets and had no protection whatsoever, obviously. They knew that he was not of much importance to International Harvester. They knew he was connected to an employee of the U.S. Government, planning to marry her. They knew they had something they could charge him with. So they thought they had somebody that they would hold for these two Soviets. And the first question was, Who's going to be the second one? We figured there would be another one. The business community was worried, but spineless. They were not willing to say much because each of them was afraid for himself. There was a U.S. Trade and Economic Council there, whose representative said that the Council would try to help Jay Crawford. He told Jack Matlock and me that Crawford would probably be sentenced to eight years in jail; they would try to get it reduced to two. We didn't think that that was very helpful. International Harvester had had as its local representative a New Zealander named Brian Reardon, but then he showed up on this occasion and was very busy and came to see me. I thought he was going to tell me what he had been doing on behalf of Crawford. The first thing he said, however, was that by dint of his efforts he'd established that International Harvester's business operations would not be affected by this incident - you know, washing their hands of Crawford. Large American corporations didn't understand what was going on because, seen from afar, it just looked like a case of corruption. He wasn't being accused of espionage at this point, although the hint was that maybe there was more than just his corruption. Americans could posture and say, Well, American businessmen have to obey the laws of the country they're in. That's essentially the position that they started to take. And International Harvester itself hosted at precisely this time a Soviet high-

level delegation of commercially interested ministers in the United States. The delegation was received by several American companies. So it looked like the American business community was trying to wash its hands of this low-level guy. Well, I must say that Bill Farrand, who was my deputy and headed the commercial office, and I didn't see it that way, and we got Jack Matlock, who was the DCM, engaged, and then we got Ambassador Toon on board. And Toon was willing to go and tell a press conference that International Harvester ought to cut its business operations in the Soviet Union until its employee was released. Well, that isn't what they were looking to hear. But we got Shulman engaged, and by the time I-

Q: Shulman being?

SKOUG: He was the advisor to Vance, a Harvard professor - excuse me, I think a Columbia professor - and expert on the Soviet Union. And he was hired as advisor to Vance. I forgot what his... He wasn't the counselor of the Department, but he was Vance's man. He must have become engaged because later on he wrote us and said that he had been blamed along with the embassy by Caterpillar for harming U.S. business prospects. Caterpillar was playing a big role - in fact a much bigger role than International Harvester - in the Soviet Union. They were building a lot of the tractors that were used on the gas pipeline in Tyumen in the far north, and they were in competition with the Japanese for a lot of the business that was foreseen in Siberia in addition - Yakutia and other large developments. Apparently Caterpillar believed that our defense of Jay Crawford's rights as an American citizen was bad for business. Well, there was a reception at Spaso House in August. It was August 25th.

Q: Spaso House being the ambassador's residence.

SKOUG: Spaso House being the ambassador's residence. Yevgeni Shershnev, who was the deputy head of the so-called Arbatov Institute, the Institute for the USA and Canada, engaged me there in a long discussion about how Crawford was clearly guilty, but he then said at the end that due to the spin the embassy had put on the matter, the amazing thing was that even Armand Hammer appeared to feel that Crawford was innocent. And this was a telling blow because Hammer had earlier in the year made a speech about the great Lenin and the great leader Brezhnev and so forth, but Hammer came down on this issue in support of Crawford. By this time, not only thanks to the embassy but thanks in part to the *Chicago Tribune* (which didn't like International Harvester and is right next door to it), the correspondent (I think his name was Carmichael) of the *Chicago Tribune* was giving International Harvester a very bad name for the activities of its officers in receiving the Soviet delegation and in just trying to protect its commercial interests, paying no attention to Crawford. So the business community was turned around, and that was very important to getting the Soviets to back off. But finally, the dénouement was that Hammer paid a visit to Brezhnev at Yalta, and he came flying back to Moscow, and I was to meet him at the airport to get Brezhnev's decision. I met him after midnight at Sheremetyevo Airport as he came back from his meeting with Brezhnev. Hammer told me, "This guy is guilty, but they're going to kick him out of the country." I said, "Thanks a lot, Dr. Hammer. We don't have the same opinion as to whether or not he is guilty, but I'm glad to hear the good news." And so we got Jay Crawford out. All these things had a price. Obviously I was not the most beloved person in the Soviet Union as far as they were concerned because, although I was economic and commercial, I also got involved in these messes.

Q: I can't think of his first name, but Carter had sent Ambassador Watson out there, who was from the IBM Watsons. What was his first name?

SKOUG: Tom, I think.

Q: But my understanding was that it was being done in order to open up business relations, and that's why a businessman was sent there. And so I would have thought that you would have... I mean, how did you find yourself working with the ambassador? You know, you are the economic-commercial officer.

SKOUG: After Walt Stoessel's departure in 1976, our ambassador all the remaining time I was there was Malcolm Toon. Watson came later.

Q: Oh, he came after.

SKOUG: Yes, Toon was a hard-line Foreign Service officer, and no fool. He was in his fourth ambassadorship, three of them to Communist countries, and he was a tough guy. He supported business, but he also, as I have said, in cases where human rights were involved, such as the arrest of an American businessman, he took the same position that we had taken for Kazan-Komarek in Czechoslovakia. We came first of all to the defense of an American citizen, and then after that there was business. The business community's relationship with the Soviet Union was an interesting one, and I might say that a lot of the top business executives that wanted business with the Soviet Union, particularly Donald Kendall of Pepsi-Cola, did not have a high opinion of Ambassador Toon and in fact tried to undermine him. An incident at the Trade and Economic Council session in Los Angeles in November 1977 illustrates this point.

The Soviets were represented in Los Angeles by Patolichev, the minister of foreign trade, a very, very tough guy. His counterpart was Donald Kendall, who was retiring as American co-chairman of the Council.

Ambassador Toon had sent with me a letter of support for the Trade and Economic Council, but it was not the fulsome, effusive sort of praise that some would have liked to see. It was more of a cautious message because we did have this other aspect of dealing with the Soviets, the strategic rivalry, not to mention human rights concerns. I brought the letter to Kendall, who took it and looked at it and put it in his pocket without comment. It was clear to me that Kendall, whom I asked to read the letter at the session, was not going to do it. So I had to work around him and try to get somebody to read the thing. But it never was read, although it was announced by one of the people on the American side that Ambassador Toon had sent his greetings to the meeting. But they didn't read his message because, I suppose, they didn't like his message. Certainly Kendall didn't like it. Eventually, we got the Council to publish the letter in the document that it sent out on the proceedings in Los Angeles. But this incident was sort of symbolic of the relationship. A lot of American business leaders that wanted to export to the Soviet Union would rather have had a businessman ambassador than a professional diplomat who was aware of all of the aspects and who knew the Soviet Union very well. It was Toon's third tour in the Soviet Union. As far as I know, Watson had never been in the Soviet Union, or at least not very often.

Q: Was it the feeling that you were getting that for the business people business is business and we don't give a damn about anything else?

SKOUG: There was certainly that feeling. Now the guys who were actually on the spot didn't entirely share that feeling. Their outlook was influenced more by fear and helplessness. They knew more than their bosses about the grim reality of life in Brezhnev's USSR. What can we do to help Crawford? We're all in this ourselves. What we encouraged them to do was to inform their home offices of the reality of the situation. In order better to represent their genuine concerns, I worked very hard to set up a forum in Moscow to parallel the forum which the Soviets had with the Department of Commerce in Washington. Our people in Commerce were very attentive to the Soviet trade people, led by a man named Mkrtumov. He had no trouble in getting to senior people in the Department of Commerce, whereas it wasn't easy for me to get to even a deputy minister, not to speak of Patolichev. I could never get to Patolichev. Even Ambassador Toon only got to him one time. I did see the various deputy ministers of foreign trade, but only with a major effort. Therefore, I tried to set up a panel of regular meetings with Deputy Minister Manzhulo to talk about problems that American business had in the Soviet Union - one example being Caterpillar's need or desire to bring in a D-10 tractor, which was a brand-new model at the time. The D-10 was too heavy for Soviet roads, supposedly, and yet there was no other way to get it in except to drive it. We did get it in. But the Soviet side resisted having this forum established. They said that I could meet at a lower level; I could meet with a man named Melnikov, who had an intelligence background and was a minor figure with very little clout in trade matters. I had to get to a higher level, like Manzhulo. So my counterpart, who was the head of the East-West Trade Office in the Department of Commerce, Alan Reich, informed Mkrtumov in Washington that they would not have their meetings unless I could meet with Manzhulo. Well, the Soviets didn't like that, and it led to a great protocol question, was I was reaching too high to get to a deputy minister of foreign trade? Eventually they gave in. We had a meeting. The atmosphere in the meeting was frosty, but we did discuss various issues with some resolution of them. Then they delayed holding another session. There were only three such meetings in a year, but at the end, Manzhulo acknowledged that they had been quite useful. He was probably not free to meet. He probably would have been willing to meet himself if he had been a free man, but he was held back by the Soviet system.

There also was competition among the Soviet deputy ministers as to who would really be responsible for relations with the United States. Manzhulo, who was a veteran foreign trade man, lost out to a younger guy named Sushkov, who was a crook, actually, and finally went to jail in the Gorbachev period. But he was Patolichev's man, and Patolichev loved Sushkov. Sushkov really was the counterpart to Kendall and his successor, Miller, I think, as head of the U.S. side of the Trade and Economic Council. There was always a certain friction between the Trade and Economic Council, which was totally business-oriented, and the embassy, which had the overall national interest to represent.

Q: What were the Soviets after? I mean, obviously they needed wheat, but were they after prototypes and then they'd copy them or was it a real trade relationship?

SKOUG: Well, they would have liked, yes, the latest computers and so forth, and there always

was COCOM, which theoretically governed trade in strategic goods. It was clear to the Soviets that the U.S. was tougher than, say, France on controls of Western equipment that could be used for military purposes. The United States also tried to discourage its Western allies from selling this sort of thing to the USSR. There was a lot of jockeying around among the economic-commercial counselors or ministers of the major Western countries. Although we discussed many things, those supporting major deals by their own nations would hold back. The Italian counselor later told me with a laugh: "We fought like tigers to protect our trade." The Soviets did want access to the latest technology in the West. There is no question about it. Essentially the Soviet Union was organized in a way to support first of all the military power of the state, and the military would have first call on almost anything. And if they could get access to the latest technology, so much the better. They did have other interests. Their interest was in obtaining a sufficient amount of grain when their grain harvest was not good, and two of the three years when I was there it wasn't good, so they did need to buy more than the agreed minimum tonnage. They wanted permission, and there was always a flexible range. They could buy so much, and they had a possibility of buying so much more. These were negotiated out essentially with the Department of Agriculture in the United States sending out a representative for regular biannual meetings with the Soviet. There was no clearly political side to this problem because it was established that food was food, and we were ready to sell it to them if we had enough. The other question was what ships would carry this, and it usually turned out that we didn't have ships available to do it, and so their ships carried it, or it was carried on the bottoms of third countries. They did technically agree that one-third of this should go preferably on U.S. ships, but we didn't always have those ships available. Our people wanted them to buy our marine insurance. They were very resistant to it. They didn't, of course, want to spend any hard currency if they could avoid it, preferring barter. Those were the sort of issues that we discussed.

In civil aviation, we tried to establish conditions where Pan Am could operate profitably. It soon turned out that it was so unprofitable they had to give up, and Pan Am ceased to fly to Moscow in 1978 except on charters. We also had an issue with the Soviets on charters other than Pan American because essentially we had no flights in there then except charters. They wanted the Foreign Ministry to receive a note before every charter flight, which made it very, very difficult because it added an element of delay when you ought to be dealing with the Ministry of Civil Aviation. These are typical of the sort of issues that sound small but nevertheless were very time-consuming and important and sometimes led to heated discussions.

Q: Well, this is the web and woof of relations between relations between countries, particularly countries such as the Soviet Union, where everything had to be spelled out very carefully. What about life in the Soviet Union, getting around? Was it possible for you?

SKOUG: Well, travel was very interesting, also very difficult. I like to travel. I think I mentioned that in early 1978 I went to Nakhodka on the Pacific. Maybe I didn't mention that.

Q: I'm not sure if you did.

SKOUG: I made a trip to Khabarovsk and to Nakhodka with Bill Farrand, the commercial attaché. We wanted to look at the operations of an American company there that was doing business with the Soviets in fishing. They had an operations in Washington State, and they also

had one man in Nakhodka, which is on the Pacific Ocean not far from Vladivostok, on Wrangel Bay, the biggest bay in the entire Pacific, I think. The Soviets were building what they called Vostochny Port - East Port, Siberia, out there. Now you had to get there by flying to Khabarovsk, which is right on the Chinese border, and there was a nine-hour flight from Moscow through seven time zones, so Bill and I left Moscow at night, and reached Khabarovsk in the morning. Now Farrand unfortunately had checked a bag. I was carrying a little bag, so we could get away from the airport quickly and spend the day in Khabarovsk. We knew the train was leaving that night for Nakhodka. It was a once-a-week night train, and they had permitted us to go down there. And we would theoretically have to stay a week in Nakhodka to get the next night train back. Since they had Bill's bag and wouldn't disclose where it was, we were their prisoners, and we had to waste our day in the train station in Khabarovsk. We normally would look all over a town at what was going on, look at the meat market, etc., but this time we got to see very little because we were held by the missing bag. We did, however, take the occasion to shed a little light on the local scene. We had copies of *Amerika*, the magazine put out by USIA - and it looked just like *Soviet Life* or *Soviet Woman* or *Soviet Culture*, except it was quite different in content. We had nothing to read that day except their propaganda, but when we departed on the train we left a few *Amerikas* buried in the stacks in the depot. We knew that they would find it out eventually, but we thought that before they did somebody might have the chance to read something interesting. Then we boarded the train to Nakhodka. We spent a day or two there. We were then allowed to come back by a day train. The day train comes within distant sight of the tightly closed city of Vladivostok and follows the Chinese border, which was very tense at that point, but you don't see much from a train. It was interesting, however, to have ridden that train, to see how people meet the train at little stops. It wasn't an express train; it was a local, one might say. Travel by train in daytime was totally contrary to normal procedure in the Soviet Union. All of our travel to Leningrad or to Helsinki, for example, was by a night train. When we went to Kiev, we went by a night train. They didn't want you to see the country. Why, I don't know - how much could you see from the train anyway? But we did have an opportunity to jostle Soviets and watch them selling food and selling articles on the train when it stopped, buying tea and so forth. When we got back to Khabarovsk late in the day, they were waiting for us because we had pulled this little trick on them. They'd pulled a trick on us with the bag, and we pulled a trick with the *Amerikas*, and now they were ready to do another trick. A close surveillance. We were under discreet surveillance at all times, but a close surveillance was when they want you to know you're being surveilled. We were in the hotel, and as we got in the elevator - there was an elevator for eight persons, and I was the eighth person. There was a lady standing beside me in the elevator, and the KGB surveillant wanted to get on. He was a big burly guy, and he got in there, too. Then there were nine persons in an elevator for eight, so it wouldn't go, of course. The KGB man then took the little woman by the shoulders and put her out, and then he rode up to the first floor with Bill and me, where there was also a *dezhurnaya* waiting. A Soviet hotel always has to have such a person, whose task it is to observe anything taking place in the corridors of the hotel or other lodging facility where she is assigned. It was probably true in Yugoslavia-

Q: No, but I did see it. They had it when I was in Bishkek, in Kirghizstan in 1994.

SKOUG: Ah, I see. The *dezhurnaya* was to watch everybody on our floor, so in addition to her and this guard, Farrand and I were well covered. We entered our room, and we stayed there a while. It being evening, they apparently thought us there to stay. Then we looked out, and the

coast was clear. Instead of taking the elevator we went down the stairs. Outside the hotel building we hailed a taxicab. We asked the taxicab driver where there was something going on in Khabarovsk, and he said, well, the other hotel. We went to the other hotel, and here were many young people who were building the BAM, that is, the Baikal-Amur-Madzhistral, the main-line track that they were building to parallel the Trans-Siberian Railroad. So we spent the evening drinking and talking to people who were out there working, asking them what they thought, checking on conditions. Thus, we did eventually see a little bit of Khabarovsk. A little after midnight, we walked back to our own hotel. We walked through Khabarovsk back to the other hotel, came in, and they were surprised to see us. "We thought you'd gone to bed."

The next day, we faced what they called the *bran*. *Branirovan* is 'to reserve' in Russian, and paying the *bran* means you pay an extra day for a hotel room. And this happened in other hotels in the Soviet Union. I always fought it, and I fought it there, and the lady in charge finally backed down and said, "All right, we won't charge you for the *bran*, but I'm accusing you before the such-and-such committee meeting in Moscow for exceeding your diplomatic..." I never heard of that again, but they did take the air out of my tires when I got home. There was always some prank being played like that. The pranks would have been worse if I had been of lower rank. Some of our guys were given rough treatment, but they never did that to me because I was a counselor. But they did take the air out of my tires.

Inevitably, the KGB would get involved in these trips, and even with my children, because frequently when I had a chance to travel and they had some vacation from school, the four of us would go, my wife and the two kids. My daughter was only 13, 14, and 15 there, but they still tried to take advantage of us. Someone would always ask her to dance. Someone would always be trying to see her. There would be phone calls. The KGB never lets you go, and certainly you know they're there. They want you to know you can't do anything without their being part of it. But the program nevertheless was very broadening.

I never was in a Soviet home in all the time I was in the Soviet Union except in Armenia. We had a session in environmental economics in Armenia in October 1977. I was a member of the delegation led by Sid Geller of Commerce, mainly people coming out of Commerce, Interior, and EPA. We flew down to Yerevan, Armenia. We then were driven by automobile to Tsakadzor. Tsakadzor is a town about 8,000 feet above sea level, just about the height of Mexico City, and it was where the Soviet Union's team had trained for the Mexico City Olympics, to get the same altitude. It was interesting because there were a lot of Armenians present at the meeting, and the Armenians had a different point of view than the Soviets. I'm skipping. I was in Armenia twice. First of all, I was telling about being there with my children. I might mention one thing. We took a trip to the Caucasus. We went to Soviet Georgia, which was very interesting. We were there at Easter and watched their services in a Georgian church. We took the train from Georgia to Armenia to spend a couple of days there. In the Soviet Union, when you arrive at one point, you immediately try to confirm your reservations to the next point, because they are not taken for granted, and I had a train ticket from Armenia to Baku, in Azerbaijan. I went to the hotel in Armenia, and I said, "I have the ticket, but I don't have the hours written in." She said, "There's no train." I said, "I know there's a train because I've got tickets on this train." We argued for a while, and then she said, "All right, there is a train, but you won't be on it. You can't ride that train." Sometimes in the Soviet Union, you can win by being tough; sometimes you win by

knowing when to quit. I recognized that it was time to quit. That train ran right through the Nagorny Karabakh, you know, the area of Azerbaijan which is populated by Armenians. Tension was high there, but at that time the problem wasn't so well known. The reason I could not travel by train was that it would have gone through that part of the country, so we had to fly to Azerbaijan instead. And I considered myself lucky because they arranged all the air tickets. Otherwise, I would have had to spend all my time in Armenia arranging my travel out of it.

Going back to the second trip to Armenia, the one to Tsakhadzor, which was with the Department of Commerce, the KGB had a big hand in that, but the interesting thing was that the Armenians were really concerned about the environmental disruption going on there. Lake Sevan, I think, had dropped 18 feet, a beautiful lake that is very romantic in Armenian history. Armenian history is really focused on Lake Van, which is now in Turkey, but Lake Sevan was the modern equivalent. The lake had been seriously depleted to provide for electrification in the area, so they were very concerned. At the meeting, Dr. Olga Dzhugaryan, who was their representative on the commission, hosts of the meeting, and the wife of a noted architect who had built the sports stadium in Yerevan, invited us to her home: Russians, Armenians, and ourselves. We sang songs and drank Armenian cognac, and it was a very pleasant evening. It was the only time I was ever in a Soviet home. I saw Dr. Dzhugaryan later when she visited the Commercial Office in Moscow. I was sure she'd paid a price for having invited us into her home. She probably paid a big price. But she said nothing about it, knowing only too well that the Commercial Office was thoroughly bugged.

Q: Did you ever get involved with the ongoing contacts with the Jewish dissidents and not only the Jewish dissidents but others, the Pentecostals and all that?

SKOUG: Well, Pentecostals did break in during my period, and there was a great issue then as to how they were to get out, because the Russian position was that they would have to walk out the door the way they came, and then they'd be arrested. They wouldn't go, and we took the position we wouldn't force them. Usually, you know, you don't permit that to happen, because if the Russians had wanted to, they could have sent thousands of people in there who would have been glad to come in there and not come out. But because of the situation being what it was, the Pentecostals occupied, I think, the area which a barber had been using in there. For the rest of the time I was in Moscow, the Pentecostals were still there on the embassy grounds. Eventually they did get out, however, in a way that they could migrate. I think they did emigrate.

There was another incident. A fellow came in who said he had a bomb on him, and he demanded to be allowed to leave the Soviet Union. The Russians were informed in this case, and they sent people in, persuaders to try to deal with him. He was sitting in the Visa Section. Of course we evacuated the Visa Section. The outcome of that wasn't so good because they could not persuade him to surrender, so they pounced on him, and he did have a bomb which was to explode outwardly, and it went off, but it was not of the capacity to destroy the Visa Section. However, he was badly injured, and they carried him out. We never knew what the end of it was. It certainly wasn't a good one. They either shot him or he died. That was one sort of incident.

Speaking of the refuseniks, we had a fellow in the political section who was working specifically on the Jewish dissidents and the other critics of the Soviet system. He came to dress like them

and to let his hair grow long and his beard and so forth, but one day the Soviet police at the embassy grabbed him as he tried to enter. They claimed that he looked like a suspicious character trying to break into the American Embassy. Now whether they really thought that or whether they just wanted to rough him up, anyway, they did rough him up. I've forgotten whether he shaved and cut his hair after that or not. They could play hardball.

Q: This wasn't quite in your bailiwick, but by the time you left there in '79 - it happened after your time, but there was a lot of speculation about how come Brezhnev and company decided to move into Afghanistan. I mean the guy was getting old, and this was a geriatric Politburo, and they wanted one last move, and the just went a little bit gaga. Was there any feeling about Brezhnev at that time, that he was losing it, while you were still there?

SKOUG: Oh, yes. There was considerable speculation about his health. I'll comment on the Afghan thing in a minute, but as far as Brezhnev's health, I saw him at two dinners in the Kremlin that he gave for American businessmen attending the trade and economic sessions in Moscow in 1976 and 1978. The Soviet elite thought they were really dealing with their counterparts when they dealt with American captains of industry. They invited to these dinners chief executive officers of 40 or 50 major American firms and banks. Well, Brezhnev was sort of a hero on these occasions. The first time Brezhnev spoke, everybody was standing up cheering. American labor leaders wouldn't have done that, but some of the American business tycoons did. When he left the dinner a little early, he made a little pirouette, and he went out. How the capitalists cheered! That was 1976. The second time, in 1978, he did essentially the same thing, except when he made his speech, he spoke for a short period of time, and then the interpreter would speak for much longer. He was reading a little, and then the interpreter would read a lot more. It was very difficult for him to speak at this point. He was already having clear physical problems, but whether that meant that he also had mental problems I don't know. He had physical problems. I think his mental faculties were probably still normal. There was criticism of him *sub rosa*. For example, he made his son, Yuri, a deputy minister of foreign trade for maritime affairs, and everyone thought the guy knew nothing about the subject, and they more or less laughed about it. There were jokes about Brezhnev's supposed senility at this point. In fact, though, Brezhnev's colleagues dreaded change so they were content to carry on as if everything were normal.

As for Afghanistan, I think that essentially the Soviet leadership was reacting to outside events it could not fully control. The Politburo thought that Soviet power was rising, not declining. They still felt a little bit - not nearly as much as Khrushchev - but they still felt that in military affairs, particularly after Vietnam, they were becoming the paramount world power. They were snookered by the Cubans into supporting the Angolan side in the civil war, but that didn't involve commitment of much Soviet military power. When it came to the Horn of Africa - I happened to be in Moscow at that time - I remember dealing with the Somali ambassador, who was just amazed at the Soviets' sudden change of position. The Soviets reacted to Mengistu's coup in Ethiopia by switching sides in the Somali-Ethiopian conflict. They only sent a senior military officer there, but they got several thousand Cuban troops under his command to help the Ethiopians win the war with the Somalis. When it came to Afghanistan, where they already had a big stake (they were heavily involved), it probably looked to them like consolidation of a régime by a little bit of manipulation. There turned out to be more manipulation than they were

anticipating, and this time they didn't have their Cuban allies. The invasion took place after I left.

Q: Yes, in December of 1979.

SKOUG: The Russian interest in Afghanistan is an old one. They must have underestimated the risk in 1979. I remember, I used to be involved in debates in our embassy about how the leadership would move as the situation in Afghanistan became ever more complicated in 1979. We debated the subject frequently in the embassy, and the primary spokesman for non-intervention, that the Soviets wouldn't do it, was Peter Thompson, a very bright guy who'd served in India and knew that area well. Peter said that if they went into Afghanistan, they would really be caught. They'd find somebody who wouldn't back down. And I would cite the example of Czechoslovakia. I said, "Well, don't conclude that the Soviets won't do it because if they see their interests in jeopardy, they'll take the risk." And Thompson would reply, "Well, but the risks are so much greater. If they do it in Afghanistan, they'll be caught. They'll be up to their knees in it." Ambassador Toon would listen, and Toon essentially thought, well, the Czechs were so gutless that they don't count as an example. He hadn't seen the Czechs the way I'd seen them. He wasn't in Prague in August 1968. But anyway, here I was arguing that they might very well do it, and here was Thompson saying they won't do it because if they do it they'll really get hooked. And I've seen Thompson since then, and he points to me and says, "You were right," and I say, "No, you were right." We both were right.

Q: This was one of the great blunders, which in a way helped to lay the foundations for... or helped shatter the foundations of the Soviet Union.

SKOUG: Oh, absolutely.

Q: It wasn't the thing, but you could point to this as being one of the major blunders.

SKOUG: You can, and furthermore, I don't think that... It's commonplace now to say that the Soviet Union was collapsing, but it wasn't collapsing at that time. It had problems. It had problems that it could have overcome. But the involvement in Afghanistan was a major burden, and if they had avoided that, they would certainly have been able to stagger on for more time than they did.

Q: Well, looking ahead, 10 years after you left, the Soviet Union was in the process of falling apart, and one of the major things was the economy, and yet we - particularly looking at the military's work, so overestimating the Soviets economically, I think because of the concentration on their military production - why weren't we - or maybe we were seeing it correctly, but it looks like - why weren't we getting a true feeling for the weakness of the Soviets in the economic field?

SKOUG: Well, we were of course under, not pressure, but we were stimulated to report every weak side in the Soviet Union we could because, of course, everything you would read and see, unless you read down to the *adnyaka*, the 'however,' would be that great glory of the Soviet Union, this plan was fulfilled and overfulfilled, and the Soviets would never give you any information which would lead you to assume that they had a problem. But we knew they did

have problems, and one of them was in the famous oil study by the CIA, which came out in the late 1976 and predicted that Soviet oil production, although it was one of the highest in the world, way up on a level with the Saudis, would peak and then head down. And Marshall Goldman of MIT, I believe, made a small part of his career out there criticizing the CIA estimate and trying to show that oil production would continue to be higher than they thought, although not as high as it was. The Soviets obviously listened to that. One Soviet official told me they owed the CIA some gratitude for pointing out problems for which they could find a remedy. We did our best to get hard facts. I remember calling on a deputy minister of oil with Jack Carlson, who was the vice president of the American Chamber of Commerce. That's how we got in to see the deputy minister. And anyway, he was very careful with what he said, but as we left, we were taken to the door by a stolid, square-jawed KGB guy who had been in the meeting, and Carlson said sportively, "We'll go back and tell the CIA their estimate was wrong." And the guy responded bluntly, "You can go back and tell the CIA you didn't get any statistics." That's the way it was. It was very hard to get any statistics.

Well, we looked at the Soviet economy. We looked at how they lived. We reported their shortage of meat and vegetables. Cabbages sometimes seemed to be the only thing they had to eat. We reported on accidents, aviation accidents, if we could find out about them. For example, one day - it was Christmas day in 1976 - my family and I saw ambulance after ambulance after ambulance and a fleet of fire engines headed in complete silence toward what could only be Vnukovo Airport. The silence was to limit public attention to what was obviously an air disaster. They finally had to reveal there had been a major accident out there, because there were foreigners involved. If they'd only been Russians you never would have known. They tried to conceal all information possible about social or economic problems, but still, along with the downside, there was the side that they produced all this steel, they produced all this coal, they produced all this iron ore, they produced all this oil. And by hook or crook, they managed to keep it going. They were producing a steadily rising amount of natural gas. They seemed to have tremendous resources, and although they needed Western equipment to get it out, nonetheless, somehow they were able to pull this thing together. So I think that that's why I say I don't think the Soviet economy would have collapsed without other things like Afghanistan. The Soviet economy would have made it difficult for them to continue the space race, and so forth, but they essentially did themselves in by devoting so much to the military side. This started right after the missile crisis in Cuba 1962, this buildup of the Soviets armed forces, which they always denied - they always maintained that their military budget was something like nine billion rubles or something when it was ten times as much. I was present at a meeting between Premier Kosygin and Secretaries Blumenthal and Kreps in 1976 where Blumenthal asked this question, and Mrs. Kreps followed up somewhat indiscreetly, and Kosygin shouted at her. It was very impolite for him to have shouted at a woman who was a member of President Carter's cabinet. Kosygin asserted: "Why don't you believe us when we say this is our military budget? This is what it is!" He was very agitated. Well, of course it wasn't the truth. It was the emphasis given to the military side and to space, I suppose, the attempt to play the great world power, that put the additional strain on the economy so that changes were needed. Gorbachev was coming along at that point as a new Communist Party Secretary. And he did not share all the views of the Brezhnev Politburo. I saw him in 1979 as he came through an exhibit I was running at Krasnaya Presnya. He came in, and the reason that he did so was the Vienna meeting between Carter and Brezhnev was coming up. There they would sign SALT II. So, there was a window of

opportunity, an opening when the Soviets showed a friendlier face to us. As a sign of temporary favor, a high level Soviet government and Party group came through and looked at our exhibit at a fair called *Melyoratsya*, which is 'improvements,' you know, improvements in technology. Gorbachev was with them, and he was not like any Soviet Communist Party Secretary I'd seen. Party secretaries seemed to observe but say little. They were dour, and their business was the Party's business, and they certainly didn't have any public relations functions. But he was talking and, you know, gesturing, and was much younger, practically a generation younger than all these old guys in the Politburo. It appeared that he had a fresh outlook. And a lot of the younger Soviets that I was dealing with did have that. It looked like a change in generations, and I think he saw himself, in a way, as a reformer. He thought he could make the system work. That's essentially what he would later try to do, to make it work. He was not willing to intervene to protect the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, and he certainly did not foresee what was going to happen.

Q: No. Did the computer generation, word processing, all that, was beginning to build up in the United States and Western Europe, particularly in the United States. Were you getting any glimmers that this thing might prove to be a difficult one for the Soviets to handle? We're really talking about information more than anything else.

SKOUG: Yes, well, I can't say that I would have been able to predict in 1979 what happened in the United States in the 1990s and the year 2000, but the Soviets were attuned to it. Gvishyani, the son-in-law of Kosygin who was the deputy chairman of the Soviet Committee on Science and Technology, was very interested, and the chairman, vice premier, Kirillin, was highly intelligent and one of the nicest senior Russian officials I ever had a chance to talk to at length. On one occasion in July 1977, I went out to Sheremetyevo Airport to see Kirillin off to the United States, and since they were delayed, I had about an hour with him. And in that chat he conceded that the USSR did indeed have an energy problem, saying, "We all have an energy problem." And Gvishyani was very bright. He was an Armenian? Georgian, I guess. I think that he was Georgian. They were very much attuned to getting the latest technology, mainly, of course, from the Western Europeans, and he had gadgets in his office of all sorts. They were brilliant. I mean, one can't say that the Soviets didn't have technical capacity. They just didn't have enough of it. And they did not have the sort of system that could turn invention into innovation and then into serial production.

Q: Also, the technical capacity opened up fields of information and things that allowed you to print things and do all sorts of things without some control.

SKOUG: Yes, well, that's true. They were very concerned about control. But there wouldn't have been the danger, perhaps, in the Soviet Union. In Czechoslovakia you had a broad range of people who were qualified and able to use technology and who could, for example, make those radios operate when the Soviets came in and could do other things. You wouldn't have had that spontaneity in the Soviet Union because it just had no history of that. There weren't enough people who were trained to think like that. They didn't have enough. They had some good ones, but not enough.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover on the Soviet Union? If there is something we should

discuss, I would be happy to.

SKOUG: Well, there's one little vignette. Probably my best source, or one of them, in the Soviet Union was Yevgeny Shershnev, who was the deputy director at Arbatov's Institute for the Study of the United States and Canada. He was assigned in 1979 to a senior position at the United Nations, one of the Soviets delegated to work there. On one occasion, shortly before he left, he told me about a trip he had taken to Iran, and this was at the time when the Bakhtiar Government was trying to hang on there. The Shah was already in a lot of trouble, but the worst had not yet happened. Shershnev said that he had been in Iran the previous fall as the guest of Vinogradov, the Soviet ambassador, a good friend of his. Shershnev, who was not a boastful man, said that he could see the problems that were going to bring down the Shah. He said he could see that the street and the Islamic clergy wielded a tremendous power there, and that the Shah was going to fail. He said that Ambassador Vinogradov didn't see that at all. Vinogradov argued with him. He liked the Shah. He even supported the Shah. Of course, the Shah had sent back to the Soviet Union a Soviet flier who had defected in a MIG aircraft. The interesting thing is that the Soviet ambassador was no more able to predict what was happening than anybody else, whereas Shershnev said that he could foresee it, and he said this even before the clerics really came in. I warned at that point that it would be going back to the middle ages, or could be, and he said, well, if they had to go back a little bit, it wouldn't matter. The future would be brighter. Obviously, he was thinking that the Tudeh Party would inherit power once the "Middle Ages" were over.

Would vignettes would be of interest?

Q: Go on, because it helps give a feel for the times.

SKOUG: Right.

I might mention a dinner my wife and I attended at the Uzbekistan Restaurant in Moscow in July 1977. The dinner was hosted by Pan American Airline to see off a senior Soviet civil aviation official, a man named Samorukhov, who was going to the United States to be Aeroflot's North American director of operations. Beside him sat a senior and very tall (about six foot six inches tall) American official from Pan American's West European division, whose name I won't mention. Then there were others at the table, including a man named Smurov, who was clearly a KGB watchdog, and the dinner went on, and there was dancing and a lot of vodka was drunk because it was Samorukhov's farewell. And he was having a lot to drink, and a lot to say, and he was talking to the tall Pan Am official next to him, having toast after toast together. We began to know what was going to happen, and I was watching Smurov, and Smurov was watching me. Smurov was shaking his head in despair, and finally Samorukhov said to Smurov, "You're KGB - I'm KGB, too." And Smurov kept shaking his head about the levity. Finally, though, the evening ended on a bad note because as the tall American and Samorukhov jumped up to make a toast - and sometimes when you've had a lot of vodka a sudden movement can do it - the American passed out at the table and fell with a mighty crash. He almost fell on my wife. My wife's a little woman. She would really have been crushed. Anyway, here we were with everyone looking at us then because it made a lot of noise when a man that big falls over. We had to carry him out. Samorukhov, although he was plastered, was able to make it out under his own steam,

but we had to carry out the American contender, and we got him out on the street, and there was his car. The car for him was a Volkswagen Beetle. We had to fold him to get him in the back seat of the thing, and off he went. That was life in the Soviet Union - a lot of drinking.

Drinking, of course, was one of the things that Gorbachev tried to crack down on and didn't succeed. Drinking vodka was one of the things they permitted because, like sports, it was a way out. Get people drunk and get them home and they won't make trouble for the Party. I used to go out early in the morning and run. You'd find in the morning that there would be all these poor figures lying in the street, no matter how cold it was, who had been out drinking at night and were lying there in the morning. Perhaps the alcohol kept them from freezing.

Q: Let's go back to Moscow. Talk about the embassy fire.

SKOUG: Yes, on the night of August 27, 1977, which was a Saturday, the American Embassy caught fire, and it was a major blaze. Now on that day I had received the local Pan American Airlines representative, who was smoking cigarettes. Right outside my office was a lot of equipment that had been brought in to improve the firefighting capacity of the American Embassy, which the inspectors had recognized to be at risk. I had a hotplate, which was used for making coffee and so forth in the Economic Section of the embassy. So when the fire broke out and it was said that it was started somewhere around the Economic Section of the embassy, I was concerned. I wasn't able to get in there during the fire, but immediately after, I ran for the hotplate, and the hotplate was still there but not plugged in. So the hotplate was not the cause. Someone who lived in the embassy or who worked in the embassy building had noticed a sort of a spark on the television set, some indication that there had been a loose connection. My office had a false ceiling and a thick carpet, and it all went very fast, and it was very, very hot - the fire. Our family went down to the embassy and watched it burn. The Soviet firemen fighting the fire showed a tremendous amount of courage, going up there to keep the roof from burning off. We knew if the roof burned off that would be a disaster for us. But it did burn despite their efforts, and I must say that those were certainly professional firemen doing their best to put out the fire, but they didn't succeed. I went back in as fast as I could the next day, early in the morning, and in my office there were seated about seven persons in the uniform of firemen. My thought was that not all of these men were firemen. There were other people there.

Q: All of a sudden a bunch of people in brand-new fire uniforms showed up.

SKOUG: Yes. They were all watching me as I went over to my desk, blackened by the heat of the blaze. I had a lot of things in that desk. And I pulled slightly open a drawer with these gentlemen watching me, and I could see there wasn't much in that part of the drawer. The wooden desk was totally burned on the outside, but inside - wood is not a good conductor of heat - it was not. I pulled open the drawer a little further, and there sat my diary among other things and all sorts of pieces of information that these guys would love to have had - reports, nothing classified of course, but still a lot of things they would like to have got their hands on. I had brought a little gunny sack with me, and I loaded these things in the gunny sack while these guys watched. I knew that they had gone through the other parts of the desk, but they hadn't realized that there was this "inner compartment." You could pull the desk out and there was another set of drawers. So I rescued what I could from the office. In the meantime, the files were just the

opposite. The file cabinets, being metal, looked normal, but inside everything was cooked to ashes. It was just totally destroyed inside. The stench of charred paper was sickening, and it did not soon go away.

Well, because the roof was off, we were in terrible shape. There wasn't a crane in Moscow available to us that could be used to work on this, and we were facing, of course, the Russian winter. This was only August, but still, it takes a long time even under the best of circumstances, and snow starts falling in late September. Well, Ambassador Toon went with me to open the American part of an international exhibit at Sokolniki Park, the fair grounds, and there the ambassador spotted a 34-meter-high Harnischfeger crane which was on display. He said this would be wonderful to put the roof back on the embassy. Harnischfeger had no problem with this. Well, the Soviets sort of agreed that this could be done, but in practice, they wouldn't let the crane out of Sokolniki, which has gates around it, barred. The enterprising deputy chief of the commercial office, Steve Sind, was out at Sokolniki, and he noted an open gate. The gates were open for something. He drove out on the Harnischfeger crane, dashed with the huge crane through the streets of Moscow - it's a long way from Sokolniki to the embassy - and he got the crane there, and the crane was used, and we got a roof over us. The Russians were mightily upset by this, contending that it had damaged the streets.

All of us transferred our activities, including the ambassador and Jack Matlock, the DCM, to the commercial office, which was a discrete building not far from the embassy. The ambassador had not been there more than a day or two when we learned that Department of Commerce officials were threatening to complain to Congress about the alleged misuse of the commercial facility in Moscow. They were asserting that the purpose of the U.S. Commercial Office is to promote trade and business, not to be used for extraneous matters. So they're telling the ambassador of the United States, whose building has just been burned, that he shouldn't be doing business in the Commercial Office. Well, Toon and Matlock got out, and they went back into the embassy, but I relocated myself in the Commercial Office for two or three months. Since my office on the eighth floor of the embassy was totally gutted, I worked out a deal with the chief of the Political Section on the seventh floor. His office, though badly burned, still could be used, and it was being used because a hole was drilled in the wall and people repairing the embassy came through there. He offered a little alcove to us, so I put three of my economic officers and a secretary in that alcove, and I worked with them, but I also worked out of the Commercial Office - except, of course, you couldn't send anything classified out of there. Finally, I went back over to the unheated embassy itself, and we sat every day in the winter with our coats on, with our *shapkas* (that's the Russian for "fur hat"), and gloves, sitting and carrying on business as usual through the whole winter. But we wouldn't have been able to do that without the roof.

Q: Well, you left there in, what, the summer of 1979?

SKOUG: Yes.

Q: Where to?

SKOUG: Well, hah, that was a good question. I had been expecting, had been bidding - I think the new system was just being set up - I had expected to go as DCM in one of three points, and

my fallback was consul general in Vancouver, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, or Barcelona - places where I spoke the language. At the time I went to the Soviet Union in 1976, I had been offered either the Soviet Union or consul general in Munich. Bob Sayre, who was advising me at that time, strengthened my own view that I should go as a counselor to Moscow rather than be the big fish in a smaller pond.

Q: Oh, sure. Moscow was the big enchilada.

SKOUG: It was the big enchilada. I was number four on the diplomatic list. It was better than being number one in Munich. So I felt that going as a consul general from Moscow would not be as interesting as being DCM. It turned out that there were no DCM-ships available for me. And I had had a lot of good ratings. For example, the CIA, which was the primary end-user of our economic stuff, said that they couldn't in their memory recall any comparable record over the three years that I was there. I later found out that that sort of information couldn't be in my personnel file or be made available to promotion panels. And there were other comments like that that apparently didn't get in. The long and the short of it was I did not get any of the DCMships which were supposedly available, nor did I get any consul general position. So although I was going to be promoted the next year, I wasn't getting an appropriate assignment. They finally came up with a diplomat in residence at Lehigh University, which I really did not feel was appropriate. Here I was, how many years into my career, 22 and a half years in the career, and suddenly I didn't find any interesting positions being offered to me. Well, I finally accepted the diplomat in residence, but the next day they came up with economic-commercial counselor in Caracas. Technically, the job in Caracas was rated one level above the one in Moscow, believe it or not, but it wasn't-

Q: But it wasn't of the same caliber.

SKOUG: It wasn't, and furthermore, where the job in Moscow was essentially economic and secondarily commercial, it now suddenly mattered that the job in Caracas was going to be overwhelmingly commercial and only secondarily economic because the Department of Commerce was taking all those slots away from us. So I took the job as economic-commercial counselor in Caracas, returning then to Latin America after 16 years away.

MALCOLM TOON
Ambassador
USSR (1976-1979)

Ambassador Malcolm Toon was born in New York in 1916. He received a bachelor's degree from Tufts College and a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1942-1946. His career in the Foreign Service included ambassadorships to Israel, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. Ambassador Toon was interviewed by Dr. Henry E Mattox on June 9, 1989.

Q: You were picked by President Ford to go to the Soviet Union. Moscow would not accept you at first, is that correct?

TOON: Yes, but let me tell you a little about what I call the saga of my appointment to Moscow. I was first appointed ambassador to Moscow by Nixon in 1973 when I was serving as ambassador in Belgrade. I received a telegram over the weekend in what we call the *agrément* channel, which pertains to ambassadorial appointments, from the Under Secretary of Management, who said that President Nixon had decided to send me to Moscow as ambassador, that they were updating my FBI check, but that the Department wanted to know now if this gave me any personal problems before going further down the road.

Well, it did give me a really serious personal problem. That was my wife's attitude. We had spent, I would say, at that point, about five years in the Soviet Union under very difficult conditions. I was there first as a third secretary when Stalin was running the show. We had no maid. The tap had been turned off by Stalin. Since my wife spoke no Russian then, I had to do the shopping. It was a very unpleasant time. It was a little bit better when I was counselor of embassy in the '60s, but not much. One still felt one was surrounded by the enemy. So that I knew that I would have a problem with my wife.

Well, when I received this telegram, I gave my wife a ring at home -- it was a Saturday. I said, "Look, I am coming home for lunch, since we have a very serious problem to discuss. Why don't you crank up a few martinis, and we will get to it." So I went home for lunch.

She said, after a martini or two, "What is the problem you want to discuss with me?"

I said, "Well, President Nixon wants us to go to Moscow as ambassador."

And she said, "Over my dead body."

I said, "Well, I am not willing to pay that price." I finally convinced her that it was very difficult for an ambassador to say no to the White House. If the President wants you to go somewhere, you go. I said, "After all, you and I have been partners in this difficult diplomatic business for years now. I don't think you should say no."

Well, she said, "All right, but only for two years."

I sent a message back to Washington that weekend saying, "Flattered, honored, and so forth. Let me know as soon as possible when I can tell Tito," I had a very good relationship with Tito and I felt he should know as soon as possible that I would be leaving. I said, "He is going to be pretty mad if he learns first from the press that I am going to Moscow as ambassador, so make sure that I can tell him before this is publicized."

And I got word back on Monday saying that they understood my relationship with Tito, and they would get word to me as soon as possible. That afternoon, I got another cable from Washington saying, "There has been an apparent change of signals at the White House. It is doubly important that you tell no one about this appointment. We will clarify the situation and get word to you, as

soon as possible.”

I called in my secretary, and I dictated what undoubtedly would be regarded as a very irascible message to Washington saying that, in effect, “If, as I suspect, the Soviets have tried to muck-up this appointment, I want my day in court before the final decision is taken.” And I said to my secretary, “Send it off. I don’t want to see it in draft. Just send it, I don’t want to change it.” And the message went as dictated.

Then I got a telegram back the next morning, which was Tuesday, saying in effect: “You are wrong. The Soviets have nothing to do with this. Understand your concern, will clarify the situation as soon as possible and let you know.” I received no further word from Washington about that appointment. And we went without an ambassador for a whole year in Moscow. Spike Dubs was chargé for the most part. And then Walt Stoessel, who was then Assistant Secretary of State, was appointed in December as ambassador in Moscow.

Now I tried to find out from Bill Rogers, who was the Secretary of State, and Walt Stoessel, who was his Assistant Secretary to European Affairs, what had happened to my appointment. They couldn’t find out. They just kept putting my name before the White House, and the answer was dead silence from the Oval Office. I finally discovered from correspondents, whom I knew well and who were covering the Washington scene, what had happened.

Henry Kissinger was then National Security Advisor in the White House. When Nixon had decided to send me to Moscow as ambassador, he had a drink with the Soviet ambassador, Dobrynin. Kissinger said, you know, “The President has decided to send Mac Toon to Moscow as ambassador.”

Q: So to continue. Kissinger had a drink with Dobrynin.

TOON: And Kissinger said to Dobrynin, “The President has decided to send Mac Toon to Moscow as ambassador.”

Dobrynin said, “That’s the end of detente,” which was nonsense. Now matter how powerful an ambassador you are, you don’t carry out your own policy. The policy at that time happened to be detente. Therefore, obviously, I would carry it out.

But Kissinger sent a back channel message to Moscow, “Don’t ask for *agrément* for Ambassador Toon until you hear further from me.” And that was the end of it. When Kissinger became Secretary of State, he revived the whole idea of sending me to Moscow.

Q: He must have had a bad conscience.

TOON: No, I think he probably recognized that it was time to send somebody there who, in the first place, could report back accurately what the Soviet positions were and, secondly, who could be tough and outspoken with the Soviets, if necessary.

In any case, you are right. What happened was that the Soviets sat on my appointment, my

agreement, for almost three months. That's unprecedented, as you know. In fact, it is almost unprecedented for any host government to turn down an ambassadorial appointee unless he happens to be a convicted felon or something like that. But they didn't turn me down; they just did not act on it. The assumption was that if they just sat on their hands and quietly passed the word that Toon was not really the ideal man for the Moscow job from their point of view, that President Ford would change his mind. And Kissinger would change his mind. But to their credit, the President and the Secretary of State stood firm. They said, "Under no conditions will we change the appointment."

Then it was assumed that what the Soviets were doing was waiting until the election. As you know, Carter beat Ford. So it seemed likely that the Soviets would just wait it out, and Carter would appoint somebody else.

What happened was -- again I behaved in my usual cantankerous and irascible way -- I called in my secretary in November to send a personal message to Kissinger. "What the Soviets are doing is absolutely unacceptable conduct. Don't misunderstand this message. It has nothing to do with me personally. I've had a good career. I've headed three embassies, important missions, and I have no complaint. But what is at stake is the good name of the United States. You simply cannot tolerate Soviet refusal to accept an appointment by the President of the United States. My advice to you is to call in Ambassador Dobrynin -- he was then, I think, in his twenty-third year as ambassador -- and tell him that unless we, the United States, receive positive word on Toon's appointment within forty-eight hours, you, Mr. Ambassador, will pack your bags and go home and we will get along without ambassadors."

Well, within forty-eight hours, I received a telephone call from Washington at 4:00 in the morning -- Washington never has had a clear understanding of time differentials -- saying that the Soviets had accepted me. The President and Kissinger wanted me back in Washington in time to arrive in Moscow before the end of the year.

Q: This was late '76?

TOON: Late '76. And so when I got back to Washington, I was met at the airport by a junior officer who said, "The Secretary wants to see you right away."

I said, "Sure." I went in to Mr. Kissinger's office, and I said, "What happened?"

"What happened? We followed your advice."

This is a very interesting development, because it meant that the Soviet Union attached great importance to having Dobrynin stay on in Washington. After all, he was a very effective guy. As I have said publicly, he snookered so many Presidents and Secretaries of State down through the years, that the Soviets felt they could not, you know, pay the price of having him leave. They were willing to accept me in exchange for keeping Dobrynin down in Washington.

Q: I dare say Dobrynin sent a very persuasive cable back.

TOON: Probably.

Q: You were appointed in January. The Senate confirmed you, oddly, in June, because the Congress was out of session for a while. When did you actually go to Moscow?

TOON: Well, that's not quite accurate. I went to Moscow in December of '76. I presented my credentials to Podgornoy, who was then head of state, in January, and I was then the ambassador.

Now when Carter came in -- well, before Carter came in, when he was trying to arrange his administration, he was advised -- I found this out later -- by people I thought were good friends of mine but who turned out not to be -- to like Governor Harriman -- dump me as the ambassador and replace me with a businessman in order to convey a positive gesture to the Brezhnev leadership. I heard about this through the grapevine -- again mostly from correspondents.

Then shortly after Carter was inaugurated and entered on duty as President, the brains from Plains around Carter -- as I have described the President's staff -- discovered that there were fifty-six interim appointments about to be confirmed by the Senate. As you know, interim appointees had to be confirmed within five days of the reconvened Senate, or the appointments lapse. So the people around Carter decided that they better pull these names back. And they did.

Of these interim appointees, there were four ambassadors; all the rest of them were purely political appointees for domestic jobs. But there were four ambassadors. One was a purely political appointee; I think he was ambassador to Jamaica. Another was the ambassador to Botswana -- another was the ambassador to Malta -- neither was an important post. And the other one was myself.

Overnight, there were headlines all around the world, "Carter cancels Toon's appointment." I began receiving phone calls from my Ambassadorial colleagues in Moscow saying, "Gee, sorry, old man, that you have to go. We are just establishing a good relationship."

I said, "What a minute. I'm not going anywhere. As far as I'm concerned, this is a pure technicality, but we will have to wait and see." But it took Carter, I would say, at least two months to decide to keep me on.

Meanwhile, I was in limbo in Moscow. I had not met the President -- I hadn't really ever heard of him before he became President. I knew some of the members of the Cabinet, Harold Brown and Vance in particular, but I had not met them as members of his Cabinet. I had not been privy to the formulation, for example, of our arms-control package, which later turned out to be a complete fiasco. I felt out of things and somewhat in limbo. I kept saying to Vance in my cables: "Look, I would like to come back and talk to you and give you the Moscow ambassador's point of view on what the nuances of our policy should be toward Brezhnev and his regime."

"No, it would be very awkward at this time until the President decides what to do," Vance replied.

Well, Carter finally decided to keep me on, but later I found out -- primarily from Jody Powell -- that the only reason he decided to keep me on was that he was told through Jody Powell by the American press that if he dumped me, he would be accused of being soft on the Soviets.

Q: How long before you came back to meet him?

TOON: I think it was in early June of '77. Meanwhile, Vance had come to Moscow. And I had about forty minutes with the President -- a private conversation in the Oval Office. I found him to be a very warm, decent human being, but a man with some rather strange ideas about the Soviet Union. I came out of that conversation and went right to Brzezinski's office -- I had known Brzezinski for years -- and I said, "You've got a big problem on your hands. You've got to teach this man the facts of political life. He thinks that there is a warm bond of friendship between Brezhnev and himself. And he thinks that he and Brezhnev are pursuing basically the same political objectives: peace and stability throughout the world." I said, "That's not true." So I said, "You've got a big job ahead of you." Frankly, I had to deal with this problem in my relationship with President Carter, and to a lesser extent, with Cy Vance throughout my entire stewardship.

Q: Well, the two were known for opposing views -- Brzezinski and Vance -- on the Soviet Union and on U.S.-Soviet relationships. Therefore, you would, I gather, come down on the side of Brzezinski on these conflicts.

TOON: Philosophically, I think Brzezinski and I were much closer soulmates than Cy Vance and I were. I am very fond of Cy Vance. He is a great human being. But, again, really a Pole has a much better understanding of the Soviet Union than a Brahmin from Yale -- and that is Brzezinski's background. But Cy and I simply didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things. And Carter and I didn't agree on a number of issues. Finally, I decided that I was not really getting through to Washington the way I thought I should. Furthermore, I had had almost three years of ambassador to Moscow. My wife and I had spent almost eight years in that benighted capital. I decided that it was time to move on to retirement.

Q: I can't let this go. You spoke of arms-control fiasco. Is that SALT II?

TOON: No, I thought the SALT II agreement was a good agreement. I had in mind the first arms-control package that Vance brought to Moscow in March 1977. As I told you before, Vance had told me by cable and by telephone that it would be awkward for me to come back to Washington, but he did want to get my slant before coming in to Moscow. Would I meet him in Brussels where he was going to brief the North Atlantic Council before meeting with the Soviet leadership?

So I went out to Brussels, and Vance and I sat together on the plane on the way to Moscow. He said, "Well, what do you think of the arms-control package that I am bringing to Moscow?"

I said, "I would be in a better position to answer that question if I knew what was in the package."

He was shocked. He said, “Didn’t Brzezinski send it to you?”

I said, “No, I don’t have a clue.” Well, then he described it in great detail. And I said, “Now, Mr. Secretary” -- even an Ambassador doesn’t call the Secretary of State by his first name -- I said, “This is not going to fly. The Soviets are going to reject this out of hand. Frankly, I think what you are doing is what your predecessor once said was a very dangerous thing to do to the Soviets, you’ll spook them.”

Vance was shocked to hear this. He presented it to the Soviets in Moscow, and they did exactly what I told Vance they would do. So then my credibility, I think, went up somewhat in Washington after that happened.

Q: It certainly would help. I am not going to take much more of your time. I would like to get, though, for the record, your impressions of Brezhnev.

TOON: Well, you have to understand that throughout my stewardship as ambassador, Brezhnev was not in good shape. He was seriously ailing to the point where, at the end, his colleagues had to sort of prop him up in order to permit him to make a speech. I saw him eight times, which is more than any other American ambassador in Moscow had seen the top man in the Soviet leadership for years. But I can’t say that I ever had a good give and take with the guy, and I speak fluent Russian, of course. He always read from a position paper. Half the time, he didn’t make any sense. Half the time, the interpreter, who was usually Sukhodrov, would interpret something which didn’t come out of Brezhnev’s lips at all. That was one of the advantages of knowing the language. There were times when he seemed to be in reasonably good shape, but I would say that, basically, he was not a very healthy man while I was ambassador.

Gromyko, of course, I dealt with regularly. Gromyko I could see within an hour’s notice. He knew that I was not going to waste his time. He knew that I would be speaking under instructions. I have great respect for Gromyko as a professional diplomat. I disagree with everything he has said and done down through the years, but he was a real professional. He would tell you, in no uncertain terms, that “I was there. I attended that conference. And I know what went on.” Usually we didn’t even have an adequate record of what went on. So he had a leg up on certainly every ambassador in Moscow, and a leg up on, I think, every Secretary of State or every foreign minister in the Western world because of his vast experience and his involvement in principal policy issues for over forty years.

But with Brezhnev, it was, you know, a good formal relationship in the sense that I could see him frequently, but I never felt confident that he was really on top of things.

Q: By the time you got there in ‘76, detente of previous years had pretty well collapsed anyway, had it not? Perhaps in the final days of the Vietnam War.

TOON: Well, certainly, we did not have the sort of chummy relationship that had existed between the Nixon-Kissinger team on our side and the Brezhnev-Kosygin-Podgorniy group on the other side. But if you mean by detente a continuing dialogue with the Soviets, a continuing attempt on the part of both sides to bring about increased stability in our relationship, I think

detente continued. And after all, we did, during my years in Moscow, negotiate the SALT II treaty, which, of course, was never ratified, primarily because of Soviet misbehavior. I would think that down through the Ford and Carter years we had a relationship which I think is absolutely essential in Moscow. That is, a relationship which would provide for a continuing dialogue with the Soviet Union primarily to make sure that they don't make a mistake in judgment and get our two countries in a position of military confrontation, which in my view would inevitably result in a nuclear exchange and the end of civilization.

Now we did have that sort of relationship under Ford and Carter when I served as ambassador, but not the sort of chummy relationship that existed under Nixon-Kissinger, which I think, frankly, was misguided. The problem with the relationship when Nixon and Kissinger were in office was that detente was oversold to the American public. I think Henry Kissinger today would admit this. The idea got across to our fellow Americans that, we were dealing with a basically changed Soviet Union. That was not the case at all. So what happened was, I think, a much more sensible and sensitive assessment of the Soviet threat in the Ford-Carter years than we had under toward the end of the Nixon-Kissinger regime.

Q: I am not, even by implication, trying to be critical of your stewardship. I am raising it because detente really, as I think of it anyway, is an aura, an atmosphere, a feeling. It was chummy, as you said, at one time. It became less chummy. Now it is chummy in spades again. What is your opinion, now in 1989, of the Soviets?

TOON: Well, I would agree it became chummy in spades again under Mr. Reagan. I think Mr. Reagan never really understood what was going on. Gorbachev was on top of Reagan at all the summit conferences, and I think, frankly, most of us who know something about the Soviet problem were very uneasy with Mr. Reagan at the helm in dealing one-on-one with Gorbachev.

Now I don't feel that way with George Bush. I've known George Bush for many years. I know that this is a guy that does his homework well. He doesn't have laid-back weekends at Camp David the way Mr. Reagan did. He doesn't spend his evenings watching class-B movies. He is a very serious guy. Therefore, I feel reasonably confident -- don't misunderstand me -- I don't agree with many one-on-one meetings with the Soviet leadership, but I am not uneasy about Mr. Bush meeting with Gorbachev. I think we probably have a safer relationship now. I would hope we would not revert to the sort of chummy relationship that we had under Mr. Reagan.

Q: In October 1978, you made a speech in Atlanta in which you called the Soviets paranoid about China, and you brought up the radiation question, bombarding the American Embassy with radiation. You had words to the effect that the Soviet Union is a highly racial society.

TOON: Racist.

Q: Racist. You brought up the problems of the African students. You were criticized for this. This is something for which we were criticized in the Soviet press, I guess. Acknowledging that it may all be correct or true, is it terribly wise, diplomatically, to make such a frank speech when you are still ambassador in a given country?

TOON: Probably not. And perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, I would have said different things, or least said them differently than I did. But I think it is important to make clear that most of these points that I made and you cited, I made in response to questions, not in my formal remarks.

Now with regard to the racist question, I was asked by one of the correspondents if I agreed with President Carter's assessment, which he made in a speech, I think, in the state of Washington just a week before, about the racist attitude of the Soviet regime. Well, I found myself in the position of either rebutting the President or speaking the truth. I knew there would be problems back in Moscow. I think the same thing is true of some of the other things I said. But they were in response to questions primarily. I have always felt that it is an ambassador's responsibility, particularly the American ambassador in Moscow, to be perfectly straight with his own countrymen as to what is going on inside the Soviet Union and not to cover-up in an effort to promote detente, if you want to call it that, or, in any case, a chummy relationship between ourselves and the Soviets.

Now, perhaps it would have been wiser if I had been less abrasive in my remarks. But if you look carefully at the speech that I made in Atlanta, you will find that it is a very strong endorsement of a continuing close relationship with the Moscow leadership. When I got back to Moscow -- I had been blasted by Pravda the day before I arrived -- I held a press conference in which I said that I'm just sorry that the Soviet leadership and the Soviet media did not choose to read the entire text of my remarks, because I think inevitably they would have concluded that I was trying to endorse what I think is the sort of thing that they want to see happen. That is, a good, close relationship with Washington.

Q: You recall, I'm sure, that the same thing happened with George Kennan at one stage.

TOON: I was there when that happened. I was a third secretary in the embassy under George Kennan. Let me if I may, give you the nature of the relationship between myself and George Kennan. I, together with another junior officer, wrote a paper called, "After Containment, What?" Now, we wrote this paper before we knew that Kennan was to be our ambassador. I may have been brash, but I wasn't stupid. I certainly would never have written this paper if I had known he was going to be our ambassador. The paper was submitted to the serious essay contest in the Foreign Service Journal.

Kennan was then named the ambassador. This other young officer and I were just quaking in our boots as to what would happen to us. "Friends" of ours in Washington gave the paper to Kennan to read during his briefings. Kennan's reaction was, in effect: Get the scorpions off the premises. He started the wheels turning for our transfers. I was transferred before my term was up. I was transferred after eighteen months. But I stayed there a lot longer than George Kennan, because he was booted out, as you know.

But the interesting thing is that the only time that I was in the foreign office was when I went down with the Chargé d'Affaires, who I think was Jack McSweeney at the time, to receive the note from Vishinsky, who was then foreign minister -- he was a terrible character who presided over the purge trials in the late 1930s -- declaring George Kennan persona non grata. That was

the only time I was in the foreign office in my first tour of duty in Moscow.

Now since then, Kennan and I have developed a very good, close relationship. We don't agree on a number of issues, but we see each other frequently. As he told me in Berlin after he had retired -- you will recall that he was ticked off, he was finished, and he went to Princeton. He came to Berlin, when I was stationed there, to deliver the Ernst Reuter memorial lectures, which he did beautifully in fluent German. I was sort of his escort officer. He asked to see me privately. He said, "You know, Mac, some of us who think we are adults, behave like children. I want to apologize to you for my behavior toward you in Moscow."

Instead of having the grace to say, "Gosh, that's great, Mr. Kennan," I said, "Well, I'm just sorry you didn't feel that way in Moscow, because my career is just about ruined." There is no question that I had a very difficult time recovering from my transfer from Moscow and from the efficiency reports that were written on me at Kennan's instigation. I finally was reasonably successful. But since then, we have developed a good personal relationship, and all the sordid past is forgotten.

Q: That's a fascinating sidelight. Even way back then, I think Kennan was declaring that large elements of what we had known as containment was not really what he meant, and he disagreed with certain NSC 68 conclusions and that sort of thing.

TOON: Well, he felt -- I have never been entirely sure that he was right about this -- that his views were misinterpreted by people back in Washington who wanted to translate them into the need for building up a strong military posture and developing a military alliance such as NATO. He claims that he never had that in mind at all. If you go back and read the Mr. X article or the long telegram from Moscow, it seems to be more or less inevitable that you could come to that interpretation of what he said.

Q: I have read them many times, and I was puzzled about that myself.

You left. Thomas Watson, Jr. succeeded you in Moscow. You criticized the appointment of a nonprofessional. You criticized, at that time, the Washington practice of using Dobrynin as a major channel of communication with Moscow. This is similar to what happens, I understand, all the time in our relations with London. The British Embassy in Washington is used as a channel for communications.

TOON: But there, there is a good reason for it. Usually we don't have a very competent man serving as ambassador to London.

But let me just say a word about, as you correctly pointed out, my criticism of the Watson appointment. I made clear that this was not directed at Watson personally. I knew the guy well. He was head of the Arms Control Advisory Committee when I was ambassador in Moscow. I would see him every time I came back to Washington. I had known him in other capacities. He is a very decent human being and a terribly nice guy. But not a guy with any obvious qualifications for the Moscow job. I felt strongly that this job, which had been in career hands for something like twenty years, ought to remain in career hands, because it was terribly important, I felt, from

Washington's point of view to know or to have an expert's assessment as to what was going on inside the Soviet Union, what the views of the Soviet leadership were. You cannot do this without knowing the language. You have to be able to read what the Soviets are telling their own people and so forth. It was for that reason that I felt it was a misguided appointment.

Now Watson, in fairness to him, never really had a chance to demonstrate that a businessman could run a good mission in Moscow, because shortly after he got there, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, and our relationship went down the drain. But I still feel strongly that our interests are far better served, frankly and speaking completely subjectively, if we had a career man serving in every mission overseas. Now that is totally unrealistic, I recognize, given the nature of our political process. But at least in those sensitive posts where it is terribly important for us to try to know exactly what is going on, we ought to have a real professional. I think, frankly, we made a mistake by sending Watson to Moscow.

Now as far as my criticism of Washington's dealing with Dobrynin is concerned, I have always felt that if you are speaking to a government which doesn't have a really good understanding as to your political process, which is true of Moscow -- less true now under Gorbachev, but certainly true under Brezhnev -- who don't really understand how Washington operates, then you are far better off if you speak through your ambassador to make sure that your point of view gets across without any embellishment or distortion. You are in a position, as the American ambassador, to explain what your policies and your positions are. Now, as for speaking through Dobrynin, I can't prove that he distorted what he heard or was told, because we don't have access to that sort of information in Moscow. But I do know, on the basis of my many conversations with Gromyko, that he didn't understand some of the finer points involved in the SALT II negotiations, primarily because Dobrynin himself didn't understand.

Now Dobrynin, as you know, never had any note-taker with him. He always liked to be one-on-one with the American Secretary of State and with whomever else he was dealing. Now, that is a big mistake on our part.

ROBERT WILLIAM FARRAND

Chief, US Commercial Office

Moscow (1976-1978)

Soviet Desk Officer

Washington, DC (1978-1980)

Mr. Farrand was born in Watertown, New York in 1934 and graduated from Mount Saint Mary's College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964. He served in numerous posts including Kuala Lumpur, Moscow and Prague and was named ambassador to Papua, New Guinea in 1990. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: In '75 whither, you left there at an early time, how did that come?

FARRAND: In '75, I left there at an early time because Henry Kissinger and President Nixon's administration had struck an arrangement with the Soviet Union or at least they thought they had struck up an arrangement with the Soviet Union, it was detente. About 1973, either late '73 or early '74 they opened in Moscow a commercial office to really expand trade between the United States and the Soviet Union. This was part of a multipronged effort to probe the system and maybe with a series of agreements, to have linkages across a spectrum of things. The university exchanges, etc., that would in time of tension hold, you know, that would be an inhibitor to an all out strike or an all out war, whatever the thinking was. Part of that, the serious part of it was a commercial effort and so where they had never done this before; they opened a commercial office in downtown Prague. Did I say Prague? I meant Moscow. They opened a commercial office and it wasn't downtown. It was about a city block away from the U.S. embassy. They found the building that had a large area, it was a high rise apartment building, but on the ground floor there was a large area all opened by windows that would have been used as a trading house of some sort. Not a trading house, but one of those import type things. So, the Commerce Department, the U.S. Commerce Department took that over and renovated it top to bottom. They brought in a design expert and made this into kind of a western style and put cubicles in for businessmen to come in, various things of the day, a typewriter, a telex machine and then had a staff of an American officer in charge of it at the O-4 level, today O-2 level in those days, actually O-1 level. They were looking for somebody to go do that. I had had two and one-half years, almost three years experience in Prague doing it. There was no question; I wanted to go back. I applied for it and got the job. So, they yanked me out and I have to learn that I have to get my Russian back on stream again if I'm to do this. So, they sent me to two and one-half months of language training at Rosslyn. They sent me to a couple months of language brush up along with Ken Skoug, Don Kirsch, a couple of others that were going out. So, I had a staff of about three or four officers. I had a Congress department guy and two or three State Department officers who worked with me and we, for me it was a brand new thing. I had never really done anything quite like it because this was high intensity. I mean you had Commerce Department pushing trade missions on you, you had, they had trade exhibits, we had a big enough area right there that we could put on what we called mini-trade shows. We invited a dozen firms and they could all have a little desk about this size here. They could sit here and they could put their displays out. Anyway, it was high intensity for two years. I got the job. I followed Thomas Myles. He opened it.

Q: Yes, I knew Tom. You were there from '75 to when?

FARRAND: '75 to '77. No, wait a minute, yes, yes. Well, I got there in the summer of '75 and I left in the summer of '77. That's right.

Q: In the first place, who was our ambassador in '75?

FARRAND: Walter Stoessel.

Q: When you left?

FARRAND: Malcolm Toon.

Q: How did these men treat the trade side of the embassy?

FARRAND: All political officers in the Department of State knew high policy questions and high policy issues and the most crucial aspect of foreign affairs. Political officers by nature, look askance it would seem to me those aspects of foreign affairs, yet don't meet the standard of what I just said. This is part of their work and it's part of their, it's the way it is. For example, a science and technology officer, I don't think a political officer would ever apply for a job as science and technology officer in an embassy anywhere. Even though, I mean, you know, you should have people who know something. You should have physicists or chemists or biologists or someone that would take those jobs and that's hard to find in the Foreign Service. So, you'd have to go outside, so maybe science and technology is not the best place, but when it comes to commerce, commercial, this is considered working with businessmen who are not known to be really up to speed on great grand issues of politics. They are more short-term maximizers of profit, etc. They don't fit. So, therefore, now I am making general comments here. I haven't answered your question. I would say that Stoessel and Toon were broadly supportive of the process of detente. I would say that they would see the role of U.S. industry and business in helping to do this was very important and they would lend support to my work. They did. They did. They would have things that, Stoessel house was the ambassador's residence, they would hold events there. So, I have no complaints. The Deputy Chief of Mission, Jack Matlock, was someone who got it. I mean Jack Matlock got it. He was a political officer, he had all these other things. He understood. He would come down if I asked him and he would support. He would address the businessmen. He would give up his time to do that.

Q: How did you find, let's talk about trying to run a commercial place in Moscow in '75 to '77 years. How did it work? How did you see it?

FARRAND: Right. Oh, by the way I think I went to '78 because, I think I did because I got there at a half-year point. I have to figure this out. Well, anyway, how did I find it? The Soviets insisted on putting a guardhouse on the front stoop of this, for Moscow, very modern establishment, colorful, lights, glitter. The gray Russian would be walking by outside, trudging home in the middle of the dark hours of winter and he'd look in and see these windows ablaze with lights and it was quite a thing. But, they put an interior department guy down at the front door. They watched everybody who came in and everybody who came out and then they hoisted Russian employees on us who would report to them.

Q: How did it work, what were we trying to sell and what was your experience?

FARRAND: From the Russian point of view, here again was almost the same as in the Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia, not the Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia. From the Russian point of view what they were interested in was we would call them technical trade seminars. They were interested in aspects of industry that, of course, they always were interested in having a trade show, having us pull together and then put out on a trade show that would go to one of their sectors of industry that they were anxious to find out as much as what was happening in the west as possible. So, they would have a tendency to want electronics, to want computer related, computers were just in their infancy back then. They would be interested in all kinds of

technology having to do with energy, with heating aspects, heating units, heating industry, how you do all of that, how you. They didn't have air conditioning, but the heating aspect. No air conditioning in the Soviet Union in those days. So, all of these things they would be interested in. Now, really for our part we would be interested in farm equipment because we knew that they had this massive, massive amount of land under agricultural. We'd be interested in showing them ways of harvesting their timber, processing wood. We'd be interested in bringing food processing equipment, equipment that would help make restaurants and eating establishments much better. We'd do all of that. That's what we'd be interested in. But, they were interested in the other. Now, if we put on one of these shows of food processing they'd come, of course, but we would always have the firm bring a sales person or somebody on that side of the house and an engineer. So, the products would be explained to the Soviets in a series of seminars and the engineers would get up and explain the product and then they could make a sales pitch. The more technical it became the more Soviets showed up. What they were interested in doing was milking American firms. They would send engineers because they would perk up when the engineers from the American firm would start talking. The trouble with engineers is they don't get out of the back room very often and they love to talk when they get a chance. So, I always had to say to them, "Be a little careful here. That you're not giving away some things that you shouldn't give away, you know in your technical slides and all the other stuff." I don't know if that answers your question, but that's essentially the way it was. They would keep the actual purchases to a minimum and they were hoping to suck the knowledge out of the American.

Q: It sounds in a way like this calculation was to put it in the upper level to make a gesture towards what we were trying to do, in opening up things. But, in the long run this wasn't really helping us a bit.

FARRAND: Well, it's not true that things weren't sold. There were sales. They weren't of a major kind. I don't think any firm really had major firms. IBM came and opened an office there. Citibank came and opened an office there. Morgan Guaranty Trust came and opened an office downtown. I think Morgan Guaranty Trust. PepsiCo under Donald Kendall opened an office there because Pepsi Cola is the republican drink. Coca-Cola is the democratic drink. Coca-Cola was in Atlanta when Jimmy Carter was president and Coca-Cola was being pushed. I think in those days it was viewed that way. The PepsiCo came, oh, good lord, there must have been ten or twelve Armand Hammer, what was his firm called? Occidental Petroleum? They opened an office. I've already said IBM. Hewlett Packard opened a big office in Moscow and sent a permanent resident. All these firms sent permanent representatives. I dealt with all of these firms. They were my constituents. I was trying to help them with the Soviet ministries. I don't think under the Soviet Union. American Express was there and had been for years and had done a reasonably good business. Pan American was there, of course, the airplane, the airline. They had done business, they had done business, but it was never the huge business that they were looking for. McDonald's came later after I left. Now McDonald's is booming over there. One of the problems was the hard currency. You couldn't get the hard currency. You could take what it was in rubles, but you couldn't get it out in hard currency.

Q: Were there many American firms that came, tried for a while and left and said, "The hell with this"?

FARRAND: It took time. There were, but it took time and at any time a large organization or firm commits itself to a market, it doesn't leave right away even in the face of negative news. It stays, it sticks, but yes, yes, some just after a point left. However, the consensus was you know, International Harvester was there. I think International Harvester no longer exists, but I think it exists now and the name of the firm is called Navistar. I think it's out in the Midwest somewhere. International Harvester was it. What the Soviets did there, they took the technical representative. There was both a corporate type and a technical rep and the two of them represented with the office. They picked this technical rep up on the street and they sent him, they just took him and yanked him out of his car and whisked him off to Botierska Prison and he became a cause celebre for about three and a half to four weeks. He was a friend of mine and when he was imprisoned like that everybody became concerned. Headquarters of International Harvester way back in Chicago or wherever it was, sent out one of their top people, executive vice president or maybe even their chairman came out to plead the case for this guy. The Soviets charged him with espionage. It was all nonsense. Now, I will say this, that this particular fellow did get into a lot of Soviet industrial activities and told me about them later. He would go off into the Arctic; he would see what the Soviets were doing by drilling for oil up there in the middle of the dead of winter. One of the most remarkable stories he would tell would be how they would start up their heavy equipment in the morning, in the Arctic morning. How they would keep it alive. They would build bonfires under the engine block. Bonfires to get the heat up, under a machine, you build a bonfire. But, anyway, they put him in prison. Well, this became a great big thing. Carrator had an office there and I found out that a lot of businessman began to question whether businessman showed their lack of political acumen by saying, "Yes, maybe he did it. Yes, maybe he was doing it." American businessmen, his colleagues, would say, "You know I always wondered about him." I would say, "Gentlemen, ladies, please, please." What happened on the Garden State Parkway in New Jersey just a month earlier yet the eyes swooped down on two Soviets at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations that were trying to suborn a lieutenant commander in the United States Navy and he notified the FBI so they set up a sting operation and they were waiting for them and he went to meet them and bingo. They got him. This was only retaliation.

Q: In a way did you kind of wonder what you were doing, did you feel you were advancing any cause?

FARRAND: I think the presence of so many corporate executives from the United States on the streets of Moscow for the first time in I don't know how many years, I don't know how many decades, I don't know I guess you could go back to the interwar years. No, you'd have to go back earlier than that. So, the very first time that modern corporate America got to see the Soviet Union and got in some cases inside their factories and began to realize just how lopsided was the Soviet industrial capability that it was very good when it came to defense, it was very good when it came to missile technology and to space exploration. It was terrible in the medical field; it was terrible in anything having to do with energy and environment, anything of that nature. Just deplorable. So, I think that this was good and I think that it helped to influence because these people were very powerful particularly within the Republican Party and helped to influence the thinking within political circles back home, but it wasn't decisive. It wasn't decisive. What we were pushing is trade and it was very hard. It was uphill all the way. We got a lot of exposure out of it though and those of us who did it had a heck of a lot of fun.

Q: Was there talking among yourselves, I mean, everybody knew it, but somehow it just didn't seem to get translated into our calculations that the Soviet Union was essentially falling apart economically? But, was anybody around talking about you know this thing can't last much longer or not?

FARRAND: Yes. Marshall Goldman at wait a minute now, Marshall Goldman is not at Harvard, he's not MIT, is it Vasser, no. He's at a major school, one of the seven sisters up in Boston. What would that be?

Q: Well, Radcliff it used to be, which is now Harvard.

FARRAND: Okay, okay, it was that part of it. It was the Radcliff Harvard situation and he was up there. He formed a Soviet studies unit up there. Marshall was saying for a long time that this thing is not doing well. The CIA, and he accused the CIA. It was a lopsided debate. Marshall would make his claims and the CIA wouldn't respond. But, he would say that they were just reading it totally wrong. They were reading as maximum threat, you know, in those days, the CIA. They were touting the strength of the Soviet Union and he was saying it's not strong at all. That's as quick an answer as I can give you. I'll tell you this. Those of us who were there would openly deride the system amongst ourselves and we'd say where is this going, how can we be afraid of these people? Well, you have to be afraid of such a people who has a massive missile inventory and it's shown that they can put rockets into space and they've shown they can do it. I mean, you know, the fact that they can't produce Kleenex for the people and they can't produce toilet paper in enough quantities or they can't do anything of this nature, well. I mean, you know.

Q: Did you run across any Soviet engineers or people who came who were concerned or who had come and obviously take a shine to what we're doing and be interested in how they could improve things in the Soviet Union?

FARRAND: Yes, but the system worked against them. This would happen. This would happen and occasionally, if you could have a conversation with somebody on the side, they would let you know that this is very, very good. What you're showing here is very, very good, but we just, (a) we don't have the money for it and (b) we can't get approval. This is really marvelous what we're seeing here. I mean, he's not going to say that in front of anybody and he's going to be careful that he's not saying it in an enclosed room. So, you don't have that much. I didn't have, I served in the Soviet Union two times. I served earlier of what I've talked about and I served this time. I didn't have a friend, a Russian friend; I didn't have a Russian friend. Maybe a few people that I felt friendly around and we would trade jokes and things of this nature, maybe in the bureaucracy. But, as far as a friend is concerned, somebody I correspond with to this day, no. In Bosnia, where I just came back from three months, they gave me a Russian deputy who was an active diplomat at an ambassadorial rank and he is now currently an ambassador for Russian somewhere in the world. That man and I have a friendship and that has survived and we correspond by e-mail and one future day sometime we will get together somewhere. I know we will because he's a good fellow. That's the only one. You know, trying to get inside that puzzle, that enigma, that closed state was very difficult and to have them say what they thought about your products would be few and far between, but of course, they had nothing to compete.

Q: Was there a type of the Soviet side that would sell things to the United States?

FARRAND: Oh yes, sure, that was the big thing. The only way that they would do business with you is if you could work out some sort of a compensatory deal that would bring in the same amount of money, so it would be a wash. They called it barter. What did they have to barter? Well, they had some timber. They had lots of natural resources. I'm talking ores. It was difficult to work out these kinds of deals, very difficult. Some got into them, I think PepsiCo got into them. What were they taking? Oh, everybody wanted the vodka trade. Everybody wanted the caviar and the vodka trade so that was overburdened with these, they had a word for it and I can't remember it right now. They had a word for it where you bounce this off and I can't think of the word right now, of the phrase. Everybody wanted at the vodka and at the caviar. That could, you know, a couple of firms, one firm out of New York bottled all of that up and maybe PepsiCo did some of it, but big outfits like International Harvester or Caterpillar. What would these guys, these are heavy equipment manufacturers, what would they do if they had a shipload of vodka arrive at port? They don't know how to market vodka. They don't know how to market liquor so they would sell it off to somebody else and it would cut into their profits.

Q: Did you have any problems with the KGB while you were there?

FARRAND: Oh, well, this businessman that was picked up on the street, that was a KGB operation, all of it and that disrupted our operations heavily as I weighed in, helped the embassy up the street, the consular section, helped them build, you know, they're making their demarches and stuff like this. It affected the morale of all the other businessmen. They became very skittish. Jack Matlock had told me, he said, "You better tell all the businessmen to be the alert." I was waiting to get them all together. I often got them, all the businessmen together at a time of a breakfast meeting with coffee and stuff. I was waiting for such a thing to happen. I shouldn't have waited. I shouldn't, but I had to let twenty offices know and I had to do it individually. I couldn't do it over the phone. It was just, I wanted to get them all in a room and say, "Be on the lookout, one of you may be a target." Well, not only businessmen may be a target, but the exchange students could be a target and people that were there like visiting professors and others could be a target, so it wasn't only the businessmen, but it Matlock's caution turned out to be the right one. Regrettably, between the time he told me and the time it happened, I didn't, I either had to go around to twenty offices which took time in Moscow traffic and tell each one individually or I had to get them together and there was no occasion for that.

Q: The man was released or what?

FARRAND: He was released after about a month in prison, maybe three weeks in prison. Then he had to leave the country. He ended up marrying my secretary and I was best man at their wedding years and years later up in Pennsylvania. Months later, not years.

Q: Well, then in 1977 you left? Maybe '78?

FARRAND: Yes, I'm trying to think. I didn't get there. You know what, you know what? It was February of 1976, not February of 1975 that I went back to Washington to study Russian to get

ready. I got there in the summer of '76 and I left in the summer of '78. I was there from '76 to '78. Yes.

Q: The Carter administration had come in by that time and I guess Ambassador Watson came out? Now, did he, in a way, Carter when he first came in was, he was really going to open up things with the Soviet Union.

FARRAND: That's right.

Q: My understanding is that Ambassador Watson was put out there to promote the new spirit of the times in early Carter. How did that affect you when he came out?

FARRAND: Watson didn't, I was there for about six months with Stoessel and eighteen months with Toon. Toon had his, Malcolm Toon had his two years to run out so Watson wasn't there, but what I did I was recruited to go back onto the Soviet desk and to work on the Soviet desk. This time on the political side and I did that. Watson then came out. I met Watson later, but Watson came out and I think it was an acknowledgment on the Carter administration side that this particular initiative the detente was not a bad idea. I mean, I look at that in retrospect. I haven't done much thinking on it over the years, but I think it was pretty good, not bad because by putting Watson out there they were imitating what the Nixon people had done. Watson was not a professional diplomat and Moscow had already been in the hands of professional diplomat. Stoessel, Kohler, Jake Read, Thompson, Boland, Toon, all had been professionals and he was not a professional and this of course, immediately Soviet hands in the Department of State now began to question whether this was a good idea or not. He brought energy to it. I don't think he was able to crack it. He wasn't able to crack it, but there was an effort to do it. There was an effort to up the stakes, but he wasn't able to crack it.

Q: You came back to Washington, then is that right?

FARRAND: Yes, to the Soviet desk.

Q: You were there from?

FARRAND: '78 to '80.

Q: What part of the action were you given?

FARRAND: I was given their four parts of the Soviet desk in those days. It was under an office director by the name of William Schinn, Bill Schinn. He had a deputy by the name of Sherad McCall and it was Sherad who recruited me to the job. There were four parts to the desk. There was the kind of the political side of it, which was divided into, multilateral and bilateral. Then there was the economic unit and there was an exchange unit. There was an officer, Ed Herwitz, responsible for exchange. Then Martin Gwenick was responsible for economic and then the political was divided into two. There was the multiside, which was Gary Matthews, and the bilateral side which was Farrand. Now, by bilateral what are we talking? Are we talking politics, are we talking administration of the Soviet account within the U.S. government? It was more of

the latter. I dealt with situations, which ranged from everything that was going around here under the rock, under the stones of the city. FBI surveillance of Soviet diplomats here, CIA interests in dissidents or in defectors, defectors, I dealt with all defectors. I dealt with any ham handed tactics that the Soviets were using in town to try to recruit. I don't want to sound like I'm, I don't want to sound like a cold warrior, but it was all that sort of thing. Soviet parking tickets, I mean good God, they would go anywhere and they would park anywhere. They would build up these enormous amount of parking tickets. They'd park in places where they shouldn't park and then the D.C. police would get all upset. The D.C. police would come in and say you know, you can't do this because the neighborhoods are complaining. Well, what are we going to do? Then the Soviets wouldn't pay their parking tickets the D.C. police would there. They didn't have to pay. In Moscow, our diplomats, there were no parking meters and there were no parking police. So, our diplomats would and it's a huge city and there weren't a lot of cars, now there are. Now the place is choking with automobiles and trucks, but in those days it wasn't quite choking. From the American Embassy it was a dog's breakfast for parking out there, but we found places. The Soviets didn't have any places downtown so they just took advantage of everything it was a real running sore. Soviet women at their embassy would, the Soviets would never hire anybody, never hire an American. We hired Russians all the time at our embassy in Moscow and they would do things. They were Xerox operators and all sorts of things. You know, probably it was a mistake. I mean they were probably doing games on us all the time.

Q: It probably didn't make a hell of a lot of difference.

FARRAND: It didn't make a hell of a lot of difference at the end of the day. We were doing most all of our stuff upstairs and we were doing it behind closed doors and we had Americans up there for that. If we had tried to have our motor pool all run by Americans and every other aspect of it, the State Department could never have gotten that amount of money out of the Congress or the White House.

Q: Well, you wouldn't have gotten the job well done because if you have local people doing it, they can get things done within, they speak the language.

FARRAND: Yes, they speak the language. Our people would never have spoken the language and you were upped the number of recruitment attempts against our staff and you would have upped the number of drunken things on a weekend and altercations of every kind.

Q: When you hire basically lower class people, I mean, I hate to put it in those terms, but it's true, they're not as controllable.

FARRAND: Oh boy, oh boy, but in any way, the Soviets, what they would do. No one would be hired from the local economy back here. Everyone they would bring in. Now, what did they do? They pressed into duty all of their spouses, all of their spouses. So, even the ambassador's wife, maybe she was freed of it, but everyone else's wife would take turns coming in and manning the vacuum cleaners and cleaning the embassy. They brought over their own drivers, they brought over, they were a very closed, secretive type outfit. As events of recent months have shown, I mean look, they were worried that we were going to try to penetrate their embassy in any way we could and we were. So, they chose the other route. So, what would happen on a weekend or

during the week, they would get a van together and they would take the van and go out to a place called, it's no longer running. K-Mart up in northern Virginia somewhere.

Q: It's a discount, big department, not really a department store, but a general store lower prices. Old Crusty outfit I think.

FARRAND: Bulk items. Is that Old Crusty? Is that what it became? That's an interesting thing. You see, I learned something. They would get a van together about once in a period of time, once in a while and they would take all of these staff wives, spouses, to a K-Mart and they would give them a little bit of money, a little bit of hard currency. They would go into these stores and go crazy because back in the Soviet Union there were hardly any consumer goods worth exporting surely. They would be stunned when they walked into these stores. What would happen, happened one night. The guard at the gate of the K-Mart asked this Russian woman who was about to walk out, she had a big overcoat on and it was a big overcoat... Well, he stopped her, opened up the overcoat and you know, she was laden with all kinds of things she was stealing, taking from the store. Well, she was taken into custody, then of course, telephone calls come and we got her released. She goes back and then the case is against her. We have to work on situations like that. All manner of ugliness that went on here between the FBI, between the DC police department all over the country when defectors would come in, when people would come in, Russian citizens would come into a police station in Chicago, Illinois and say, "I want asylum, I don't want to go back to the Ukraine. I don't want to go back. I have nothing." We would get involved and then we would have to work it out as best we could before it hit the press and once it hit the press, of course, it was katie by the door. Then it becomes this great big circus, you know.

So, the construction of the new embassy in Moscow... We had to work on that. We had to work on tracking where the Soviets went, they tracked us, we tracked them and everybody had to have a travel note. All travel notes in the Soviet Union came to my unit and then they had to be looked over. This is the first secretary, he says he wants to go to Phoenix, Arizona. All right, when's he going? What flight? Where? When? So, everybody knows along the way. One time a Soviet comes in and this happened over several, several months before we got onto it. They'd say they wanted to go to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and we'd say okay and they'd say, how and they'd say by air on a certain date. Fine. We had to tighten this up, but it went on for a couple of series of such trips that this particular Soviet would go out here to Leesburg to one of these little airports and he would rent a pilot, but he would rent one of these little four seaters. They'd take off and fly to Pittsburgh at 4,000 feet or 8,000 feet and he'd be looking down and taking photos and doing all this la la stuff and he'd land in Pittsburgh. He went there by air. Well, we had to close that thing. You know, this was before the satellites were doing all that stuff. I mean all of this is so silly. Some of it was cops and robbers, katzenjammer kids. Tit for tat. As a result of all of this, Jack Matlock came up with the idea because over there in Russia they had a thing which all of us used to call UPDK, Uproblema Diplomatiostroya Corpus. In other words, it was the body set up over there to control all diplomatic travel inside Russia, to control all licensing of vehicles inside Russia, to control all internal documents, everything having to do with diplomats and employees. Everything and all was under the KGB and it just blanketed the diplomatic community. So, Jack Matlock said why don't we do one back here? Now that was a rather bold idea because it was going to cost money, right, nobody likes to cost money. Except when the security boys back here

get smelling something like that, the FBI jumped onboard, said, yes, yes, we need one of those. Of course, they'll have to ask for it; Langley would be on that and on all of them. All of them said, hey, let's get going. So, we formed a thing, which exists to this day in diplomatic security, and you'll see all these red, white and blue license plates of diplomats around town with little codes on them. You know, you've seen them. They're issued by the Department of State. Why do you think they exist? Why do they have to have every diplomat put on? Why, because we couldn't single out the Russians, but our purpose was to get a license tag on every Russian diplomat vehicle, Soviet, that we would know by looking at it, you know, that's a Soviet, right? But, you couldn't do it, just one, so we had to do it for all. It's not a bad system.

Q: No, I know. When I was in Yugoslavia all Americans had a 60-A and then a number. The Soviets had a 10-A; Canadians had 63 and Poles I think were 12. Those things I remember to this day.

FARRAND: Amazing things to remember.

Q: Yes, so I used to keep a little list. I'd see a car and I knew exactly where it came from. It was kind of fun.

FARRAND: Well, I'll tell you what's kind of fun, if you don't know it, I don't think they hand them out like candy, but there is little book you can actually buy them in a bookstore, but you have to ask for them. It was this little book put out by the State Department with all those codes. So, I have one for each of my cars and I'm driving down the road and there's a guy sitting next to me and I see LR. So, I look inside, Bosnia Herzegovina. I was amazed. LR. It was a big Lincoln; they can't afford them back there. They can have one here. I see AF is Japan. I can tell you that. XZ is Australia. PD is the United Kingdom. I can tell you that and I look so I know that guy's from San Salvador or El Salvador. They don't know who I am, but I know who they are.

Q: You were there until '80. After the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December of '79, was there a major change in how we treated the Soviet Union? That was the end of the Carter effort to play nice.

FARRAND: Yes, that brought it all down. Marshall Schulman, do you know the name?

Q: I've heard of it.

FARRAND: Well, he was a professor at Columbia. He ran the School of Soviet Studies at Columbia and he was brought in by Vance and Carter to be the Soviet guru at the Department of State. He had this effecting habit of wearing a green eyeshade; a green eyeshade is the old fashion thing that goes around. Bookkeepers and accountants wore them. He wore it in the Department of State. I guess, I don't know why. Professor Schulman, there was Marshall Goldman and Marshall Schulman, but Marshall Schulman was a very strong influence on the Soviet desk and he had working as his assistant a fellow by the name of Curt Cammen. He was a very bright Foreign Service officer who, after all this, many years, Curt had experience in the Soviet Union and Curt was a quiet man, but highly intelligent. Schulman is sitting on the seventh floor of the Department of State would look down, Curt would be his emissary to those of us,

and we were on the fourth floor of the Department of State if I'm not mistaken. Then, of course, the deputy assistant secretary and the assistant secretary were on the sixth floor. The office director was Bill Schinn. He was a Princeton graduate, a scholar of Russian literature and a student and a man thoroughly devoted to Soviet studies. He had several offices that were working, and this is a very big office, I mean you probably had thirty officers in there. I had about eight, six or eight officers of my own in this bilateral unit. Some of them were deeply educated in Soviet affairs like Sean Burns and others like me had not been deeply educated in it, but we had served there and we had had particular expertise that we brought to the job, plus talking about it everyday amongst each other so you build up a lot of knowledge, some of it good, some of it not so good. Schinn was a and he's retired now I think, God bless him, wherever he is, he bridled I think a little under this watchdog thing that came down from the Schulman office upstairs. In between there was a deputy assistant secretary named Robert L. Barry. Barry has just come back from Bosnia here last week as head of the OSCE operation in Sarajevo. Before that he was ambassador to Indonesia and before that ambassador to Bulgaria. Barry and Schinn did not get on, did not get on. Both were and are highly intelligent people. Schinn probably took more, however, to the Schulman approach to things than Barry. I'm going to say that. Barry, I worked for him as consular officer in my first year in Moscow years back. So, Bob and I are friends, but Barry is a very realistic, oh, Barry is a person that isn't swept away by emotions of the moment. I mean he saw the Soviets for what they were. Schulman, the word that came down from Schulman was this, for my desk and the desk in general, to "stop being all arms and elbows with the Soviet, let's try another approach. Let's try to put out our hand and get on with it." That marked the underlying philosophy of my two years on the desk. Even though I would see the Soviets kick us in the groin regularly.

Q: Was there a change though after December '79?

FARRAND: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Went south. Yes. Went south. All sorts of things stopped. The commercial office that I had departed from became just cobwebs. Another fellow went out to run it, but just cobwebs, nothing moved.

WILLIAM ANDREAS BROWN
Political Counselor
Moscow (1977-1978)

Ambassador William Andreas Brown was born in Winchester, Massachusetts in 1930. He joined the "Holloway Program" which was part of the Naval Reserve Officers Training Program and went to Harvard University, graduating with a Magna cum Laude degree. In 1950 he went to Marine Corps basic training in Virginia and later served in Korea. His Foreign Service career took him to a multitude of places including Honk Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, USSR, India, the UK, and Israel. His career includes an ambassadorship to Israel as well as several positions in the State Department, Environmental Protection Agency. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November of 1998.

BROWN: Yes. Let me say that my second posting to Moscow, as well as my timing, were unique. First of all, why did I go to Moscow? I went for the needs of the Foreign Service. That is, Marshall Brement was the Political Counselor of the embassy. He had been declared persona non grata in retaliation for our having declared a Soviet spy assigned to the UN persona non grata. The Soviet official was of about the same rank and status as Marshall Brement. I think that the Soviet official at the UN was on leave when we declared him persona non grata, so he couldn't come back to New York. It so happened that Marshall Brement was on home leave, at that time, so the Soviets retaliated against him in that way. This was considered foul ball. After all, Marshall Brement was not an intelligence officer, but a regular Foreign Service officer assigned to the embassy, but that was the temper of the times. The embassy needed a replacement for Marshall Brement.

Now, I had served there in the embassy in Moscow from 1966 to 1968 as a Sino-Soviet watcher. My basic job was following Sino-Soviet developments. In 1967 I had witnessed the 50th anniversary of the Great October Bolshevik Revolution. Brezhnev had taken power in 1964, overthrowing Nikita Khrushchev. However, Brezhnev was newly in power when I went to Moscow in 1966. I could speak and read Russian. More recently, from the end of 1973 to the end of 1976 I had been running the world's largest, environmental agreement, the one between the Soviet Union and the United States. In that capacity I had done considerable travel, both in the Soviet Union and in the United States.

Prior to that I had spent a period of about two years studying Mongolian. However, I was not assigned to Ulan Bator because the Mongolian Government did not agree to our opening up an embassy there. I had studied the history of the Mongolian People's Republic and translated into English the history of the Communist Party of Mongolia. Harvard University published this history, with the help of the FSI, I might add. So I was up on things Soviet, and I suppose that I was a logical choice to be assigned to Moscow as Political Counselor, there being no one else available. So I went to Moscow on very short notice.

Q: Excuse me, I always like to get when and where. You were in Moscow this time from 1977 to...?

BROWN: I was there in Moscow from January, 1977, through late June or early July, 1978, when I was transferred to Taiwan, Republic of China. Now, we had a very interesting situation in Moscow at the time. To draw in the big picture, and I'll come back to that, I read in today's New York Times a review of Henry Kissinger's latest volume of memoirs, Years of Renewal, which is well and favorably reviewed. I haven't yet had a chance to read this book but I would commend the possible listener or reader of this interview to that book for Kissinger's view of U.S.-Soviet relations, in which he played such a prominent role, under Presidents Nixon and Ford.

In early 1977 President Carter entered office, having just been elected in November, 1976. I was just leaving for Moscow. Carter was about to be sworn in as President. Late in the Ford administration, after a protracted and acrimonious exchange with the Soviets, President had nominated and the Senate had confirmed Malcolm Toon as the new Ambassador to the Soviet Union. That appointment was initially resisted by the Soviets. One story that I heard was that Secretary of State Kissinger said to Anatoli Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador to the United

States: "If you want to remain as Soviet Ambassador to the United States, you'd better arrange to have Malcolm Toon receive agreement from your government as Ambassador to the Soviet Union." Ambassador Dobrynin had been Soviet Ambassador to the United States since the Kennedy administration and was considered a very influential representative. I don't know whether he was Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Washington, but he had tremendous access everywhere in the U.S. Government and in U.S. society more generally, including the White House.

Q: This was only logical, but what was the problem holding up Toon's agreement?

BROWN: Well, the problem was that Malcolm Toon had previously served in the American embassy in Moscow. He was a highly professional diplomat but he had a strong reputation for being tough as far as the Soviet Union was concerned. He had seen tough times when he was Political Counselor in the American embassy in Moscow. He had been denounced personally by Pravda at that time.

Anyway, Toon eventually received agreement and was confirmed by the Senate. He arrived in Moscow in early 1977, just as I did. We were then faced with the situation that it was widely reported that President Carter was uneasy or unhappy about the appointment of Toon as Ambassador to the Soviet Union. There were all kinds of rumors and reports that President Carter was reviewing the appointment of Toon and five or six other Ambassadors. The others had been appointed to countries of much less significance than the Soviet Union.

Sargent Shriver was reported to be visiting Moscow amidst rumors that Ambassador Toon was going to be rapidly withdrawn from Moscow and that Shriver would become the next Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

I remember accompanying Ambassador Toon on a call on Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko. I guess that this was after Ambassador Toon had presented his credentials. All of these stories were swirling around, and the press was playing with them. In his typically churlish, sour, and sarcastic manner in talking to an American Ambassador, Gromyko's first words to Ambassador Toon were: "Are you still here in Moscow?" This was downright insulting.

Anyway, Ambassador Toon was very unhappy as the stories continued to circulate that the Carter administration was cool and negative toward him and was considering a replacement for him as Ambassador to the Soviet Union. This was understandable and was quite evident in the first press conference that Ambassador Toon held in Moscow for the American press. The press conference was "off the record" and wasn't long. Ambassador Toon said, in effect: "Look, I don't like the Soviets, and they don't like me. That's fine with me, and that's the way it ought to be, given the current state of our bilateral relations." Someone asked him about the story that Sargent Shriver had been in Moscow. Ambassador Toon said something like: "Look, I have nothing against Sargent Shriver, but that would be a disaster. What we need here in Moscow is a senior, qualified person." The conference went on like that.

As the press conference broke up, one of the better known correspondents turned to me and said, "Boy! My notebook is burning!" I said, "Stick it in your pocket and let it burn, buddy."

Remember, this conference is off the record.”

So this was the situation. The DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in Moscow at the time was Jack Matlock, a fine and experienced, professional diplomat. He was well read and fluent in Russian. He was a very serious scholar of Russian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian affairs, as well as Soviet questions. Ambassador Toon was rather dour to begin with and was not in the best frame of mind, to put it mildly.

I would call your attention to Henry Kissinger's most recent book, which I haven't read or reviewed. However, let me now talk about the overall Soviet-U.S. relationship as I saw it, as the new Political Counselor of the embassy in Moscow.

At this point [1977] Brezhnev had been in power since 1964. He had solidified his position. He had been unwell. There were reports of his illness, but he was very much in power. Now the 60th anniversary of the Great Bolshevik Revolution was coming up [in November, 1977]. With it, of course, came the near deification of Brezhnev. He had been the equivalent of a Brigadier General or Political Commissar of an Army Division [during World War II]. You were now beginning to see works published which made it seem as if he had won World War II all by himself!

The Soviet-U.S. relationship had soured. The U.S. had suffered a major setback in terms of prestige and morale in Vietnam. We were still very much suffering the aftermath of that. To a significant degree, the U.S. military were demoralized in that respect, suffering from the Vietnam Syndrome. The military establishment was being downsized.

As we perceived them, the Soviets were expanding their influence around the world at our expense. In Africa, they switched from supporting Said Barre in Somalia to Mengistu, the brutal, new dictator in Ethiopia. Ethiopia was in a fascinating position in terms of population, size, potential influence, and ideology. The switch of Soviet support from Barre to Mengistu was very upsetting. Fidel Castro of Cuba became involved in Angola. We learned that the Soviets were not happy about this Cuban involvement as such. Reportedly, the Cubans had not asked the Soviets for permission to involve themselves [in Angola], although they depended on Soviet sea and air transport to maintain Cuban forces in Angola. In their own way the Soviets were using their involvement in Latin America to expand their influence. There was rising concern in Washington about Soviet mischief-making and contacts in the Caribbean area and elsewhere in Latin America.

In Asia, you may remember, the Soviets looked mighty powerful at that time. Clashes had taken place along the Sino-Soviet during and after my first tour in Moscow [1966-1968] in which the Chinese communists did not come out at all well. Soviet muscle was very much in evidence. There was the ongoing nuclear missile arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States. This was the situation as President Jimmy Carter entered office. He had a new agenda and a new Secretary of State.

Q: You mean Cyrus Vance, the new Secretary of State.

BROWN: Yes. President Carter had a new agenda in which there were several elements deemed

of major importance by the new administration, vis-a-vis Moscow.

Human rights was a very big issue. I would like to dwell on that at some length here. Of course, we continued with the policy of containment of the Soviet Union but we hoped to open up a new dialogue. The arms control issue was very high on the agenda of the early part of the Carter administration. Finally, there was another, significant item on the Carter administration agenda, and that was China. We could sense and feel that this new President intended to complete the normalization of relations with China. We still hadn't reached closure on this issue, even after the Shanghai Communique of 1972.

Q: We had not exchanged Embassies.

BROWN: There were Liaison Offices in Beijing and Washington. We had some very important people involved in this process but we did not yet have a full, diplomatic relationship and all that that would mean. However, one could sense that the new, Carter administration meant to pursue this matter.

Q: As you were looking at it, did the Korean situation come to your attention?

BROWN: Oh, yes. How would the Soviets respond to the changing situation? If there were a pullout or downsizing of American forces in South Korea, how would that affect the balance of power in terms of the big game, that is, relations between the U.S., the Soviet Union, China, and Japan? These were major issues at the time.

Several of these relationships overlapped, and there were tensions and conflicts or elements of conflict, if you will, between them. Our job, as I saw it and as the American embassy in Moscow saw it, was to sort these relationships out and try to give them their due weight. It wasn't very long before we got into a real pickle on some of them.

In the human rights field President Carter's statements had given great hope to the dissidents in Moscow, including Sakharov and company, the Jewish dissident community, the refuseniks, and so forth. This rapidly led to a KGB [Soviet secret police] crackdown. When I arrived in Moscow, the KGB was starting to roll up the dissidents.

Then in February came a real stunner, a bolt out of the blue. I think that this happened on either a Saturday or a Sunday. Ambassador Toon called me in on very short notice. We met in the "Tank" [conference room built of plastic for highly classified meetings]. The Ambassador laid on the table a brief instruction from Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, "You will deliver the following message to Andrei Sakharov from the President." It was a first person message from President Carter dated February 7. It was a brief but very poignant statement of support for virtually everything that Andrei Sakharov had said. Ambassador Toon asked me what my reaction was. Now, I was not Ambassador Toon, and he was not I. We had never served together before and didn't know each other too well. We came from different backgrounds. However, we were both professional Foreign Service Officers. I looked at the message and said, "I'm very, very concerned." Ambassador Toon said, "It's a disaster, an utter disaster!" We both focused on the fact that from our view as professional diplomats, the prospects for the arms control

initiative, which the Carter administration was widely reported to be preparing to take to Moscow, would be negatively affected. There was no surer way of souring the atmosphere for that major undertaking than to deliver a message which could only be taken by Brezhnev as a direct, first person insult.

I mention this because of the dilemmas which you can run into when you are involved in the big, diplomatic game, and you have all of these cross currents in play, some of which are in conflict. Ambassador Toon said, "What do you recommend?" I said, "I recommend that we send a message to the Department of State saying that, of course, we stand ready to deliver this message as soon as possible. We should add, however: 'We assume that Washington is aware that this message could have a major, negative impact and be misinterpreted by Brezhnev as insulting thus souring the atmosphere for a major, Carter administrative initiative, arms control.'" We sent a back a message along these lines and got a reply shortly thereafter from Secretary of State Vance, who was on a visit to the Middle East. In effect the reply from the Secretary was: "You've received your message. Deliver it."

So Ambassador Toon called me back into the "tank." We sat down, and he said, "What do you recommend?" I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, we could try a cutout, a friend of a friend to deliver this message. There are various, possible intermediaries. However, no matter what we do, the Soviets are going to know exactly what we are up to. They have us and Sakharov so bugged that they will know what we are up to. My recommendation is: just deliver the message straight out in the open. Call Sakharov down to the embassy, and he'll come. Then give him the message." And that's what happened.

The Political Section in Moscow had two sub-sections: the Internal and the External Units. Both units were headed by wonderful guys who did very, very well in the Foreign Service. They were real, professional diplomats. The head of the Internal Unit at the time was Dick Combs, later to become DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in Moscow. I talked the matter over with Dick, who phoned Sakharov. Although Sakharov had been publicly pilloried and disgraced by the Soviet Government, he was still a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. As a member of the Academy of Sciences, he phoned down to his motor pool. The result was that he was driven down in a proper, black limousine to the embassy, in front of which a great crowd of KGB goons had gathered, with cameras. As he stepped out of the limousine, the cameras were put about a foot in front of his face, with many flashbulbs going off.

Sakharov came into the embassy. Dick Combs read to him from the copy of the President's message which we had typed up. He said that the original copy would be coming in the Diplomatic Pouch. Sakharov said immediately: "Do you have a xerox machine?" Combs said we did, and ran off a dozen or so copies of this statement. He expressed tremendous gratitude and satisfaction and went out, faced the camera flashes, got into his limousine, went home, and held a press conference. So we were then in the soup. Brezhnev and company were obviously very angry. Sakharov and company were delighted.

This was now about February, 1977. President Carter had recently been installed in office. It was arranged that I would meet with a group of Soviet dissidents in the apartment of our key, contact officer for such matters, Joe Pretzel, who is still very active and has been a roving Ambassador

in the whole Caucasus area and that part of the world. Joe arranged this meeting. Attending were my wife, Sharansky, and several others, including a number of non-Jews who were nonetheless dissidents. It was a fascinating evening. Our guests were showering praise on President Carter. It got to the point where I said, "You know, my reading of history is that dissident movements, throughout history, essentially make it or fail on their own and have no need for outside help. Now, you could argue that there are exceptions. Here you are in Moscow, the capital of an enormous country. I would like to ask you, and it may sound strange, coming from me, whether you really believe that this kind of support from President Carter is going to help your cause? The way I look at it, one of you who is missing tonight has gone underground. The KGB is arresting dissidents, and all of you stand to be incarcerated by the KGB."

They said, "That's right. Keep it up. Keep the pressure on the Soviet Government. Increase the pressure." They said, "You see, Mr. Brown, you don't really understand Soviet society. There is no other way than to pressure this kind of regime. Put the pressure on, keep it on, if you can, and increase it." Well, it was an interesting exercise. These dissidents were all "rolled up" [arrested] soon after. Within a few weeks trumped up charges had been pressed against Sharansky, who was jailed. I didn't see him for another nine years. This was a prime agenda item for the Carter administration which, I think, very much enjoyed the publicity. This incident was very much on the agenda of human rights constituencies, including Members of Congress.

I'll give you another example of the kinds of dilemmas we would get into. The Armed Services Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives was then led by Congressman Mel Price [Republican, Illinois], who was well on in years. He was coming to visit Moscow at the time of the Congressional Easter Recess in 1977. We received a cable from Congressman Price, which said, "I'll be coming your way." Then followed the usual "laundry list." He said that he wanted to see members of the Soviet Politburo; the top Soviet leadership; the Chief of Staff, General Orgakov; and other top Soviet military leaders, since he was the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

I took this cable down to the Soviet Foreign Ministry. They said, "We didn't invite them. This is a self-invitation. They want to come to Moscow at Easter time? Well, you can go down to Intourist and make arrangements. We're not inviting them and we're not giving you any guarantees whatsoever that they'll be seen by any of the Soviet officials they have mentioned." This gave me a real problem. I ended up doing something unusual, because throughout my career I had developed great respect for Congressional Delegations and their power in a variety of ways, both observable and unobservable. I had been named Control Officer for CODEL Price [Congressional Delegation Price]. I flew to meet them in Copenhagen. They had their own Air Force plane.

I went to Copenhagen at my own initiative. I sent a cable and was told that this group of Congressmen would be touring the Castle of Elsinore, in Denmark, but I could meet with them in the evening and then fly with them to Leningrad [now St. Petersburg] and then down to Moscow. I wanted to have a good session with these Congressmen because I figured that this was a very important trip and at a very difficult time.

Well, I got to the Control Room of Congressional Delegation Price in Copenhagen and was told:

“Well, maybe one or two members of the Delegation can see you.” However, as things turned out, the word got around, and I met with a great number of them in Congressman Mel Price's suite. The Executive Director of the House Armed Services Committee at the time was John Ford. He had long been Executive Director of the House Armed Services Committee. He said to me: “You'd better lay it on the line with these people, because some of them have some pretty interesting ideas.” I soon found out that, among these Congressmen, were both members of the Committee and other Congressmen who were self-invited and who were there to pursue the primary agenda item of human rights. Some of them were there for both military matters and human rights issues.

I won't go into names of these Congressmen, but one of them, a distinguished gentleman from California, had a list of the dissidents and refuseniks that he wanted to meet on arrival in Leningrad. Others on the delegation wanted to attend church services and meet with dissidents of this or that stripe. There were many different varieties of dissidents in those days.

I said, “You know, this will be on your arrival in the Soviet Union. You'll be there in Leningrad for a day or two, and then we'll go on to Moscow. You hope to meet with the top Soviet leadership. Thus far we have absolutely no, positive response on that. If you have any hope whatsoever of having a constructive dialogue with the Soviet leadership, you have to bear in mind that the KGB will be following each and every one of us, day and night, as well as all of those that we contact. By contacting dissidents you run the risk of souring the whole atmosphere.” However, they were determined. They had made many commitments to constituents back home.

So I did what I could to get dissident addresses. I alerted our Consulate General in Leningrad, I arranged for some of the members of the Delegation to attend church services, and others to meet with dissidents, both Jewish and non-Jewish. When we arrived in Leningrad, Arabatov was there to meet us. This was a pleasant surprise, not that he was a pleasant personality. However, he was a well-known specialist on U.S.-Soviet affairs.

Q: Wasn't he at the time the head of the North American Institute, or something like that?

BROWN: Right.

Q: His name was Georgi Arabatov.

BROWN: Right. His son now holds forth as a current expert on North American affairs in the Soviet Union. Arabatov made some sour remarks, and off we went. It was a brief, fascinating tour to Leningrad. I accompanied several of the Congressmen to a Baptist, Easter service, where the congregation was so moved that the congregation, if not speaking in tongues, was at least speaking out from the floor. I found it fascinating that one member of the congregation at this service was in a Soviet Army private's uniform. The Members of Congress were put right up on the pulpit, right up on the stage, as it were.

That evening I got together with Georgi Arabatov, who was drunk. I met him up on the top floor of the Leningrad Hotel. He gave me “hell.” He said, “We know where you and your people have

been. And you expect me to help them, etc.” I talked pretty tough back to him. I said, “They are what they are. They are members of a very important Committee of the United States Congress. They ought to be of very considerable interest to you.” He said that they had asked to meet the Soviet Defense Minister, but he was sick and was not available. I said, “Well, at least they ought to meet the Chief of Staff, Orgakov.” Arabatov said, “He's got a bad cold. He's been on maneuvers,” and so forth. I said, “Well, put him in a wheelchair and roll him out! You owe it to yourselves as well as us to have a dialogue develop.” I had to help Arabatov down to his room, he was so drunk.

We then flew on to Moscow. No appointments, of course, had been granted by the Soviet political leadership. Further meetings were held with Jewish and non-Jewish dissidents. We had a meeting with Chief of Staff Orgakov, the first official American delegation to have met with him. He received the Congressmen with a huge staff to his left and his right. He took their questions himself, made notes, and, of course, fed them the line that the Soviet military budget was infinitely small, compared with the U.S. defense budget. Of course, it was unbelievably small, because much of it was hidden under other budget headings.

General Orgakov conducted this briefing suavely and with finesse. Our Military Attaches had never seen a performance anything like this. They had never been able to see him. They had always been blocked off by phalanxes of Soviet officers. Here they had him on full display. I saw an Orgakov who was a soldier-diplomat.

Then we went down to Kiev. There were more meetings with dissidents, refuseniks, and so forth. The Congressmen asked me to leave various things which they hadn't been able to deliver. They would give this stuff on me, asking me to deliver it to so and so at such and such an address. It was just incredible. However, it shows you the kinds of things that we can get into, as we get into these missionary modes and if the Congress, let alone other human rights constituencies, bless such initiatives.

I consider myself a human rights advocate as such. I've done a lot in that field. However, there is a dilemma facing a professional Foreign Service Officer in this connection. I'll say that former Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, now that she's out of Congress, came out of that trip to Moscow with a somewhat lurid reputation for what she had done. It wasn't long after that trip that I received a lengthy clipping from a newspaper, to the effect that she had smuggled out in her brassiere and panties tape recordings of her interviews with Soviet dissidents. This wasn't exactly the best way to go about dealing with such matters and then publicizing them in that way.

A word on our assessment of the situation in the Soviet Union at the time, as the Sharansky trial was being prepared in Moscow. He was labeled a U.S. spy. His roommate or a close associate of his was a KGB agent. The Soviet authorities trumped up the charges against Sharansky.

We got into a real fuss about such matters. From time to time it was useful to try and step back and estimate what the Soviet public thought about all of this. We regretted having to conclude that the Soviet man in the street just didn't give a damn. (End of tape)

Q: You were saying that Sharansky was...

BROWN: Frankly speaking, he was an unknown, apart from a select circle of the Soviet intelligentsia and fellow dissidents. Of course, he got great publicity in the United States and in the West more generally. Incidentally, I think the world of him. He is a wonderful person.

My conclusion, and those of my colleagues, was that this issue came down to being a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. In that configuration, the Soviet public supported the Soviet regime hands down. First of all, it didn't give a damn about someone like Sharansky. Secondly, if this were portrayed as it was as a U.S. intrusion in Soviet affairs, it was just another negative from the viewpoint of Soviet public opinion, whatever that was.

Q: I just wanted to ask what was the effect of the visit of this Congressional Delegation?

BROWN: I think that such visits can be extremely useful. There was an important audience in the Soviet Union listening to Members of Congress, regarding our concerns and how to handle the Soviet-American relationship. I was delighted that for the first time until then, they at least had a formal session with General Ogarkov. We hoped that this would give us the leverage, the precedent, to have such dialogues in the future.

Early on in the Carter administration we learned that Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Paul Warnke, the new head of ACDA [Arms Control and Disarmament Agency], were planning to come to Moscow for arms control discussions. Ambassador Toon, suffering from the slings and arrows of his situation at the time, managed to set up a meeting with Secretary Vance in Brussels, so that they could get to know each other and to prepare more effectively for Vance's visit to Moscow. Toon told me that Secretary Vance asked him: "What do you think of the package?" Toon told me that he replied: "I could give you a better opinion if you would show it to me." In other words, the Department had not shown the American Ambassador in Moscow what they were bringing for discussion with the Soviets!

Then, having absorbed as much of the package as he could, and this was very complicated material, Toon told me that he had said to Vance: "Look, if this is what President Carter wants and which you all have decided on, then I'll do everything that I can to advance it. However, I can tell you straight out that in the current atmosphere in Moscow, this is not going to fly."

Well, Secretary Vance and Paul Warnke came to Moscow with that package anyway. Vance was a unique Secretary of State. He visited the embassy, wearing a blue, woolen sweater. He spent some time in our terribly cramped quarters, and gave us all a pat on the back, and that was very good for morale.

Vance also initiated a new approach with the press. That is, at the end of each day's discussions with the Soviets, he would have a press conference. Well, the discussions with the Soviets had been very acrimonious and unproductive. This was inevitably reflected in the press conference. On the next day or so the Soviets began holding their own press conference and blasting us. So the whole visit was a flop and a shock.

Now, Ambassador Toon had wisely said to Vance and Warnke: "Look, in view of the bugging of

the hotels, I offer you my nearby residence. Then you can work here in the embassy.” The Soviets had offered them a beautiful villa in the Lenin Hills area. Vance and Warnke declined Ambassador Toon's offer and went to the villa offered by the Soviets in the Lenin Hills area. As the Political Counselor at the embassy, I went out there with them. The Vance Delegation was deeply concerned and, I would say, in a state of semi-shock. Vance and Warnke were walking around the great, gravel driveway, so that, hopefully, they could have a private conversation with each other. This was a rather simplistic view, shall we say. We had warned all of the members of the Delegation that everything they said and did in their rooms would be recorded by the Soviets. I entered some of their rooms at this villa, where there was classified material scattered all over the place. Delegation members were getting on the phone back to the State Department in Washington, speaking in the clear, and expressing dismay that this visit had failed and that they had been stiff armed by the Soviets. Of course, since Ambassador Toon had warned them in advance, this should not have come as a surprise. So we were off to a tough start.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about what you were picking up? Cyrus Vance and Paul Warnke were not novices. They were not like William Jennings Bryan coming out of Nebraska. You had this peculiar Carter administration in that you had Zbigniew Brzezinski there as National Security Adviser, who hated the Russians. You also had the sort of evangelical peace side of President Jimmy Carter. Were Vance and Warnke talking to other Soviet experts? Did they know what they were getting into?

BROWN: Frankly, I do not know. I can only suppose that they had expert briefings back in Washington, but this certainly didn't come across. I say that with the deepest respect for them individually as public servants of great stature and integrity. However, I felt that they just weren't equipped at that time for the task at hand in terms of a realistic approach. But they were loyal, senior civil servants of President Jimmy Carter.

Q: This is one of the things that one hears as we do these interviews. We hear of the disaster of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance going out on a mission which would not be successful. This is not a good way to start an administration.

BROWN: Well, look, today we are talking in March, 1999. If I were to have Sharansky here, who is now a cabinet minister in the Israeli Government and if he were seated over in that chair between us, I am sure that he would look back and say, “You did exactly the right thing. Look, the Soviet Empire toppled, the whole human rights approach was vindicated, and we're all the better for it.” I cite this in terms of the dilemmas that a professional Foreign Service Officer runs into in such matters. What weight should you give this agenda item as against that agenda item? If you think that the administration is wrong, how do you try and educate them and, at the same time, be seen by them as loyal messengers and servants of a new administration? This is a very difficult question.

Now, there is another question that your remark brings up, and that is the position of Zbigniew Brzezinski. It was known that Brzezinski hated the Soviets. Most of us did. It also became apparent that Brzezinski wanted to come out himself and deal with the Soviets. The State Department was determined to prevent this.

One of the means used at the time was an instrument called the “Informal.” Embassy Moscow and the Soviet desk in the State Department had found, over the years, that in order to cope with leaks more efficiently and to cope more effectively with those people back in Washington who might disagree with this or that professional approach by the Soviet desk, an Informal channel of communications was set up which functioned concurrently with the regular telegrams. These messages were labeled “Informals,” and they were very closely held. These messages would be signed off in the Ambassador's office in the embassy in Moscow, but there was no easily available file of them. Similar precautions were taken back here in the State Department in Washington. I remember on one occasion that we received the text of a proposed Brzezinski operative plan regarding the Soviet Union, which involved going after what was described as the soft underbelly of the USSR. That is, go after the minorities in the Soviet Union, the Ukrainians, the Georgians, the Armenians, and so forth. In other words, stick it to them.

The Soviet desk in the State Department used the Informal channel to ask for information to critique this reported Brzezinski approach. So we used the Informal channel in a fairly lengthy reply. It was not to be the kind of thing which was then intended to surface. The idea was: “What is the best way of coping with Brzezinski?” I must say that Brzezinski didn't visit Moscow during my time in the embassy.

I'd like to talk about our analysis at the time of the Soviet economy and society. Bear in mind that our local sources in Moscow were extremely limited. The Soviets were not about to give us their statistics or any particular help in discovering their weaknesses, economic or otherwise. It was a real challenge to collect material on these subjects. An awful lot of the material we collected was anecdotal in nature. Bear in mind that on the one hand I was a non-economist arriving in Moscow for a second tour of duty, although this was some years after my first tour there.

During my second tour in Moscow I could see that in big places like Moscow and Leningrad there were more things to buy in the shops than had previously been available. There was a greater variety of goods. At the same time the goods available were still of fairly poor quality and very uneven in availability. When we traveled out in the countryside, we found that even many of these items were not available. This was particularly noticeable on a seasonal basis. During the winter, for example, the Soviets were desperately short of meat. It was so bad that my Yugoslav colleagues used to comment on the situation.

The Yugoslavs were really good observers. It was in their national interest to do this. The Yugoslav officials to whom I refer spoke fluent Russian and often had their children attending Russian schools. They were able to buttress our observations by telling us about other aspects of the situation.

Invitations were being issued among the intelligentsia in Moscow in the dead of winter: “Come out to my dacha for a night of lamb” or beef or whatever, meaning, “Bring the meat with you.” I used to jog in those days very early in the morning. I used to see crowds of people coming into Moscow from the hinterland at the railway stations, carrying what looked like empty laundry bags over their shoulders. They were coming in to buy whatever they could in terms of canned goods at what was for them very stiff prices. They would then load up with these canned goods

like Santa Claus and take the merchandise home on the train. We knew that there was a lot that was wrong with the Soviet economy. However, we didn't have the sense of the collapse that was to come over the next 10 years or so. [See Melvin Goodman's piece, "Who Is the CIA Fooling? Only Itself" in the Washington Post Dec 19, 1999. A former career CIA analyst. Goodman, asserts that, "CIA analysts had tracked the early stages of decline of the soviet economy from 1976 to 1986 but [CIA Director]Gates would not circulate most draft assessments that pointed to Soviet weakness. As a result, CIA estimates overstated the size of the Soviet economy and underestimated the economic burden of maintaining the Soviet military."]

I may have mentioned this before, but there were some currents stirring in terms of religion in this controlled society. I mentioned dissidents, both Jewish and non-Jewish. On the religious front, if you went to the Baptist service on the occasion of Easter that I attended in Leningrad, or in Moscow, as I did later on, you would see people who, in Soviet terms, were members of the underclass. These people were absolutely jamming the churches. These people were waiting outside, often in bitterly cold weather. You could witness really religious experiences by going to such churches.

Then, of course, there was another manifestation. One day late in the afternoon Ambassador Toon called me up to his office and said, "Look, there's been a group of Seventh Day Adventists down in the Consular Section all day. They have refused to leave. Now, you are a senior officer and have a bit of gray hair on your head. Go down there and tell them that it's time for them to go home." So I went down and met with them in the very crowded Consular Section. There must have been eight to 10 of them sitting there on benches and so forth. The men had long beards. I said to them in Russian: "You know, you've been here all day. We deeply appreciate your courage in forcing your way through the guards in front of the embassy and barging in here. However, you know that there is no way that we can get you to the United States, even if we wanted to. You have to have the approval of the Soviet authorities. You need an exit visa and so forth." I said, "You know, it's now 5:00 PM. The staff of the Consular Section has been working hard all day. It's time for you to go home. So I'd suggest that now is the time for you to leave the embassy."

The leader of these Seventh Day Adventists looked at me and said, pointing upwards in the air, that "God has spoken to us. God has told us to leave this terrible Soviet society. God has chosen YOU [emphasis supplied] as the instrument of our departure." So I went back up to the Ambassador's office, and I said, "We've got a problem here." I don't know whether it was a year or a year and a half later before they finally left. They camped in the American embassy.

Q: I think that they were Pentecostals.

BROWN: They were Pentecostals, not Seventh Day Adventists. This was a truly gripping story. I had to deal with other people who simply barged into the Consular Section, Georgians or whatever. Charging through these huge, Soviet guards outside the embassy by creating a disturbance and then fighting their way in took an awful lot of courage. Of course, I had to urge them very hard to go out, at the end of a long day. These people then faced an immediate and very grim experience. They would go around the corner and be picked up and rather severely handled by the Soviet police, shall we say. Some of them had done this more than once and

described to me the water hose treatment they had received from the Soviet police.

You could see that some elements of Soviet society were in ferment. People were seeking some other outcome than the standard, communist propaganda answer to their lives.

Another factor that one could see, and it began to hit me later on, toward the end of my second tour in the embassy in Moscow, was corruption. We had a Soviet contact who was a bit of a maverick. He was the husband of one of our Russian language teachers. He was a cinematographer. We rarely saw him. We figured that his wife had been co-opted by the KGB. This was one of the circumstances of the time. All of our local employees had to report to the KGB, whether they were formally agents or not.

I remember meeting with Sergei. I never pressed him for information because I didn't want to hurt him. He would be remarkably frank with me in a certain way. I remember once, over a glass of vodka, he said to me: "You know, you're the distinguished Political Counselor of the American embassy. With all due respect, you don't know what in the world is going on out there. I travel this country, because I'm a cinematographer. Let me tell you. If you travel 100 miles out of Moscow, or any city, into the countryside, you wouldn't believe the way that the people live, their standard of living, and the way things are done."

Another source was a German correspondent who had been in Moscow for about 15 or 20 years. He was leaving at this point. During a farewell conversation over drinks he said to me: "You know, the level of corruption, even in Moscow, is just unbelievable now. You go to buy a pair of socks, or nylons, or a dress or something nice like that. You end up trading this for that, with money passing under the table." He said, "The Soviet Union is really corrupt." So it seemed to me that there was already something quite rotten in Soviet society, both in Moscow and elsewhere.

Before I forget it, I want to turn to the Middle East in this context. You know, there had been an effort, following the 1973 Yom Kippur war, to broker some kind of joint approach to peace in the Middle East. Material has been published on this in Vienna and Geneva. The Carter administration and Moscow came out with some kind of joint approach, heading toward something like an international conference. That was just what the Soviets would want, because their great obsession, among many others, was always to try and display parity with the U.S. and to demonstrate that, while they had been behind, they were catching up, and so forth.

Well, in the midst of all of this came the surprise visit to Jerusalem of Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat. One of the outcomes, given Moscow's obvious rancor at this surprise, was to send Phil Habib [then Deputy Undersecretary for Political Affairs in the State Department] out to Moscow on a lightning visit. I was his Control Officer for this visit. It was a typical Phil Habib operation. He arrived in Moscow one morning and left in the afternoon of the following day. In between he had major meetings with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, Deputy Foreign Ministers, and so on. First Habib met with a Deputy Foreign Minister and then he saw Foreign Minister Gromyko.

For this visit the notetakers at the various meetings were Dick Miles and myself. Dick is now an Ambassador and a wonderful guy. He has since been Ambassador to Armenia. He was then in

the External Unit in the Political Section. As Habib moved his hands in their usual gesticulations and was laying out his position to Gromyko, he tried to assure the Soviet Foreign Minister that we had not played any games. He said that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's trip to Jerusalem was a surprise to us as well as to the Soviets. Gromyko interrupted him to say, "Mr. Habib, I can barely restrain myself from laughing in your face!" He said it just like that. Habib said, "Oh, no, it was a surprise to us, and we haven't been doing things behind your back."

Well, that was a fascinating business. Habib was eager to join Secretary of State Vance, who was now traveling in the Middle East. Habib met with various Soviet officials all day long. He said to me: "I want all of this verbatim." When he ended his meetings at about 5:00 PM, Dick Miles and I got two secretaries and dictated memcons [memoranda of conversations] all night long. We had them typed up, and I think that we finished the job at about 3:00 or 4:00 AM. So I was up all night. I delivered the memoranda to Habib at breakfast. He said, "Great. Now, make sure that we get the follow-up, because my flight leaves at 2:00 PM this afternoon. We have another meeting, and I want to make sure to have the complete record." So we went in, bleary-eyed, for the early morning sessions the second morning. These meetings went on for a couple of hours. Then Miles and I dashed back to the embassy, dictated the memcons, and had them typed up. I rushed Habib out to the plane. He had a transcript of his meetings as nearly full and verbatim as possible. That's the way Habib was, and that's the way we operated in those days. We were damned proud to do it.

The story that we heard was that Habib joined Secretary of State Vance in the Middle East. They did their business, involving a bunch of shuttle trips and so forth. They went straight back to Washington. Habib went straight to work at 6:00 or 7:00 AM and shortly after that he collapsed. Habib's life was saved by a coronary fibrillator on call in the State Department. He had had a major heart attack. He was so dedicated to his job. That was the way he was. I was to deal with him at great length in a later incarnation in the Middle East. That was quite a story. I'll never forget that.

Q: How was the Camp David meetings arranged? Were the Soviets...

BROWN: They were furious. This series of meetings at Camp David cut them out completely. Here was Anwar Sadat who had, in effect, dismissed the Soviets. Sadat launched what came to be called the Yom Kippur War with Israel. Sadat used the Soviets in a desperate attempt to survive the Israeli counterattack across the Suez Canal. Now, having gone through the motions of approving an international conference and so forth, Sadat had independently assessed that this was not what he wanted. He wanted a breakthrough with the Israelis on his own terms. So Sadat went to Jerusalem and met Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

By the way, Ambassador Toon had previously been Ambassador to Israel. When the news that Sadat had gone to Jerusalem broke, I'll never forget what Ambassador Toon said. Like the rest of us he was taken by surprise. I remember his saying: "I know Menachem Begin. I dealt with him as Prime Minister of Israel. I'll tell you something. He will NEVER give back the West Bank of the Jordan River [emphasis supplied]." He was right. Begin would not give the West Bank back to the Palestinians - or anyone else. Look at Begin's disciples even now.

The Soviets were furious at this development. Here President Carter got all of this publicity and put on a grand show, which was very dramatic. You remember the famous handclasps and so forth at the White House. And the Soviets were left high and dry. In strategic terms the Camp David meetings must have been a tremendous jolt for the Soviets because they had bet so heavily on their relationship, and a very expensive relationship, with certain Arab clients. In the Cold War atmosphere behind all of this, anything that we supported the Soviets opposed. And vice versa, too. We had provided major quantities of military supplies to the Israelis, and the Soviets had given major quantities of military supplies to Egypt and Syria. The Soviets had become involved in a budding relationship featuring the supply of arms to Iraq. The Soviets were, of course, stunned at what was left.

I remember calling on the newly-installed Director of the Institute of Asian and African Studies in Moscow. His name was Yuri Primakov. Of course, I knew something about him. Namely, that he was a KGB agent and correspondent for years, writing for PRAVDA. He spoke Arabic and was on the best of terms with the likes of President Hafez al-Assad in Syria, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and other such people. Now Primakov was the head of this prestigious Soviet institute, and I thought that I should pay a courtesy call on him. He gave me a polite reception, but he was obviously rather sourpussed, and he wasn't prepared to give me much new wisdom, if I may put it that way. Little did I think at that time, and this was in 1978, that I'd be talking about Primakov in 1999 when he was the Prime Minister of Russia. Well, that's one great thing about the Foreign Service. If you last long enough in office, you see some remarkable changes.

Q: I've always thought that it was an article of faith with American policymakers: "Don't let the Soviets into negotiations over the Middle East." It sounds as if you were up against a new administration with a different view. When you were sitting around and having a drink after work, was there concern about the new, Carter administration and its backbone in dealing with the Soviets?

BROWN: Speaking personally, I was very concerned. You have to bear in mind that I didn't have all of the facts at hand, but you didn't have to be a rocket scientist to perceive that the Soviets were out to extend their influence as far and wide as they could. The Soviet Navy, while no match for ours, was nevertheless becoming a blue water Navy, able to operate on the high seas. Their submarine force, with its nuclear capabilities, was a subject of very serious concern. The Soviets were putting out newer and better missiles of greater accuracy, with longer range and much greater, destructive power.

The Soviet Navy had become involved in various escapades, as we saw them, in Nicaragua and other places. They had an ideology and a propaganda apparatus which made it very clear that they intended to overtake us. They were dedicated, if you will, to the eventual destruction of capitalism, as they termed it. They were trying to undermine us at every turn. Of course, we reciprocated. It was a real contest. I remember summing things up in a kind of annual wrap-up, listing Soviet efforts in the African, Latin American and Asian situations at the time. The situation looked pretty menacing and pretty discouraging to many other people. I tried to put myself in the position of a diplomat from a Third World country, given our efforts in Vietnam and our own self-flagellation. As against that, I mentioned in this review that Soviet society was increasingly corrupt. Apart from the facade as far as showcase, Moscow-Leningrad imagery was

concerned, the Soviet Union had deep economic problems and great inefficiency. One wondered at what cost this great colossus was maintaining itself. However, I did not have the feeling that the Soviets would be so involved in their internal concerns that they would no longer be an external threat to the U.S.

That takes me back to a conversation I had with Mark Garrison, who had been instrumental in arranging for my assignment to the embassy in Moscow. Mark later left the Foreign Service. He had been DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] under Ambassador Watson, the IBM [International Business Machines] executive. Mark should have been appointed Ambassador somewhere. He had an outstanding background and a tremendous grasp of Russia, including Russian history and the Russian language. The Soviet Union had been his career. He was a very dedicated, serious person. In about 1974 or 1975 I called on Mark when he was Political Counselor in Moscow. I told him that I realized that I was out of the mainstream of the Foreign Service. Here I was on detail to Russell Train, Administrator of EPA, running the US-Soviet Environmental Agreement. I said, however, that in that capacity I got to see places in the Soviet Union that he would never get to. So I said to him: "Let me ask you. As I talk with the military attaches here in Embassy Moscow, they sure don't see a process of serious detente or decay in the Soviet Union." Mark said, "Well, the Soviet Union faces a lot of problems, and one hopes that they will focus themselves and address their internal problems, so that they won't pose the same threat and problems to their neighbors and to our interests, externally." I said, "Good luck!" I had no idea that I myself would be involved in these issues not too long thereafter. I just didn't believe that the Soviet Union was headed for a breakup.

Nonetheless, it was a very disturbing situation. The Soviet Union became involved in Afghanistan...

Q: In December, 1979.

BROWN: Yes. Then there was the whole Iranian situation which fell on us at that time. I can't say that I predicted all of this. No. But there were disturbing signs at the time, and I was one of those who were very concerned about American policy and the Carter administration's handling of it at that time. Maybe I was completely wrong.

Q: One of the things that I have wondered about is whether we were concentrating too much on Kremlinology. In other words, who was moving up in the Politburo in terms of the other members, rather than looking at Soviet society as a whole. Perhaps we were concentrating too much on the leadership, which we could get from the newspapers, rather than looking at Soviet society and saying: "Ye gods, this system doesn't work." We could have looked at Soviet society from that perspective, rather than looking at the relative standings of the leadership.

BROWN: A tremendous effort had been going on for decades in the intelligence community and among very qualified people who had devoted a great deal of effort to learning Russian, studying Russian society, and so forth. Still, we were terribly deficient in terms of crucial statistics and analysis [See Goodman, op. cit]. I think that I may have mentioned before, to take one example, the agricultural scene. The Soviets wouldn't give us their agricultural statistics. They didn't want us to have a true picture of their agriculture. So, in the 1960s, and right on virtually to the end of

the Soviet Union, we were forced to send an Agricultural Attaché and another person to accompany him on trips designed to get a better picture of the state of Soviet agriculture. During my first tour in Moscow (1966-1968), I went along with the Agricultural Attaché on one of these trips and did random sampling of the crops through areas of the Ukraine and the Caucasus that the Soviets would allow us to visit.

With the information derived from these trips, plus the data we obtained from our satellites, we would try to put together an estimate of the size of the Soviet crops. The Soviet economy was terribly vulnerable to weather changes. The weather can seriously affect the crops, for better or for worse. It is very vulnerable, particularly when you get out to such problem areas as the so-called “virgin lands” of Soviet Central Asia.

Let's face it. We had all of this study going on. Kremlinology, for lack of anything better, was considered terribly important to us at the time. Of course, we needed to consider the question: “Will Brezhnev survive?” However, I recalled for my staff of the time wasted thinking of obituaries for Mao Tse-tung, who died in 1976 at age 83. Still, I warned them to be alert to developments. We were now in a new, technical era, since we had television. If Brezhnev hadn't been seen on Soviet TV for the last three to five days, this could mean something. I'll never forget coming into the embassy one morning and realizing that Brezhnev hadn't been seen on Soviet TV for a week or two. Later that day, at the Country Team meeting in the “Tank” [classified conference room] I remember stating this. Then to Ambassador Toon I said, “I saw Brezhnev at a reception last night. I was in the room with him.” I had gone to a hockey match and I saw Brezhnev there, up in his special box, with two or three people blowing smoke past him. So we were able to conclude that Brezhnev had survived.

While I'm at it, let me tell you of a meeting with Brezhnev. In the midst of this sour atmosphere that I have described, there was a time when Ambassador Toon was instructed to arrange a call on Brezhnev and lay out President Carter's views on arms control. The request for the call was made, and I accompanied Ambassador Toon into the Kremlin. After cooling our heels for a considerable period, we were finally shown into the Conference Room where Brezhnev received people. He was flanked by the inevitable interpreter, a youngish and very dapper Soviet official who had interpreted for Soviet leaders for years. Brezhnev was also accompanied by two aides. Brezhnev was well dressed but didn't look so well. His complexion was very florid. He had, as you know, a jaw or a mouth problem. He spoke with a sort of a slur which sometimes could mistakenly be interpreted as meaning that he was under the influence of alcohol. The doctors had ordered Brezhnev to stop smoking. So he would pull out a cigarette and put it up to his nose and sniff it. He ordered one aide to light up the cigarette and blow some smoke past him. Then Brezhnev broke out in a tremendous coughing spell. I swear that he went on for something like five minutes, hacking and coughing. We all sat there just frozen, ourselves and Brezhnev's aides. We didn't dare say, “Would you like a glass of water” or something like that. We just stayed quiet. Finally, Brezhnev recovered. I said to myself: “This man is obviously not well.”

The conversation began, but it was not particularly productive. Brezhnev informed us that he was for peace and that the whole country wanted peace. The Communist Party wanted peace, and all Soviet citizens wanted peace. He said that he was doing everything he could do to achieve peace. However, he said that it would take a corresponding effort on our part, and so forth. At the end of

this passage, Ambassador Toon, bless him, said, "Before I go, Mr. President, there is one thing that I would like to raise with you, more or less on my own." Brezhnev said, "What is this?" Ambassador Toon said, "There is this question of the microwave beams being directed against our embassy. This is a matter of real concern for my embassy and my staff. We'd like to see this taken care of." Whereupon Brezhnev said, "No such thing is happening. I'm an engineer. Don't tell me that we're beaming microwave radiation against your embassy. There are hospitals in Moscow, just like in every other city around the world. They have x-ray machines, some of these machines emit x-rays, and maybe some of them, somehow, go this way or that way. Moscow is a big, modern, industrial city with various emissions and so forth, but nobody is targeting your embassy."

With that, we left. I said to myself ever after that: "This was a bald faced, straight out lie." That leads me, Stuart, to dwell on this subject at some length. Various leaders in various societies throughout history have lied when faced with unpleasant news or developments. I shouldn't have been shocked, but it was somehow shocking to me the way Brezhnev handled it. I would have expected that he might have said, "This is new to me, and we'll have somebody look into it. I can assure you," and so forth. Instead, Brezhnev gave Ambassador Toon an abrupt, curt dismissal of this question. Beyond that, it takes us to the question of morale in the American embassy at that time and the evolution, if you will, of developments on the Moscow front of the Foreign Service.

When I first went to Moscow in 1966, after serving in Borneo and Southeast Asia, I fought tooth and nail to be assigned to study Russian, so that I could be assigned as the Sino-Soviet specialist in Moscow. For me, with the mentality of that period, this was a great challenge. This was the front line in the heart of the country of our adversaries. That's the way we looked at things in the Foreign Service in those days.

I have to tell you what a shock it was in about 1972 or 1973 to wake up to the great, microwave scandal and to find that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and his associates had kept from us the fact that for years we had been bombarded by microwave apparatuses, directed straight at the embassy in Moscow. I remember being one of a small group of officers in 1972 or 1973 when news of this development broke. We raised our voices in despair, dissent, and so forth. We were finally ushered into a room where Larry Eagleburger, Kissinger's Special Assistant at the time, briefed us and made some sort of presentation, assuring us that steps would be taken, and so forth. He said that medical studies were under way, and the evidence thus far was that these microwaves had not been deleterious to our health. This was somewhat reassuring until, at the end of the meeting, Larry Eagleburger said, "Now, rip up all of your notes and give them to me. Nobody can leave with notes on this discussion." One said to oneself: "What in the hell is going on here?"

It turned out that the Soviets had been bombarding us with microwaves, beginning in about 1964 or 1965. Why they had done this remained a mystery. How they had bombarded our embassy remained somewhat of a mystery, as well as why they had done so. Also a mystery was what was the response. We were furious. We felt betrayed by the leadership of the Department of State and by the Secretary of State himself. (End of tape)

I'm speaking now of the microwave radiation scandal, as I would call it, of the early 1970s,

which harked back to the early 1960s. Many of us who had served in the embassy felt betrayed as people who had put so much into our efforts and who had volunteered to serve in Moscow. We probably would have volunteered anyway to serve in Moscow, even if we had known about this. However, we learned only years later that this had happened and that information on it had been kept from us. Foreign Service physical examinations routinely include a blood test. Unbeknownst to us, the Department of State was testing our blood to see what, if anything, had happened to us as a result of the microwave radiation. This was a pretty jolting realization.

Now, at that stage we were assured that there was no evidence whatsoever of damage to our bodies. You know, so many people had been given physical examinations. In an atmosphere like that stories soon began to come out that so-and-so had developed cancer. There was a story circulating that a former leader of the Marine Security Guard detachment in Moscow, who was married and had children, had filed a suit against the State Department and that this suit had been settled out of court for alleged damage to one or more of his children.

Wow! Let me tell you. When I went back to the embassy in Moscow in 1977, this situation had become a matter which affected staff morale. Now I was going back, if you will, as the third-ranking officer in Embassy Moscow. I was of equal status with the Economic Counselor, but in the third-ranking position in the embassy. I had become a part of the management of the mission. By this time we had meters to measure microwave emanations. In the interval something like summer screens had been installed on the windows. I remember once gathering a group of officers with this meter and showing them the effect of taking the screen off. The needle on the meter jumped noticeably. Then we put the screen back on the outer window, because the microwave beam was coming in directly from the front. When we did this, the needle on the meter dropped down. Not all the way, but it faded significantly. So I then said to them, you can see the effect yourselves, but we are now told that this radiation is less dangerous to your health than living near one of the radio stations in Chevy Chase, Maryland, or something like that.

I had just been administering the environmental agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States. I had seen studies by Soviet scientists in an entirely different field which highlighted the deleterious effects of microwave emissions, such as emissions from high voltage electric wires.

It wasn't long before another scare broke. It turned out that the studies of our blood samples over the years of people who had served in Moscow showed that something like six months after a person arrived in Moscow, his or here white blood counts rose significantly. Some people speculated that this had to do with the water supply. A team led by a doctor was sent out from Washington to look into the matter. I can't recall his name now, but he had earlier pooh-poohed the notion that the radiation the American staff was receiving was deleterious and now he was visiting Moscow again. He announced to us that his group wanted to meet with Soviet medical authorities to discuss with them the epidemiology of the Moscow population, because we had now found significantly higher white blood counts in the blood of the Americans who served in the embassy in Moscow. The idea that the Soviets would sit down and talk with such a medical team about the blood counts of typical, Russian residents of Moscow, in epidemiological terms seemed so naive. Can you imagine the concern of Russian medical authorities about a story that Moscow was an unhealthy place to live? In fact, environmentally speaking, Moscow was an

unhealthy place to live, in several ways. So the Soviets ignored this request.

All of this fermented, and the American press played it up. We had a real scare in Moscow.

Q: And rightly so!

BROWN: I raise that matter in terms of lessons learned. Lord knows what the future will bring in the Foreign Service.

Q: Before we leave that matter, was consideration ever given to our saying to the Soviets: "If you keep up this nonsense, we will close our embassy in Moscow?"

BROWN: Or, we could say, if the Soviets kept up this nonsense, we would do exactly the same thing to the Soviet Embassy in Washington. But, oh, no, that would have been nasty, and nothing like that was done. We felt pretty strongly about this.

Q: Of course.

BROWN: It affected morale and assignments to positions in the embassy.

Q: What was the purpose of what has to be regarded as this campaign by Soviet authorities against the health of members of the staff of the American embassy in Moscow? Did they think that if they aimed these microwave radiations at the embassy, they would eventually be able to understand what our people were talking about?

BROWN: This takes you into realms that I'm really not qualified to discuss. I was aware of various theories and of measures and countermeasures that might be taken. However, the point is that microwave emissions were being beamed at us. This point came home to me particularly one day when a visiting technician from the State Department came with equipment and said, "Do you mind if I set this up in your office?" I said, "Okay, but why here? Why in my office?" He said, "Because actually there are at least two beams being directed at the embassy. One comes in from the front of the embassy building, and one comes in from that great, white building over there, which is called the 'White House.' You know, where the Russian Parliament meets."

Q: That's the building which was in flames at one time.

BROWN: Yes. He said, "One beam comes this way, and the two beams intersect right here at your desk. So I'd like to set this up." I thought: "My God! It makes you think." But the Soviets weren't turning these beams off.

This was a disturbing development. As I said, it affected assignments to positions in the embassy in Moscow, as well as other things. The Foreign Service had now a much less glamorous view of serving in Moscow. It was a dirty, unattractive, hostile city. It was difficult to persuade a middle ranking senior officer of superior quality to come back to Moscow. Over and over you encountered a whole variety of excuses, such as: "I'd love to return to Moscow. Don't misunderstand me. However, my wife would object, or my kids' schooling situation would be a

problem.” In those days it was very disturbing to me to deal with such attitudes. I myself had not volunteered to go back to Moscow. However, once there, I threw myself into the job. So service in the embassy in Moscow was a unique experience in many ways.

That takes me to another factor that I haven't really discussed. That is, the China factor. Since my first tour in Moscow as a Sino-Soviet specialist I had seen the great breakthrough of the Nixon and Kissinger visits to China, the issuance of the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, as well as further, high level visits and exchanges. Clearly, the handwriting was on the wall. There was, if you will, a bipartisan view in the United States that we should further develop our relationship with Chinese and regularize and normalize it, but at not too great a cost to our national interest.

Certainly, as one viewed the Carter administration coming into office, there were early signs that, for a variety of reasons, including strategic considerations, because this was driving so much of it, this new administration was determined to move that whole process along. With the departure of President Nixon and the incumbency of President Ford, the further development of our relations with China had been sort of sidelined because of the transition of administrations, the elections of 1976, and all of that.

While I was in Moscow during this tour of duty, among the many professional visitors that I had was Harry Thayer. Harry was then the senior officer on the Peoples Republic of China desk. He came to Moscow, and we discussed relations between the Soviet Union, China, Japan, and the United States. Then Harry said to me: “Look, we have this small Liaison Office in Beijing. I'm thinking of proposing you for the number two position there. We need to have somebody who is senior, a solid performer, and so forth.”

That faced me with a real dilemma. In professional terms, an assignment to Beijing was just what I wanted. I hadn't particularly wanted to go to Moscow this time. But an assignment to Beijing was right up my alley. I could speak Chinese. However, I felt morally bound to decline, because I'd only recently arrived in Moscow, albeit that I had accepted the assignment to meet the needs of the service, and so forth. I just felt that I was morally bound to stick it out and complete my tour there. So, on those grounds I regretfully declined the assignment to Beijing that was offered to me. So J. Stapleton Roy was the Foreign Service Officer who was the right man for this assignment, and he got it. He was an excellent man for the job. A first class officer.

More time went by, and then I had a communication from an old friend and professional colleague, Roger Sullivan. Roger had been in the same Foreign Service Institute class with me. He had succeeded me in the following class at the Chinese language school in Taichung. He had succeeded me as Political Officer in Singapore, Then I had brought him into the China Shop in 1972-1973, and he succeeded me there as the Deputy Director on the Peoples Republic of China desk (ACA). Now he was elevated, during the Carter administration, to be Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, under Richard W. Holbrooke.

Roger got in touch with me by telephone and said, in a guarded but understandable way, that something was afoot, and they therefore proposed that I go to Taipei as the Deputy Chief of Mission. The idea was that I would be placed there so that if something which was under consideration developed further, I would be in a position to deal with it and the inevitable

consequences, which clearly implied the departure of the American Ambassador from Taipei. So I said, "Okay. When do you want me to go?" The answer was: "Now."

So in the summer of 1978, after a year and a half in the embassy in Moscow, my wife Helen and I got on a plane and flew to Tokyo. After a few days' consultations in Tokyo, we flew down to Taipei. Ambassador Leonard Unger was the Chief of Mission at the time. Now, do you want to take this further, or...

Q: I would like to ask a couple of more questions about the Soviets. Then we'll stop and pick up on your assignment to Taipei.

Now, at this time, how did we feel about Brezhnev and his leadership of the Soviet Union? We're talking now about one of the chief things that the Political Section in Moscow was doing in those days. We're talking about a period only a couple of years before we were asking what the political leadership of the Soviet Union was doing in getting the USSR involved in the war in Afghanistan. This was an absolute disaster for the Soviets, and it seemed to be almost an off the cuff and reckless decision. Who was leading in the Soviet Politburo as we saw it at this time? How did we view the Politburo and Brezhnev at that time?

BROWN: Our sources were limited. However, the picture that we had was that Brezhnev was physically in decline. We could also see that he was surrounded by a bunch of other people who were old and suffering from physical ailments of various kinds. Brezhnev's Minister of Defense, Ustinov, was very ill. Gromyko, the Foreign Minister, had been in that position ever since 1962. These were not healthy men. They were men who had lived lives of great tension and stress, and the ravages imposed by time and stress were taking their toll. The constant question was how long would Brezhnev survive, and then what? And we would go around and around, as far as likely successors were concerned. There was no clear successor in view.

Indeed, the succession to Brezhnev happened after I left, and look at the spiral that developed. First Andropov and then Chernenko. These guys were dropping like flies! Access by the embassy to members of the Politburo was practically non-existent. Access by other sources was almost non-existent. Western and other powers dealing with the Soviet Union dealt with the front side of the Soviet bureaucracy, that is, the cabinet ministers and so forth. In other words, the official, governmental side. As we knew and know now, the real power was in the Communist Party. You never got to see them at a party level.

When it was decided that Ambassador Toon should begin a program of travel in the Soviet Union, he charged me with arranging for him to see a Communist Party figure in Leningrad. There was no way that he could do that. We went up to Leningrad and got to see the Mayor of Leningrad and the head of the local branch of the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. He also got some tours of the sights, some nice meals, and so forth, but he didn't get to see the Communist Party boss in Leningrad.

Then Ambassador Toon asked me to arrange a trip to Kiev, in the Ukraine. Toon wanted to see the senior Communist Party boss of the Ukraine. We got to Kiev. We knew this wasn't going to happen. I really tried to set this up and argued with local Soviet officials. I got what everybody

else got, for a distinguished, Western Ambassador, and that was an appointment to see the Foreign Minister of the Ukraine. Remember, Ukrainia had a seat in the United Nations.

Q: Oh, yes. White Russia, Ukrainia, and another Soviet republic...

BROWN: Was it Georgia? These Soviet republics had been granted seats in the UN. Initially, we considered them Soviet puppets. However, this was later an excuse for us to open up American Embassies in their capitals. I think that we were able to arrange a courtesy call on the President or the Deputy Vice President of the Ukraine. That is, governmental officials. We also saw the Mayor of Kiev, as well as an array of gray-faced bureaucrats in between. That was it. We never got to see the boss.

There was another occasion, when I was accompanying a Congressional Delegation to Kiev. After this Congressional Delegation left the Soviet Union, Helen and I stayed on in the Ukraine for a few days. We wanted to visit the home of Bulgakov, the famous writer of the 1930s who perished during the terror of the Moscow purges in the late 1930s. Helen wanted to paint a picture of his home. We had lots of wonderful stories about this. Bulgakov's home had been on a hill, close to a famous, old church. Helen wanted to visit his home. She was outside his home, painting the church. All of a sudden, there were no cars and absolute, dead silence. Then came the sound of a loud siren and screeching of tires. It turned out that the Communist Party boss was returning to his home or his office, which was near by. I saw this great cavalcade of limousines and heard the sound of sirens. This great, security entourage flashed past us, and that was that. I said, "Wow! There's the local boss!" [Laughter]

We were denied access to all of that. You therefore couldn't establish any kind of dialogue or rapport with local leaders. We couldn't measure these guys. They were encased in security arrangements, and contact with them was very, very difficult.

Q: Looking at the decisions that were coming out, you'd have to say that these Soviet officials really weren't with it. We have these kinds of security arrangements with our own officials in the White House and other places, but...

BROWN: Moscow was a rolling mill. There were all kinds of people, all the time, and there was a lot of chicken feed around, too, you know. But all of the foreign representatives were watching and comparing and so on. When all is said and done, we had pretty limited access to these figures.

Now, as far as speculation as to the succession to Brezhnev and others is concerned, of course we analyzed that, as much as we could. It was clear that Brezhnev had not chosen a successor, nor would he. You didn't do that in that kind of a society. If they did that, pretty soon they would get rid of the man in power. We have seen that happen many times in history. However, it was then, and it remained, quite a challenge to determine what might happen.

Q: Now, as chief of the Political Section, how useful did you find what was being produced by the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]? Obviously, Moscow was the major target, as far as the CIA was concerned.

BROWN: We didn't get much locally as State Department consumers because that was a different scene, both operationally and so forth. CIA studies would be sent out to us. Remember, I was a fan of the FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] from previous experience. So I was constantly flipping through the latest, FBIS reports or accounts of Soviet broadcasts and so forth. We received prestigious studies from the CIA and other intelligence agencies. They tended to confirm our own views. However, you see, we were all in the same swim, as it were, and particularly in terms of economic analysis. I mean no disrespect either to the CIA or to our own economists, but we just didn't have a grip on the situation. [See Goodman, op. cit.]

My own, gut feeling, which I often expressed to others, was that there was a lot wrong with Soviet society. It was inefficient in so many ways. It was corrupt and increasingly so. Our people were spending such a disproportionate amount of our limited resources on the Soviet military and putting out good analysis.

During my second tour in Moscow a very senior officer from the Defense Intelligence Agency came out to Moscow. We had been together at the National War College some five years previously. He had gone on to greater things in his own agency. I remember discussing my view of the Soviet Union with him. He said, "Bill, what you're telling me is that this Soviet economy is lousy, that things are rotten here, and so forth. But I've got to tell you, Bill, from my end of things, the Soviets are producing first class, modern, nuclear weaponry, in very significant amounts, and with a very high level of sophistication." I said, "Okay, I can't challenge that. I'm just telling you that, at the street level, there are potholes, shortages, alcoholism, disaffection, disillusionment, new stirrings among the people, and Soviet youth is disaffected. From anecdotal material there are great shortages of meat. There are, at times, terrible shortages of meat and other produce. God knows what conditions are like in the hinterland of the Soviet Union which we still can't get to. From all of our accounts, the Soviet economy faces major problems." So we had a kind of standoff here.

Q: What about your feelings on Marxism and Leninism? I was talking to one person who said that he was in Poland at this time. He said that there were maybe three people in all of Poland who really believed in Marxism. Did you see any evidence of that?

BROWN: I think that as far as the great bulk of the masses were concerned, they were loyal, Soviet citizens, doing their jobs and struggling to make a little better place in their lives. You could say that they were getting the crumbs, but automobiles were beginning to become more available. The automobile population was growing, the cars were junky and broke down frequently, but at least the elite and sub-elite, the upper classes of Soviet society, now had wheels. Restaurants were better, and there was more merchandise in the shops. The power of the Soviet regime was incontestable. At the same time, more and more people had visited, heard of, or could read about the West and all of its delights. I think that the European miracle, let alone the achievements on the American scene, were increasingly evident. The reach of radio and, on the periphery of the Soviet Union, foreign TV broadcasts was increasing. Finnish TV could now be seen in Estonia. More travel abroad was being allowed. There was the whole business of Western dress and attire, blue jeans, and the beginnings of narcotics addiction. The birth control pill had enormous impact. Alcoholism was a major problem, as it always had been.

There was, if you will, a greater perception of the West and of the contrast between conditions in Soviet society and the West. Relatively few Soviet citizens would ever be able to travel in the West, but you should bear in mind that the system of awards for internal travel existed within the Soviet Union. I once went with my wife and daughter to Sochi.

Q: Is this near Yalta?

BROWN: It is on the Black Sea, across from Yalta and just North of the border between the Russian Federated Socialist Republic and Georgia. It is on the other, eastern coast of the Black Sea. Visiting Sochi was like moving from night into day. Sochi is a warm, seaside resort. Thousands of people were in bikinis there, sunning themselves on the lovely beaches. Pepsi-Cola was available there! Ice cream and Pepsi-Cola were being consumed. There were nice coffee and snack bars. This is where the trade union and other leadership elite of the "heroic workers," the party bosses and union achievers, and so forth went. A visit to Sochi was a status symbol. In Moscow, on the shelves of many a senior bureaucrat was an unopened bottle of Pepsi-Cola. The label said "Pepsi" in Cyrillic letters, because Pepsi now had its own bottling plant in Sochi, thanks to Richard Nixon and Pepsi-Cola. What this bottle meant was: "I have been to Sochi and I have had Pepsi-Cola. Here is the bottle to show it!" That bottle was right next to the ritual copy of the "Collected Works of Lenin."

Q: In Yugoslavia I used to see copies of the "Collected Works of Tito." They were constantly in sight, obviously.

BROWN: Everybody had those collections. The rituals were all there, including the parades and so forth.

One had the sense that there was minimal enthusiasm about this. I'm not saying hostility, but there was minimal enthusiasm and a growing amount of cynicism as to what it all meant. I don't want to put too much of an edge on this but I was struck at the signs of a kind of religious movement. There was enough missing in enough people's lives that numbers of Russians were going to church, searching for something else. Even though the Russian Orthodox Church was under the thumb of the regime, one could sense that there was some outreach to the people by the Orthodox Church leadership. There were signs of some contact with Russian Orthodox communities abroad.

The Russians carried in their intellectual baggage a tremendous sense of inferiority vis-a-vis the United States. We had our materialism, as we have a materialistic society. However, with the Vietnam conflict over, the drumfire of really virulent, anti-American propaganda which I had been exposed to some 10 years previously in Moscow was noticeably absent. Soviet media had often carried pictures of American troops in Vietnam, using napalm against the local people, and so forth. That had lost its edge. So there was continuous competition but no sense, certainly at the lower, public level, that the Soviets had overtaken us. There still was that Slavic sense of inferiority which manifested itself in peculiar ways.

Q: My last question on this subject. You were sort of a China watcher par excellence. What

about the China-Soviet relationship, and how did that play out during the time you were there?

BROWN: Let me tell you. The evolution in our relationship with China since the time of my first tour in the Soviet Union had reached the point that at diplomatic functions the Chinese Charge d'Affaires in Moscow, Mr. Wang, at times would say to me in front of other Western diplomats: "NATO must be strengthened! Don't go soft on the Russians! Make yourselves stronger! The only things that they understand are pressure and power." Incidentally, Sino-Soviet relations were so bad that they didn't have Ambassadors in each other's respective capitals. They just had Charges d'Affaires, but these had the personal rank of Ambassadors. Wang would make these remarks in front of representatives of other NATO countries. I said to him: "We really should make you an honorary member of the NATO Society."

There was another, interesting time when Wang and I were sharing old memories of the Nixon-Kissinger-Mao Tse-tung-Zhou En-lai breakthroughs and so forth. I confided to him that at the time of the Nixon visit to China I had been Deputy Director of ACA and had prepared these Secret books for these visits in which we cautioned our people, based on our own knowledge of the Chinese and on our readings, to be careful not to put their arms around the shoulders of Chinese officials or slap them on the back. Kissinger and his people came back from Beijing and said to us: "What's the matter with you people? The first thing the Chinese did was to put their arms around our shoulders, ask us to have a drink, and so forth." Whereupon Mr. Wang said, "Don't you think that we were preparing our own Secret books?" He had been involved in the preparation of similar books for his superiors.

Q: Was there any concern among the Soviets about their ability to take care of the Chinese?

BROWN: Oh, no. not in terms of conventional warfare. So deep had the mutual hostility between the Chinese and the Soviets become that they had the worst possible images of each other. Remember, in 1969 they had an armed clash along the Ussuri River [along the border with Eastern Manchuria], near Khabarovsk. The Soviets said that all that was left of the Chinese soldiers on that occasion were their belt buckles.

Clearly, in any hypothetical conflict the People's Liberation Army of China would be no match for the Soviet Army in full array, with all of its tanks and nuclear weapons. However, a lot had happened since this border clash. The Chinese were absolutely determined to continue modernizing militarily. They had now developed a breakthrough in their relations with the U.S., although it was still in the early, formative stage. However, the background music was that U.S.-China relations could be and would be improved. Certainly, that was unpleasant music in Soviet ears. For their part the Chinese remained driven in their concern about the Soviets, whatever their public remarks. We'll come to that in a later session, because that fear of the Soviets and the Chinese determination somehow to counter them through the relationship with the U.S., if necessary, was clear.

We're now talking about my time in Moscow in 1977-1978. In fact, that was abundantly clear through 1985, when I was later Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State dealing with the Chinese, and discussing our relationship with them.

THOMPSON R. BUCHANAN
Consul General
Leningrad (1977-1980)

Thompson R. Buchanan was born in Beverly Hills, California in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943-1946. Mr. Buchanan's Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, France, Russia, Burundi, Gabon, and Norway. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 15, 1996.

Q: You were in Leningrad from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From October, 1977 until August, 1980.

Q: How long had the consulate general been in existence?

BUCHANAN: It opened in July 1973 with Culver Gleysteen and his wife living in the Astoria Hotel for many months while our construction crew rebuilt our future consulate. As I told you, the Soviets responded to my request for a building on the former Furchatskaya, then Petra Lavrova, and now again Furchatskaya street, opposite our former chancery before the revolution. The man I replaced, Joe Neubert, had formerly been on the policy planning staff. He made a major effort to get to know and understand the Russians. After his retirement, he became the American representative in Moscow of the Soviet-American Trade Council.

With my background I tended to see the Consulate General more as an important intelligence and political reporting post than a consular post. We certainly could not compare with visa mills like Frankfurt and Munich. Leningrad provided a different vantage point from which to view this vast country. If Leningrad lacked the dynamism of Moscow -- a "Museum city" as the Muscovites called it -- it had a more civilized atmosphere. For some reason, the series of lectures in the so-called Znaniye or Knowledge Society, and particularly the questions and answers were more revealing than in similar lectures in Moscow. And it was the base of a vast consular district extending from the Baltic States to Murmansk and Archangel on the Barents and White Seas, offering other insights into this great land..

Q: When you are talking about lectures, what are you talking about?

BUCHANAN: On weekends, partly because my Russian was better than that of some of the staff members, and they often had children and I didn't, I would take the weekend shift and go to these lectures on different aspects of Soviet life organized by the Knowledge Society, lectures delivered by very experienced lecturers who were specialists in their own fields. The lectures might be on anything from the Middle East to the economy, to agriculture, etc. The Bermuda triangle was one of the most popular lectures in Russia. "Is there life in outer space?" was another popular theme. There were lectures on civil defense, you name it. As I say, these lectures would last two or three hours and the lecturer often would not look at a note. Very impressive.

After the lecture we would write a cable summarizing the main points, particularly the questions and answers. That was one of my more time-consuming activities.

The issue of Soviet Jews was very important at that time. We kept getting messages from the Department saying, "Would you please check into what happened to Abramowitz. We understand he is in jail." And very often they were correct. We would send somebody down to the local synagogue and check with one or two of our regular contacts down there. We knew Washington had heard about it because the relatives in Leningrad would phone to their blood relatives in New York and tell them. It was curious that these phone calls from this police state could still go through. The Soviets were very frustrated for they didn't know how to handle the whole Jewish question. It remained a thorn in their side and was to some extent a constant irritant in our relations. They tried to deter us from having contact with Jewish or other dissidents.

One of my consular officers was a regular source of contact with the various dissidents. He was a little guy who was a marathon runner. He used to run about 18 miles about three times a week. The Russians, of course, wondered what this American was doing running all over Leningrad. They were highly suspicious. They didn't have anybody who wanted to run and keep up with him. But, what they would sometimes do, would be to wait until he was crossing a street and then run a car at him which would come to a screeching halt about three feet from him in an effort to intimidate him. And, at least, on one or two occasions, "citizens" beat him up after he had visited a dissident, but very professionally with no visible damage, nothing very serious, but just a "don't come back" message. That really didn't work because we, of course, had our orders to continue to maintain these contacts. But it was a game, an irritant.

Q: One thing about being a consular officer is you have much more access, you can go to anyone you want, as opposed to being an embassy officer where you are sort of trapped by working through the foreign ministry, the rules of the game are different. Did you ever feel that you could go to say the head of the KGB in Leningrad and say, "Come on, cut this out. You know what we are doing and we know what you are doing, can't we stop this before it turns...?"

BUCHANAN: Well, I would do that to the foreign ministry, too, in Moscow. But, yes, I complained.

Q: But you can go more directly as a consular officer sometimes too.

BUCHANAN: Oh, I was constantly protesting to the Diplomatic Agency about one problem or another. The head of the Agency, Yefimov, was, as far as I knew, a former political hack from the Leningrad Oblast apparatus, not KGB. But his deputy was certainly KGB. Koslovski was a very sophisticated agent, who had served in East Germany. I became aware within the first weeks of my arrival that he was KGB, by accident. The diplomatic corps was invited to a celebration of what I recall was Brezhnev's version of the Soviet constitution. As we entered October Hall, Koslovski met us to direct us to our seats. As he passed the security guards, he was greeted as an obvious colleague. He scowled and pretended that he had not heard. They blew his cover, not that I had any great doubts. In fact, he was not only a civilized person with whom to deal but, on two occasions, extremely useful.

On one occasion, we had a Fulbright scholar, John Pratt, sent to us as a lecturer on American literature. The fact that he was a colonel in the Air Force, who had served in Vietnam, disturbed me. We had problems enough, including friction regarding Vietnam, without his presence. The Soviets would, of course, assume that he was a spy, which they did initially. I agreed to have him come because my deputy PAO, Criss Arcos (incidentally, a tremendous officer, who had an impressive career later in Latin America), reassured me. "When I was in Portugal," Criss said, "Pratt came and lectured and he is superb, don't worry." When Pratt arrived, he was promptly taken in hand by the professor of American Literature at Leningrad University, as I recall a tiny, little man, very bright, called Kavaliov. John told us that he felt like he was defending his doctoral thesis during his first dinner at Kavaliov's house. Kavaliov asked him about the most obscure American writers of the 19th and 20th centuries. At the end he was apparently convinced that John was the real thing and not a CIA agent. John had lectured on American literature at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and is a prolific writer himself. Kavaliov warned John, however, that Leningrad was not the US and he should not expect the sort of professor-student dialogue to which he was accustomed. John bet Kavaliov that he would get the students talking, and he won. Actually, while John lectured in English, and no Russian, he had people coming out from the suburbs, who were English speakers, to listen to him. He told me how amazed he was by the knowledge of American literature on the part of his students. Some would walk with him after class and ask him questions about the latest book by, for example, John Updike, which they were not supposed to have read, but somehow, presumably as children of the Nomenklatura, they had managed to get hold of.

Well, back to the point of my story about Koslovski. At around 11 p.m. one night I got a call from my consular officer saying, "John Pratt is in the hospital here. I am calling from the hospital. John has apparently a kink in his colon, and they will have to operate very quickly or gangrene will set in." The consul described the hospital room as being, as usual, "pod remontom" (under construction), with large, dirty blankets hung as curtains over the windows. I arranged a three-way conversation with our doctor at the Embassy in Moscow. The doctor explained that what was most important was that the operation should take place in a sterile environment because the intestines would in fact, be exposed. The description of the operating room was not reassuring. We did not know what to do. Happily, at that point, an older, more senior doctor appeared, looked at the X-ray and said that this was not a kink in the colon but a tumor in the lower bowel, what he called the "lucky tumor," because it is easily operable. Since there was not the same urgency to operate, we had time to get John out to Helsinki. The embassy doctor said he assumed that plastic tubes would be inserted into John's extremities to relieve pressure during his transport to Finland, but the Russian doctor claimed his hospital had no plastic tubes, probably because he was hoarding the few that he had and he had no confidence that they would be replaced. I then arranged to have John sent with a couple of our consular officers up to Helsinki. The problem was that it was by now 1:00 in the morning, and we had to open the frontier. This is where we will get back to Koslovski in the KGB. I called him and in half an hour he had opened the Soviet-Finnish border, which is closed at night. The problem then was that, on the Finnish side they had all gone to bed. And so, in fact, when our people got there they had to wait until the Finns appeared at work about 5 or 6:00 in the morning. This was the first of two times that Koslovski opened the border. Footnote: John was tremendously impressed by the operation of the Finnish doctors, as we all were. Finnish doctors and dentists were superb. And John is living happily now in Fort Collins, Colorado, teaching at the university there. He

keeps in touch with Kovalyev.

The other occasion was when General Rooney, the right-wing general put into the SALT delegation by conservatives in Congress, came to Leningrad. I thought this would be a good opportunity for me to be briefed since we were not on distribution for SALT traffic. So, I took the general into our little secure room and he gave the most pompous performance I had ever seen. He told me less than I could read in the *New York Times*. "It is *very* secure, you know." Well, that same evening, also late, about 11:00, he was called from Washington and told that he should be at a noon briefing the following day in Washington. Now there was one possibility of getting him there. He could make a plane connection from Helsinki which would get him on the Concorde out of London. Frankly, after listening to him I wondered if it was in the national interest to get him on that plane. But, I decided it wasn't my job to make that decision. Our administrative and consular officers drove him up to Helsinki. Again, Koslovski came through and opened the Finnish border, again the Finns couldn't be found, and they barely made it to the airport. An amusing footnote: On the way, nature called but the General refused to stop the car, asking, "Don't you have a Pepsi Cola bottle or something that I could use?" When our staff returned from Helsinki, we debated, given the General's pompous concern for security, whether we should not have sent the bottle and its contents, "Top Secret" to the Pentagon!

Q: Did you find the Leningrad society different from the Moscow society?

BUCHANAN: There is something you could call old Leningrad or St. Petersburg manners...more gracious, better mannered, less likely to knock you down standing in line. Yes, there was a difference. Leningrad treasured its historic cultural traditions. Within a week or two of our arrival, I heard there was going to be a concert at Catherine's Palace: an amateur choir was singing to do a Schubert mass. I felt that sounded interesting, so my wife and I were driven out. This took place in the outer hall of the chapel there. The ladies in the choir came in silver lame evening dress, the men were all in tails. It was a superb choir. The choir master worked at the professional Kapella, the choral group founded in Moscow by Ivan IV and transplanted to St. Petersburg. On another occasion, we attended an Italian baroque opera sung in the green marble room of Pavlovsk Palace, with all the singers and ushers in period costume. If the plays put on at the Gorky theater were not quite as avant garde as those at the Taganka theater in Moscow, the choreography and acting were superb. At the Kirov theater, we never missed a performance when our friend, Valiya Galibalovna, danced. Her Giselle was a delight. With her help one evening, we put on six hours of American ballet at the residence on video. Bolshoi ballerina Maksimova was among the 16-odd leading lights of Soviet ballet who attended. We were, of course, quite spoiled by the cost of attending the theater or musical events, the equivalent of \$3-4, and correspondingly shocked when we bought tickets for the Kennedy Center upon our return.

Petrinin, who was number two in the Gosispolkom's (city government) cultural section, was not a particularly cultivated gentleman himself, but he took pleasure in showing off his city. Knowing my wife's interests, he arranged one weekend for us to visit a man who was a restorer of icons. We went there, however, not to see his icons but his collection of paintings and engravings of the pre-revolutionary nobility and Royal family. We were told that he had been essentially a worker at the time of the revolution, who took advantage of the New Economic Policy period to buy up some of the great Russian painters like Repin and Serov, as well as

ceramic works and silver from the impoverished aristocracy. In the '30s he inexplicably decided to get rid of his Russian masters and concentrate instead on an area that no one was collecting. He told the story of one choice small engraving of a countess, which he spied in an apartment when he was walking. The old woman who owned the engraving resisted his argument that her countess would feel more at home in his apartment surrounded by her noble friends, until one day she knocked on the door, and was ready to sell, sensing perhaps that she did not have long to live.

Another time we were taken to the home of an elderly lady who had relatives in Paris, and who obviously had political connections because she went out to Paris periodically. She had created a total Parisian apartment. She was living in the past. She reminded me of the time that we attended a concert in Moscow given by Prince Volkonsky, who had studied in Paris and returned from emigration with his father after the war. When permitted, he gave concerts of his modern compositions. That particular evening, he performed with his baroque ensemble. What was fascinating was to hear elderly couples behind us, dressed in what had been once well tailored clothes, introducing friends to one another...Count so and so, you must know Baron X, etc. People who had obviously survived under Socialism by keeping their head down. In Leningrad, this lady who had been a member of the old nobility, was allowed to live a Bourgeois existence, and keep up her relations with France, in exchange perhaps for providing information on her contacts.

More moving in many ways were our visits to dissident artists, often arranged by a good friend the sculptor Grisha Israelovich. He had apparently some political protection, as a member of the Artists Union, since his father had been in charge of sanitarium on the Black Sea. His former wife and daughters had emigrated to the U.S. After we left, the authorities took away his wonderful gate house studio.

To get some feeling for the religious life of Leningrad, I attended, of course, special holy days at the synagogue and the various Orthodox churches. On one occasion a Baptist church service began with my being introduced to the bearded 18 members of the Council, who all insisted on kissing me, Russian style!

Life in Leningrad was not, of course, all fun and culture. There were problems with our Soviet staff. We felt that we should treat the daughter of the cultural honcho of Leningrad with kid gloves, despite her fairly obvious efforts to entice her American GSO boss into bed. She would sit so provocatively in her office, I learned, that the wife of the GSO brought in a screen to put between them to reduce temptation. On the other hand, we had one lovely lady, who was enormously helpful whenever visitors came to Leningrad. She knew many of the artists and what was worth seeing around town -- the sorts of things that no American local would ever know. Unfortunately, she apparently became too visibly fond of her job and Americans, without perhaps adequate reporting on her part, so that she was suddenly removed one day and demoted to a menial job with Intourist.

Our biggest problem in 1979 was handling the 8 CODELS, congressional delegations that descended on Leningrad, typically on weekends. Each delegation usually consisted of two plane loads of congressmen and senators and their wives and staff, none of whom was often very

interested in being briefed about Leningrad. They were there for a good time. They offered an opportunity, however, for us to meet local officials, who were otherwise unapproachable. I took particular satisfaction in persuading the Ribicoff-Bellman delegation that it should try to meet with the First Secretary of Leningrad, Grigoriy Romanov, a tough little ideologue, very combative, a Napoleonic disposition. I knew him only from occasional verbal bouts with him on November 7, or May First. The Politburo obviously wanted the delegation to meet a much smoother member, Masherov, of Belorussia, but, on my urging, the delegation pressed to meet with Romanov. Ambassador Malcolm Toon supported my request, and accompanied the delegation when it met with Romanov. What Romanov told us about his personality during this visit suggested that, had he won out in the power struggle that followed Brezhnev's death, rather than Gorbachev, we would not have had an end to the cold war, but rather the reverse.

Small examples. Ribicoff spoke without notes, just off the cuff. It was always rather difficult for an interpreter to follow. In the middle of a long speech by Ribicoff, our interpreter, instead of referring to the "tomb" of the people who had died during the blockade of Leningrad, he referred to their "grave." Romanov interrupted to chastise the interpreter saying, "If you are an interpreter you should know the difference between a tomb and a grave." He was feisty and bad mannered.

Bellman started talking about trade, trying to be polite to supplement what Ribicoff had said. Romanov interrupted saying, "We don't need your trade." After dinner, where Romanov had all the fine artists of Leningrad perform for them at the guest house, I heard him talking to the senators saying, "And you mustn't believe the things your Consul General writes about me and about Leningrad."

Well, I knew that we were probably bugged because my French and German colleagues had warned me saying they had found bugs in their offices in the ceiling. I had, in fact, requested Washington to "debug" our consulate. The operation happily took place when I was on leave; my poor deputy had to suffer through all the dust. Our people didn't find that bug until long after I left. The Soviets were obviously monitoring what we wrote about them and they didn't like it.

Some of the things they probably didn't like was the accuracy of our reporting on their economy. Moscow was reporting the economy was in fairly good shape. We had, I think, a more realistic view from lectures that were franker than those in Moscow, and from little incidents like the time one of our Russian speaking wives was standing in line and the woman ahead of her was weeping and telling a friend that her daughter had called that morning and had said, "Mother, you know, I was able to find some *kasha* (a cereal) for the family for breakfast, but I don't know what I am going to find to feed them for the rest of the day." From these little incidents, one knew that life out in the sticks, what the Russians call the "periphery," was a far cry from what it was in Moscow or Leningrad. So, we were reporting that there were more economic tensions in the country than perhaps were generally admitted.

The Soviets also, of course, didn't like the role the consulate played in trying to monitor the shipbuilding activity in Leningrad. Our naval people would come up, or British or Canadian naval officers. In a sense, we represented the Commonwealth, and we provided what assistance we could.

Q: They didn't have posts there?

BUCHANAN: No, they didn't. There were some nasty incidents. The Russians seized our naval attaché who was clandestinely photographing a new cruiser that was being built in the shipyards. We naturally protested their uncivilized behavior in seizing this naval attaché and removing his camera.

So, there were lots of little tensions, and the Soviets got back at us in their own way, sometimes personally. For example, we had a wonderful chef from the liner *Pushkin* who had been provided to my predecessor. Because he had been a chef on a liner you could call up and say, "Sasha, tomorrow we are going to have a cocktail party for 150 people," and it didn't phase him at all. He also took the side of my wife against the two women harridans on the residence staff. One was an embittered old woman, who had lost all of her family during the blockade. The other, a rather plump version of Marilyn Monroe, was a slick KGB operator, but a very good housekeeper who loved the residence and took a lot of pride in it. My wife thought that she went out of her way on one occasion to demonstrate the speed of her hands, to warn us not to leave things around. When Soviet-US relations were particularly tense, the two ladies might claim to be sick and unable to work. On one such occasion, Sasha insisted that he would vacuum our "palace," rather than my wife. We should have known better than to tell the walls how highly we thought of Sasha, instead of cursing him for his protection.

So one day, just on the eve of a large delegation coming, Sasha came to me with tears in his eyes and said he had a better job. I took him out in the courtyard and said, "Sasha, what happened?" He said, "They didn't tell me, but let me go quietly." Then he said in French, "c'est la vie." I didn't let him go quietly, I complained bitterly. The Russians made it very plain that they assumed that I would get another Russian chef, but I said, "No, I am not going to be dependent on you people. I am going to get someone from Finland." They said, "What? That is going to be very expensive."

So, we got probably the finest chef we ever had. He had been chef to the Finnish ambassador in Paris and we have never eaten better in our life. Pretty soon, he was being importuned by our Marilyn Monroe lady, who wanted to marry him so he would take her out of the country, and apparently they were quite close. But, ladies were not our chef's primary interest, so it didn't quite work out that way.

Another time, just to be nasty, we suddenly found the residence had only boiling water coming out of all our faucets. This went on for three days. The "diplomatic agency" would send over a "plumber" who came up with a lot of ridiculous suggestions. Our whole furnace area was about the size of the *Queen Elizabeth's* engine rooms, so an amateur couldn't go in and figure out what valves were what. I finally was able to get a local city plumber to come and it took him about 30 seconds of looking around to say, "Who was the idiot who turned that valve?" Just petty harassment.

Q: We are talking about a difficult period with the Soviets. I would have thought Leningrad in someway a bad place to monitor what was happening, it was a sophisticated area close to Western Europe, etc., when all hell was breaking loose out in the hinterland. Did you find in

many ways it might have been better to have somebody in Volgograd or some place like that?

BUCHANAN: Oh yes, but we had no option. Officers traveled, of course, to the extent they could to places like Volgograd, but Leningrad remained our only permanent outpost.

Q: Well, were you seeing the real Russia or not?

BUCHANAN: Oh yes, we were seeing small bits of the real Russia, although they tried to prevent us from doing so. We had a somewhat different perspective on Russia than the one obtainable in Moscow. In some ways security controls were tighter than Moscow but in other ways we were better off than Moscow. The lecture series, for example, were franker. The consular district was also very large, extending from the three cities in the Baltic north to the Barents and White Seas, with a variety of places in between that we managed to visit at least once. Our visits to enterprises and institutes and meetings with local officials were, of course, rather controlled and formal, but they nevertheless provided some insights into Soviet life, adding small pieces to the much larger jigsaw puzzle.

One could also do some investigative reporting in Leningrad itself. We had serious friction in our administrative office between the Administrative Officer and his new GSO, who was the wife of the consular officer, and an economist, who considered herself much smarter than her boss, and told him. I accordingly converted her into an economic officer and had her do a study of unemployment in the city. There were notices all over Leningrad of people seeking employment. By pulling this together, she was able to identify areas where there were shortages and what appeared to be under-employment.

Administrative officers had probably the best opportunity of anyone to experience the frustrating, seamy side of Soviet bureaucracy. If they had served in the Third World, they tended to be more effective. My first administrative officer, an African hand, apparently understood that if he wished to get our shipments through customs he would have to pay off the appropriate officials. I assume that vodka, cognac, jazz tapes or “Playboy” passed hands, but I never asked. I suspect that the reason we began having problems after his departure was because his successor, a quite competent Europeanist, insisted on operating by the book.

Q: You left when in 1980?

BUCHANAN: That summer.

Q: So you were there at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Were any of you ready for it? Were there any signals? What was the reaction of the people in your area to this?

BUCHANAN: Well, to cite an example, at one lecture, at a factory, the lecturer was speaking about historic military figures. At the end of the lecture a workman got up and basically said, “Comrade lecturer. Can you tell us what the hell we are doing in Afghanistan?” Stories began to spread around about the number of bodies coming back. Definitely there was all sorts of exaggeration about the number of coffins. But it was a sign of the times. There were stories about discrimination in the sort of people they were bringing into the military to fight in

Afghanistan, for example, Jews or people from the Baltic States.

There was a very interesting woman who ran the Dostoyevsky Museum. Her husband, I never knew exactly, but I think was a leading doctor in the Soviet Armed Forces. He would travel surveying military establishments. They were obviously in shock because a doctor friend of theirs was sent out to work with Amin, the Afghan leader. (Somebody had reportedly tried to poison him.) When the Russians decided to knock off Amin, and their paratroopers attacked the palace, they killed the doctor friend along with Amin. By then I had gone up to Moscow and we had all discussed with Ambassador Watson and particularly Mark Garrison, the DCM, what should be our reaction. One of the proposals which we made strongly against our personal self-interest -- because all of us were looking forward to seeing the Olympics -- was that we should boycott the Olympics because we knew how important they were psychologically to the Russians. All of these measures were announced: the trade cut off, boycott, etc. I had a cocktail party and very few people came. But this Russian lady came, despite a bad cold. She spoke to me privately, virtually in tears, saying, "What do you think you are doing? When you push the bear into a corner, he will fight back." She seemed genuinely upset and quite frightened of where the confrontation would lead. I still believe that it was a genuine response and not a KGB-orchestrated scene, but who knows. In fact, everyone was upset, and nobody was more upset than all the Intourist guides, because suddenly there would be very few tourists. The reason they had selected to become Intourist guides was to have a feel of the West, an opportunity to travel to the West, or at least to meet Westerners. But our boycott meant that they weren't going to meet any Americans. Instead, they were given jobs translating obscure texts into English.

I had gone down to Tallinn where the Mayor had taken Nan and myself on a boat to see sailboats in training for the Olympics. We visited the very fancy marina which the Estonians had built for the occasion, which we later visited ourselves after I retired, and we went sailing in the Baltic Sea with an FSO friend. We had looked forward to returning to Tallinn for the Olympics.

So, I was directly involved in the Embassy recommendations on how to respond to the invasion of Afghanistan. President Carter's decision has certainly been much criticized, with hindsight, notably his embargo on grain shipments to Russia, perceived as an inequitable burden on the American farmers. Others have attacked the mixing of sport and politics. But I still think that our boycott of the Olympics served its purpose to underscore the inadmissibility of a great power invading its neighbor. On the other hand, I did not agree with the commonly held view that the invasion represented an offensive move toward the Persian Gulf. That seemed to me to be nonsense. I saw the invasion as primarily a defensive reaction by a paranoid regime with a 1700 mile border dividing a Muslim fanatic state from its own Muslim areas of Central Asia. Soviet lecturers claimed that the decision to intervene was only undertaken very reluctantly following fourteen pleas for assistance by the desperate leftist regime in Kabul, as it lost province after province to the rebels. Talk about a cloudy crystal ball, or wishful thinking. At the dinner given for me by the head of the Diplomatic Agency, Yefimov, before our departure, he assured me that, "Don't worry, Mr. Buchanan, in a few months all will be quiet in Afghanistan." To the extent that the much touted "convergence" between the US and the USSR was a reality, it was in our mutual Great Power arrogance. At least the Afghan invasion spared us a continuing deluge of delegations overwhelming our poor little consulate.

Q: Yes, with the Olympics coming.

BUCHANAN: It would have been terrible. I should have mentioned the most amusing delegation I had. Soon after I arrived in Leningrad, we got a message that Mrs. Mondale wanted to come to Leningrad on an unofficial visit to see the avant-garde art collection in the Russian Museum that the head of the National Gallery had described to her. This resulted in a three-day negotiation by me with the head of the city government

Q: Mrs. Mondale, by the way, was the wife of the Vice President.

BUCHANAN: She was given very bad advice by her staff. You can't be the wife of the Vice President and sneak in and have an unofficial visit. Certainly not in a highly protocol society like Russia. What she chose to visit was closed off to everyone except a few Russian art students. I had tried to visit the avant garde collection a number of times and been refused. Selfishly I was delighted that she was asking for this, but it was not an easy thing. She also wanted to have a private meeting with someone who produced ceramic work. We had a three-day negotiation arguing whether this should be an official-unofficial visit or an unofficial-official visit. We finally agreed, I think on an "unofficial-official" formula.

The issue of what was official or unofficial was joined right at the outset, on the way from the airport to my residence. It was an almost hallowed tradition that visitors stopped on Victory Square to pay their respects to those who fought and died to save Leningrad. Victory Square contains an enormous monument with some interesting figures, and a museum underneath where a very moving film is shown, depicting the suffering and heroism of the population during the blockade. While I would have liked Mrs. Mondale to see the film, it was not on the schedule for what was supposed to be this "unofficial" visit.

Q: This was a traumatic time for Leningrad.

BUCHANAN: It was indeed. Everybody in Leningrad still relived those days, just as so many of the older generation of Russia continued to relive, throughout all the time that I was in Russia, World War II, which for the men was their heroic period and the period that had most meaning in their lives. The war was constantly on films, plays, you name it, and in the minds of the people. As a result the word "peace" had enormous psychological significance for Russians, stronger than for most Americans.

To return to Mrs. Mondale, standard practice is that you lay flowers at the eternal flame at this monument. Mrs. Mondale was determined not to do this. She had been told to do nothing official. I tried to persuade her, but the issue was taken out of our hands. I had planned to drive Mrs. Mondale in my official car, but the Soviets offered their own much more luxurious Zil, which meant we were essentially in their hands. So when we came close to the monument, our Zil slowed and stopped. We were faced with a fait accompli. If I had known Mrs. Mondale had a bad cold I could have argued that she should not be standing in minus 30 degree weather in this open air monument. But she had to go through a ceremony which lasted much longer than it should have outside.

When I talked about ceramic works I could see the eyes of the city officials sort of roll. I was convinced that they were going to show us the ceramics but not the artist. To my pleasure and surprise, we were taken to a six-story building. The Secret Service that was accompanying Mrs. Mondale refused to let her go up the elevator so we walked up the six flights of stairs to the apartment of a very attractive couple with a large brown poodle and a very pretty young daughter, with her little pigtails. They were both ceramicists who had exhibited at the Bienale in Venice. They weren't on our list of local artists. It was the best part of the whole visit. They served cognac and coffee and showed some quite interesting ceramic pieces. The couple would occasionally accept invitations after that but not often. They were pretty cautious about their relations with Westerners.

The high point, of course, was the visit to the basement of the Russian museum where the paintings of Malevich, Kandinsky, Popova, Chagall, Goncharova, etc., all these forbidden artists, were hung one on top of the other on panels. We wandered down narrow corridors between the panels, looking at all these treasures. What was interesting and touching was the knowledge and pleasure with which our guide talked about the paintings and the authors. The museum obviously highly valued its collection of avant garde art, and was just waiting for the day when it could be brought up from the basement -- which happened with "perestroika."

The museum to the great Russian basso, Chaliapin, tells another story of Soviet intolerance. After Chaliapin emigrated to Paris in the 1920s, he became a persona non grata. His secretary, however, remained in Leningrad and looked after Chaliapin's apartment, which contained all his memorabilia. When the secretary died during the blockade, the neighbors went to the Theater Museum, told the officials there that Chaliapin's apartment contained all his costumes and music, and asked what could be done to protect them. The staff of the Theater Museum, who were doubtless on the verge of starvation like the rest of Leningrad, went to the apartment and loaded all the singers' effects on sleds and dragged them across town to their museum. It was only in 1975 that they finally received permission to open a museum dedicated to Chaliapin where all his memorabilia could be shown. When you visited the museum you heard Chaliapin's voice played on his huge, golden Victrola with its funnel speaker.

Q: Did you in this late, late Brezhnev time feel that when you came back to the Soviet Union that there was any change?

BUCHANAN: Yes, there was some physical change. A little better choice of clothes. Some of the things in the theater were perhaps a little more daring. But the difference between 1973 and 1977 was not very great. There were the same smells. The same old ladies were breaking up the ice. No, not a great deal of change, and in some ways, the atmosphere was more depressing. With the negotiations over SALT and the meeting between Brezhnev and Carter in Vienna, there was some improvement in our bilateral relations, but then came Afghanistan and our relations went rapidly downhill.

On the business front, however, there was some progress. The Swedes built a huge hotel, the "Prebaltiskaya" on Vasiliyev island, in the area where Romanov was rumored to have his mistress. And business tycoons like Armin Hammer, were able to exploit their long-standing relations with the USSR, going in his case back to the time when he met Lenin, to negotiate

profitable contracts. Ever the shrewd entrepreneur, Hammer arranged to exchange a not very good Goya painting, since the Hermitage had none at the time, for a more valuable Malevich. One of his big projects, with which I became involved, consisted of exchanging potash fertilizer from mines, which I had visited south of Murmansk, for urea, which he imported from Florida. When I decided to visit the huge warehouse, which Hammer was building in Ventspils, Latvia, I do not believe that I knew about the poor state of morale on the part of the young, American construction crew. I quickly learned, however, that the local police were harassing the Americans when they tried to meet Latvian girls. I told the local political boss at the warehouse that the men were simple Joes, who had been there a long time and needed a bit of recreation, and he seemed to understand. In fact, one of the men eventually married the girl whom he had been dating, who was perhaps unjustly described as a prostitute. We failed to discourage him.

My meeting in Ventspils was discussed in a two-part article entitled “the Mask” which appeared in Leningradskaya Pravda. The article purported to be an expose of our consulate as a nest of spies. The official in Ventspils was alleged to have protested over my effort to browbeat him, to facilitate spy activity on the part of the local American workers. A close reading of the article made it clear, it seemed to me, that the real target of the article was not our consulate but Soviet scientists, notably nuclear scientists, who were being warned to stay away from the Americans.

I was also accused in this article of trying to bring in Zionist propaganda. At issue was a Jewish student at Leningrad University, who had had most of her personal books confiscated, including numerous books on Jewish history. I had protested to the authorities that she had come to Leningrad as an American student, who had a perfect right to keep books for her personal use. It was not like the Jewish visitors who came to the USSR with quantities of Jewish literature for distribution to the Jewish dissidents. If the Soviets had really wanted to discredit me as a spy, they could have made a much stronger case. Their purpose rather was to warn Soviet citizens against having too close relations with the consulate.

I am afraid that the Soviets were not the only ones who became paranoid in Russia. It was a bit of a professional disease among old Soviet hands, as I will illustrate. I developed a hobby in Leningrad of looking for the properties that our former ministers and ambassadors had occupied there before the revolution. Since we had never owned property, each envoy had rented a residence that fitted his pocket book. I spent quite a bit of time at the Saltykov-Schedrin library looking into old maps and Baedekers to locate the addresses of the American chiefs of mission, and into old city maps to find the streets. Since both the names and the numbers of the streets had changed at least twice, this was quite an enterprise. At first they were very cooperative and prompt in the library, bringing me old books from 1813, containing maps. But when I went back to ask to see the same books, they seemed to take hours to find them. I suspect that certain people were convinced that I must be leaving messages in the books, using them as a sort of “drop,” and they were frustrated searching for the evidence. In any event, I worked late one weekend when the temperature outside was minus 42-45 degrees. I was driving myself, wearing an expensive mink fur hat to keep warm. When I came out of the library late in the evening, there was no sign of my hat. Since this was a time of considerable harassment, I concluded that the KGB wished to pass me a message not to play games in the library. So I made quite a stink, carrying my protest even to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. The Soviets apparently decided eventually to get Buchanan off their back, and several months later I was presented with a new

mink fur hat, better than the one I lost.

I came away with a new hat, but a bad conscience. In the meantime I had visited the library wearing another fur hat, but instead of giving it to the cloakroom on the left, I handed it to the old “dezhurnaya” in the cloakroom on the right. I told him that I expected to find my hat when I came out, telling him what had happened before. He was shocked, asked where I had left the hat, and told me that I should never leave things with the young dezhurnaya across the way, implying clearly that nothing was safe over there. I concluded that probably someone saw my warm hat on that very cold evening and made a deal, perhaps for a bottle of vodka. Given the story from Moscow of the guests who lost their fur coats at a Western Embassy reception, I should not have been surprised, or so quick to blame the goons we loved to hate.

Q: You left there in the summer of 1980. By the end of the 80s the Soviet Union was in the process of dissolving. What did you think about whither the Soviet Union at the time you left?

BUCHANAN: At the time I left I was quite disturbed about the thrust of our policy. I thought it had gotten too negative and shortsighted. I wrote a very long two-part cable regarding our policy toward the USSR as I had watched it evolve over the years. Marshall Shulman, who was then I recall Under Secretary for Political Affairs, described my cable as “sort of useful,” obviously concerned by its implied criticism of administration policy.

Q: The Carter Administration had gone in with great ideas of how sweetness and light would open up the Soviets and then had been hit in the face and it was almost like a lover rejected and turned things around too far.

BUCHANAN : Let’s see, when did I send that? Yes, it was before I left Leningrad because my deputy had to finish getting it out after I had already left.

In any case, many people liked it and my neighbor, Chalmer Roberts of the *Washington Post*, somehow heard about it and said I should write it up. In any case, I ended up writing an article for *Foreign Policy* called “The Real Russia,” (which was not my title and one I didn’t like), which came out in the spring of 1982.

I argued in the article that “detente” was a more subversive policy against the Soviets than a crude hard line. I wrote at the time out of concern that an ideologue like Romanov might come to power, who would seize on a hard-line American policy as justification for his own internal crackdown. In the longer term, I did postulate that reform might come to Russia, as it had historically, not as the result of any mass movement but as the result of the efforts of a reforming Tsar. But I certainly did not anticipate in the article that this reforming Tsar would come so soon, in the form of Gorbachev. It was Gorbachev’s ill-conceived program for reforming a system, which he understood was increasingly unable to compete on the world scale, that destroyed the Soviet system. Reagan’s military buildup did not bring down the Soviet Union, but it was seen by Gorbachev, I believe, as “objectively” helpful to his efforts to argue with his hardliners that the USSR could not compete with the US and required a quite different approach in Central Europe. Gorbachev apparently hoped to persuade the West that “We are no devils bent on aggression, but a civilized state with which you can negotiate in safety.” Shevardnadze claimed

to have understood that the policies of concession and perestroika would lead to the unraveling of the Soviet empire. But Gorbachev apparently dreamed, like Khrushchev before him, that he could reform the Communist Party and revitalize the USSR and its alliance system, without fatally undermining the whole communist structure. History can only bless him for his huge miscalculation.

If I was unhappy about the trend of our policy toward Russia, I was equally unhappy with the trend in the Foreign Service itself. It no longer seemed the career service that I had been so proud to serve. I was admittedly influenced in my feeling by a nasty personnel quarrel at the consulate. Our GSO had organized a vendetta against the Administrative Officer, dividing the consulate into factions. In an earlier era, I would have sent the couple home, when it was clear that they would not control their feelings. But I was concerned that defending myself against a grievance suit from a minority woman would lead to endless litigation, and a drain on my time and energy. I should have simply soldiered on, knocking heads together, and forcing people to behave civilly to each other. Unwisely, I informed the EUR Executive Director, who visited Leningrad, of the problem. He concluded after talking to the parties that the GSO should be moved to other work. I was pleased to use her as an economist, but this required permission from the Director General. I accordingly “made waves,” reflecting on my ability to manage personnel. The next thing I knew, the Director of Personnel, Bob Brewster, announced that he was coming to Leningrad on Sunday. Saturday night I got a call from the airport where Brewster was mad as a hatter because he had not been met. At the time I was giving a reception to which he refused to come. I showed him the incoming cable proving that it was his mistake, but he never had the manners or courage to apologize. If Brewster had had Eastern European experience, he would have known that there were always morale problems, particularly with non-Russian speaking members of the staff, and I had acquired a particularly cantankerous lady in place of her delightful predecessor. This was further proof to him that something was wrong. He could not understand how this could be, since he acknowledged that Nancy and I apparently went out of our way to do things for the staff. In my perhaps glamorized memory of the old Foreign Service in Moscow, officers did their duty without whining and complaining.

John Ausland, the former DCM in Norway, had tried to persuade me that I should have retired many years earlier, that I would quickly earn more in retirement than I was working. The fact that I had been frozen at the Class I level for years made the idea of retirement even more attractive. That, and an idea I had to write the history of the American diplomats and residents of St. Petersburg before the revolution. So when it was clear that there were no posts opening up in the foreseeable future, I applied for retirement in June 1981. At the time, I was doing research on Soviet policy in Africa at the National Defense University. In retrospect, I made a mistake. Not only was the salary ceiling broken shortly after my retirement, which would have helped my pension, but I was not really ready to retire. Impatience has always been a failing. That summer after retirement I got a message, while in Europe, asking if I wished to do some work on what they called Soviet “active measures” in Africa for INR. Active measures means political warfare. As a result, for several years, I did studies for INR, which were always very highly classified because they were based usually on CIA reporting of what the Soviets were doing in the way of political warfare in Africa. After several studies of Soviet behavior in various African states, I undertook to analyze the 60 or so Soviet officials, who had been sent as Ambassadors to Africa. What was their background? Why were they selected? How many of them were Communist

Party officials in disgrace? The assignment of the number two in the KGB to Ouagadougou, for example, was hardly a promotion. Some Soviets were clearly Africanists in their Soviet foreign service, but others were clearly in political trouble. Certain key posts...Ethiopia, perhaps Algeria and Angola were reserved for trusted Party officials, usually with Central Committee status. This work as a WAE (when actually employed) kept up my security clearance and involved me, at least indirectly, in Soviet affairs.

I became more directly involved with Soviet affairs in 1986, outside the INR context. You will recall the flap over the Marine guard, Sergeant Lonetree, who supposedly allowed the KGB in Moscow to enter our Chancery building. This issue contributed to the decision to get rid of all our Soviet employees. Gene Boster, an old Moscow hand, and I were brought back to assess the potential damage of this suspected security leak. We read files for three months to determine what the Soviets might have read if they had had entry to our files, and finally we were sent to Moscow, and in my case on to Leningrad, to make the same assessment there with the Embassy and consulate files. We concluded that the worst damage would have been what they might have overheard if they had managed to put a bug in the secure "box." But the more that I looked at the likelihood that the KGB actually entered the Chancery, the more unlikely it seemed. I tended to agree with the analysis of some retired CIA "beltway bandits," who had briefed us before our departure, that the KGB would have needed to neutralize probably three, not two guards, to be sure they could enter without being caught. Of all the hours that Lonetree was on duty with his suspected accomplice, they were only together on duty a total of 8 hours. Burned by the Walker case, Naval Intelligence was apparently just too eager to demonstrate that it was "vigilant" and eventually concluded that no entry had taken place. Their mistake bought me a new Honda and a trip to Moscow, so I could not complain.

JANE MILLER FLOYD
Exhibit Guide, USIA
Moscow (1977)

Intern, Soviet Desk
Washington, DC (1979-1980)

Rotational Officer
Moscow (1980-1982)

Jane Miller Floyd was born in Washington in 1954. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Washington. She joined the Foreign Service in 1980. Her career included positions in the Former Soviet Union and Moscow. Mrs. Floyd was interviewed on December 6, 2004 by Charles S. Kennedy

Q: Did you have any idea what you were going to do with all of this?

FLOYD: Yes and no. I did not know probably until graduation whether it was going to be in government or in the commercial sphere. Finished up quickly so that I could take a job with the

United States Information Agency.

Q: You were there for three years, right?

FLOYD: Three and a half. Took a job with the United States Information Agency as an exhibit guide, again going back to the former Soviet Union.

Q: You did this when?

FLOYD: Most of 77.

Q: How did that prepare you for this?

FLOYD: They bring you to Washington for two weeks and some of it is language preparation, depending on what the exhibit is on. Part of it is the substance of what you are going to do. The exhibit I was on was about American photography, so they took us up to New York and took us to the International Museum of Photography and we had professional photographers along with us. We went to their studios to see their work.

Q: Well I must say, I can't think of a more fascinating thing to get involved.

FLOYD: I think the U.S. government was wise for its own internal purposes. At the time, there was no Peace Corps operation in the former Soviet Union, but the exhibits became a very fertile breeding ground for future diplomats, just as a lot of Africanists have some experience with Peace Corps, or Latin America folks. It is statistically improbable the number of folks that came out of exhibits and went into the Foreign Service.

Q: Where did the exhibit go and what was your impression of some of the areas?

FLOYD: We went to three cities. Ufa, which is out in the Ural Mountains.

Q: What's the name?

FLOYD: U-F-A, ufa. Which we often joked that "Ufa was too far."

Q: Did it stand for something?

FLOYD: No, that's the name. Then we went to Novosibirsk, which means new Siberia, which is out in the middle of Siberia. And then our last city was Moscow.

Q: What was some of your experiences in doing this? I would imagine that this would really attract an awful lot of people.

FLOYD: We had about twelve to fifteen thousand visitors a day, which was a major affront to your olfactory senses, but also just fascinating to see the curiosity of these folks. The actual photography equipment, the photographs, were a tool. We could have had rocks. I think the real

interest was in actually seeing Americans. Had incredible incidences of where – when we were in Ufa you would have people come up and say thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. And it turned out that what they wanted to thank you for was that their family had survived on American spam through World War II.

As in any country, it was very interesting to get outside of the capital. Ufa is a reasonably good sized regional city. About four-hundred thousand people. But so distant from Moscow. There were any number of people who had never seen a real live American before. And the questions were – it was amazing how many of the questions were about prices. How much does bread cost? How much does a car cost? And just trying to convey to people the diversity of America, that I can't tell you how much a loaf of bread costs. Are we talking Wonder bread or gourmet wheat tops? Because for them, whether it was in Moscow or in Madagan, there were three different kinds of bread, and they were the same prices, regardless of where.

Q: I can remember when I was in Belgrade passing on to my Soviet colleagues elderly Sears and Roebucks catalogues. Well they just thought this was the greatest thing in the world.

FLOYD: Years later, when we were living in Siberia doing arms control, we had Sears and Penney catalogues, that's the way we kept the kids clothed. And one of the things people wanted to know was who could order from that catalog. There was a presumption that it was because I was a government employee that I had so much variety. And trying to tell them that anybody who had money, was one of those little things that just didn't fit in their gear case.

Q: Did you find that you were – particularly after hours – were the KGB types running herd on you and all? Or were there just too many of you?

FLOYD: Oh, they ran herd on us. And you could so clearly figure out who they were because the KGB had to import them to take care of us. They too were strangers. And the people you would meet locally would say "Who's that? He must be with you." "Yeah, he's with me, but he's not with us." So they did a very thorough job of following us. The concern was clearly always more for any Russian that would be prepared to talk to you. Worst case scenario for us was that we would be on the next plane out.

Q: How about the older generation? Did you find that there was a lot of interest there, or was it mainly younger people?

FLOYD: There were different interests. The younger people, for better or for worse, wanted something. They wanted your jeans, they wanted your magazines, they wanted something. The older generation really wanted to talk and in many ways were more interesting because they were more philosophical.

Q: This was the period of détente and you mentioned the Soyuz mission, the American-Soviet joint mission and all that. I mean it was a period of some optimism, I think. Were you picking this up from the Soviet people?

FLOYD: They were so glad to have us around. They loved the contact with the outside world.

They would search out any example of previous contact. They loved it.

Q: Did you get a chance to get out and around at all?

FLOYD: While the exhibit shipped from one city to the next, because we only had single entry visas, we had to remain within the former Soviet Union, and it gave us a chance to play tourist. Between Ufa and Novosibirsk, I went back to Leningrad, went off to Estonia and then took the trans-Siberian railroad from Moscow to Novosibirsk.

Q: Despite the difficulties and all, were you sort of falling in love with the Soviet studies and . . .

FLOYD: Oh sure. Oh absolutely.

Q: I probably shouldn't use the term Soviet anymore, because it was Russian.

FLOYD: Yes and no. One of the most fascinating parts about it is those people who grew up only knowing Soviet-ness. And that wasn't all bad, the commonality, the pride – coming out of World War II – pride in the space program. Pride in the ability to – by hook or crook, it wasn't all voluntary – unite a country as large as the former Soviet Union. So I would decline to say that Soviet is an inappropriate or no-longer-in-use adjective. It has its own place in history.

Q: As I'm doing this oral history program, I started out in the 80s and all, and we're getting close to the point where I'll have to ask somebody "Could you explain what you mean by Soviet?"

FLOYD: Well to a certain degree you can just look at the kernels of the discussion between "Is it Saint Petersburg or Leningrad?"

Q: Did you get any feel at that time for the ethnic differences. Did you get a feel for the differences?

FLOYD: In any economy of scarcity, which is what the Soviet Union was, you always look for somebody to blame, somebody to be beneath you. And in the former Soviet Union, it was definitely their Central Asian colleagues, who they called yellow and who they hated, beat up, looked down on. They wanted to compare it to our black ethnic issues at the time, but it was so much more visceral. With rare exception, I believe there are probably few Americans who would characterize our ethnic minorities using animal pronouns or animal allusions, but that . . .

Q: Black monkeys or something.

FLOYD: It's rare. You could find somebody.

Q: I got this from Ethiopian students who came out of Bulgaria in the 60s who were called (Bulgarian term), black monkeys.

FLOYD: Which is not to say that we didn't and don't have our issues, which is not to say that

we've got it down perfectly, but it is the rare . . . The worst American racist is going to tell you about minorities' superior sports ability or they're not as smart or shouldn't get into university, but there's still a human equivalency. The Soviets' jokes, the allusions, were definitely to the animal kingdom.

Q: Of course the government wasn't really making much effort, as we've made a lot of effort.

FLOYD: The Soviet Government did try to use ethnicity too. They preserved symbols of ethnic identity and ethnic pride. Would have Uzbek caps at the central exhibit location where they would allow Uzbek caps to be sold in markets, but very falsely. We always used to think it was sort of like Disneyland. The Russian word is "pokazuka."

Q: Did you get any feel for the American foreign policy or Foreign Service apparatus?

FLOYD: Less so in Ufa and Novosibirsk, but when we got to Moscow and we were in contact with the embassy - the embassy people came out to the exhibit, they invited us to the embassy for events. I would say that was my first robust exposure to the day to day life of diplomats. And I came back and took the Foreign Service exam.

Q: You examined it and found it pleasing?

FLOYD: Absolutely. Just the thought that the U.S. government would pay me to go and do stuff that as a student I had paid for myself was very attractive.

Q: I know. I was one of those people who was giving the exam around that time. We tried to make it nice.

FLOYD: It was funny because I took that oral exam in the summer of 79, the summer between my two years in graduate school. And I was working as an intern on the Soviet desk at the State Department. So all my colleagues had talked to me and tried to prep me for this, and when I came back and had to tell them that I had failed, I was disappointed, and so were they. But I had another candidacy running and was successful in that one.

Q: When you were interning on the Soviet desk, what sort of things were you handling?

FLOYD: I worked in the exchanges office and dealt with visa matters for Soviets coming to the United States as exchange students.

Q: What was the feeling about – I've heard people that were involved with that say that the Soviets were sending 40 year old scientists to the United States and we were sending Byzantine scholars to the Soviet Union. They were interested in science and we were interested in orthography or something like that. But was there a sort of general feeling of what the hell?

FLOYD: Yes. Exactly. Because the scientists did not spend all day in the lab. Had to go to Giant at some point to realize that food was available and that anybody could walk into the store. And that the American orthographer also sat around and drank tea with people talking about their

lives. It's one of the reasons that those things came under the category of cultural exchange. If one looked at it narrowly in terms of the development of specific subject matter expertise, probably the Soviets got more than we did. But the collapse of the Berlin Wall would indicate that we actually won that one.

Q: Yeah. I mean, as an exchange program over all, it has been such a tremendous success and I think it is not given the credit that it should be by the powers that be.

FLOYD: I suspect that it will get more attention as we look ahead to what is likely to be our needed course of action in dealing with other worlds and cultures that have been not part of our day to day operations, specifically the Arabic and Islamic world. We need the same type of long term commitment, the same strategic view to be able to say not how many scientists versus how many literature professors we exchange. It's going to take that degree of time to appreciate the complexity and the resources.

Q: Were you pretty well concentrated on the Soviet thing or were you trying to get some experience outside of the Soviet Union?

FLOYD: Oh, I was more than happy to explore that. However, the Soviet desk called me the day after I told them that I had made it into an A-100 class and said "Do you want to go to Moscow?" I said yes. And even though Moscow did not appear on the open assignments bid list – surprise - and even though they did not like sending unmarried officers to Moscow, they didn't really like sending first tour officers to Moscow, I was in Moscow by June.

Q: Did you have a mentor or a couple of mentors?

FLOYD: Absolutely.

Q: Who were they?

FLOYD: Jack Matlock, Sherrod McCall, more recently John Tefft.

Q: How did you find the A-100 course?

FLOYD: I don't know whether I was simply so excited finally to be in the Foreign Service or what. There was way too much time at old FSI sitting and listening to people talk and still at that time the delightful multi-hour discussion of when you bend the corner of your business card as to whether or not you have actually seen somebody or if you just left it at their calling card. Some of the political stuff was considerably overblown for a changing diplomatic world.

Q: I have to say that I had all that and I came in in 55. And I don't think we ever paid much attention to the card business, except if you were there you tried to see everybody, which wasn't a bad idea.

FLOYD: I never served in Paris or Rome or London or Brussels or someplace where that might have been the standard.

Q: To me it was something kind of funny.

FLOYD: In Moscow it was much more important that your card be bilingual than anything else.

Q: You went to Moscow and you were there from when to when?

FLOYD: First time was 80 to 82, as a Foreign Service officer, which was already my third time.

Q: In Moscow, this was after the Afghan invasion in 79.

FLOYD: This was the summer that we didn't show up at the Olympics.

Q: So what was the situation when you got there?

FLOYD: We were not well liked. The Olympics was a really strange set up. There was some advantage to being a junior officer because the embassy was under instructions to not provide senior level representation at events, which was just fine for the junior officers. It was amazing, the Soviet Government's ability to control its population and the general functioning of the capital city. Sending kids and criminals and drunks out of the city. In the case of drunks and criminals, they took them out about a hundred miles and dumped them, figuring that by the time they walked back, the Olympics would be over.

Q: Were you all, you know, finding out where they went and reporting on that?

FLOYD: That it happened. We didn't want to share that experience.

Q: What type of job did you have? Did you have a multitude of jobs?

FLOYD: Yes. I was a junior officer rotational position. I served in the consular section, in American citizen services, doing a lot of work involving dead Americans, lost or hurt Americans – because Americans certainly still came to the Olympics. Also did two curious other programs. There were two Soviet medical programs, one dealing with retinitis pigmentosa the other one dealing with spinal cord injuries, in which the Soviets were well ahead of us. And we had many Americans who wanted to take advantage of that. The other group of people I worked with was an office at the Department of Justice that looked for war criminals.

Q: On the Americans and the people that dropped dead or had problems, how were the Soviets? I mean the Soviets were pretty pissed.

FLOYD: I don't think any amount of Soviet-ism would ever be able to totally conquer Russian hospitality. When Americans died in the former Soviet Union, the government had a very efficient system. They knew our requirements in terms of documentation. The Americans who came to the Soviet Union for medical treatment obviously gave them a bit of a propaganda boost, gave them some money, so they were treated reasonably well. We always had to warn people who came for such treatment that Soviet medical facilities did not provide adequate support to

patients. That you could not come and be admitted and left alone. You were going to need somebody to feed you and bathe you. The nursing care was not that present. Even despite the American boycott of the Olympics, on a person to person, level the Soviets greeted any guest fairly well.

Q: How did you find the embassy, your working environment and all, when you first got there?

FLOYD: During the early 80s, there was still enough of a siege mentality that it was a very close knit group of folks. Because people could not work on the economy, spouses were all throughout the embassy and that had the great advantage of providing immediate cross-cutting of section isolation. You may have a boss, but his wife works in GSO or someplace so that there was good circulation. This was still the era when they would turn off the hot water for a month in the summer and we would have shower parties because different people at different times were without hot water. So you would quite casually bop over to somebody else's apartment with your towel because they had hot water and you didn't. I went from the consular section to working as the ambassador's staff aide and therefore came into contact with everybody over all sorts of things.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

FLOYD: Jack Matlock was the charge for the majority of my time as the staff assistant. Ambassador Tom Watson was confirmed and came into country towards the end of that.

Q: How did you find Ambassador Watson?

FLOYD: Very interesting character, very savvy person. Willing to listen and follow suggestions from his staff. Only ever once saw him get excited and that was when his and America's humanity was challenged by a not very pleasant individual who we all had to deal with anyway. And he dealt with him as many of us would have wished to have dealt with him ourselves.

Q: Who was that?

FLOYD: An American. A person by the name of Abe Stolar who had gone to the former Soviet Union in the 1930s, had been a bit of a Tokyo Rose on Radio Moscow. He retained his American citizenship, passed it along to his children, and primarily used it to come to diplomatic flea markets. But was quite happy to otherwise bash the United States.

Q: I can't remember where – was it Sergeant Lake?

FLOYD: Lonetree.

Q: Had that experience happened?

FLOYD: Later.

Q: So it wasn't during that period. So the embassy was able to use Foreign Service nationals?

FLOYD: Oh, by the truckload.

Q: How did one deal with it? I mean the security requirements?

FLOYD: You dealt with them as humans, minimizing social contact, focus on day-to-day operations and assume that anything and everything that you told them was recorded.

Q: Well at a certain point one makes the calculation of “what the hell difference does it make?”

FLOYD: Exactly. If you are talking to the driver who takes you to the MFA for a meeting, you just tell him when and where you need to be, you don't discuss what your talking points are going to be with the driver. When you need opera tickets, you go get them from an FSN. Does that mean that the FSN knows you are going to be going to the opera? Yes. So. It was a balancing act, particularly for those like the consular section or GSO who had a lot of FSN assistance. You became conscious of the limits to your relationship. And in subsequent years when you dealt with more normal FSN relationships, either in other countries or as the Soviet Union evolved, you recognized the falseness, the strained nature of it.

Q: Were there any demonstrations during this period you were there?

FLOYD: I have difficulty saying whether it was during this tour or other tours, but there were always periodically organized demonstrations against the United States. I've got to believe that there was a demonstration sometime that summer over the American boycott of the Olympics. I can't put my finger on one. I can't say how many. But every so often you would have a group of 30 or 40 jump off of a government bus in front of the embassy, do their thing, have the American media show up, and they'd get back on the bus and go their way.

Q: Did you find - both by the time you were on the desk and when you went out to Moscow - any feeling one way or the other about our boycotting the Olympics because of the Afghan business?

FLOYD: Depended whether you talked to someone officially or . . .

Q: I'm thinking of informally, within the embassy.

FLOYD: I think the greatest regret that people voiced was that the U.S. Government enforced the boycott, meaning what the government chose to do was the government's business, but to impose that political will on athletes – it was that connection. Not that the U.S. Government was opposed to the invasion of Afghanistan. That was understood. That was no problem. The greatest hostility came from the Americans who came and the rare American athlete who remembered his British grandmother and participated on the British team.

Q: Well looking at it, it probably wasn't one of our greater moments.

FLOYD: Most Russians are amazingly apolitical. Whether it has been beaten into them or scared out of them, I don't know. But they are much more interested in the day-to-day survival issues.

Q: Was there a change in political life, living conditions and all, between the time you were with USIA and when you went back?

FLOYD: Clearly my living conditions were a totally different order of magnitude, going from Soviet hotels to embassy housing was amazing. The Russian difference was less palpable. They were going through their own bit of questioning. Brezhnev's health was in decline. It was the time of stagnations to a great extent.

Q: Did you have much contact, going over to the ministry of foreign affairs? Did you get much contact, as a junior officer, with the Soviet foreign affairs apparatus?

FLOYD: Yes. Clearly the Consular Administration purely for my work. But as the ambassador's staff assistant, I would go with him for some of his meetings. As the protocol assistant, would go for formal diplomatic document exchanges.

Q: How did you find Jack Matlock? I knew him before and . . .

FLOYD: He had been director of the Soviet desk when I was an intern, and then was out there as the charge. For any number of reasons, probably many of which I never knew and wouldn't understand, we didn't have an ambassador for a significant amount of time in that period and he was there as the charge.

Q: Were there any major incidents when you were in Moscow during this time? Between the United States and the Soviet Union?

FLOYD: KL 007 was later. Invasion of Afghanistan was before I got there.

Q: Was there any feeling at the time you were there that Afghanistan was going to be firmly in the Soviet camp, or was there a feeling that maybe things aren't going so well for the Soviets?

FLOYD: Remember this was very, very early days. So officially it was their right to do, that if they had been invited in, they were helping, all of that line. For the general population the only concern was, "Don't send my son."

Q: Was the embassy, Tom Watson, Matlock and all, was there talk about this aging gerontocracy?

FLOYD: Oh constantly. We quickly went from Brezhnev to Chernenko to Andropov. It became the "who died today?" period. It was clear, from looking at May Day or Revolution Day line ups on the mausoleum, these guys were decrepit.

Q: There must have been a lot of speculation of who was going to come out on top in the long run?

FLOYD: Oh, absolutely. Again, as it panned out, there weren't many options out there. The

Central Committee of the Communist Party was very much internally controlled. This was not a “riotous people in the street” turnover.

Q: You said you got assigned there despite the concerns about single officers, women officers, very junior officers. Did you have any attempts at compromise or difficulty because you fit into all three categories?

FLOYD: Whether through proper maintenance of security standards or naiveté, it never got far enough that I would identify it as such.

Q: Naiveté really is very useful many times.

FLOYD: If you went to a reception and the American jazz quartet was there and their local escort said “Well gee, we are having an after party, why don’t you come and join us?” You made sure that it was a group thing. When you got the note that said “Meet me out back,” you gave it to the RSO. I suspect that some of these might have been approaches that would have led down that path, but you just don’t start and you don’t get in trouble. It tends to be after a couple of feeders, after a couple of lures. The first approach usually isn’t the killer.

Q: How are living conditions?

FLOYD: I started out living in a one bedroom apartment off campus, which also had twelve or fifteen other American diplomats there, recently renovated by some Austrians. Very pleasant. Commute was okay because the Soviets had not yet discovered private vehicle ownership, so we were pretty much the only cars on the road. When I became the ambassador’s staff aide, they moved me into Spaso House, the ambassador’s residence. Because Jack Matlock was only the charge, he chose not to live in the ambassador’s residence, so it was me and an ancient Chinese butler who were the only ones living in this mansion, which was a bit spooky. But the ambassador’s cook loved me. So when I would come home late, even though I had my own kitchen, there would usually be dinner waiting for me. That was very pleasant.

We didn’t let go of the ambassador’s staff because you still needed to dust for receptions. So they just also dusted my apartment. That was pleasant enough. When I rotated out of that position to the political section, I went back out to an off campus apartment in an older building. It was a little more awkward. The Soviet apartments usually were, because we would take one or two of them and your kitchen would be at one end and your dining room at the other. No one designed them. You took what you could get.

Q: When you were in the political section, what piece of the pie were you given?

FLOYD: I did protocol and internal political reporting.

Q: What sort of things were we looking at internal-wise?

FLOYD: Reaction to Afghanistan. Did a lot of the biographic who’s in, who’s out, regional party secretaries.

Q: Was Gorbachev a name at that time?

FLOYD: No. Not in the early 80s. Might have been to somebody in the central committee, but it was not on the embassy's radar. Yeltsin was for his role in Moscow.

Q: How was Yeltsin perceived at that time?

FLOYD: My memory capacity is not yet honed enough to tell you when it was then, when it was later, and when it is now. My memories of Yeltsin's image were simply as an efficient administrator who was building like mad in Moscow.

Q: One of the greatest, I won't call it an intelligence blunder, but here we had the best and the brightest concentrated and looking at the Soviet Union and yet they weren't predicting the collapse? Were you part of the looking? Were we seeing what we thought we should see?

FLOYD: I would have told you that the Soviet Union was headed for more internal independence. That the republics would be able to have more control, particularly over their economy. That the centralized nature of planning was in collapse. I would never, ever had predicted that it would literally fall into pieces. The Ukrainians today are challenged today by the question whether they can make it in an international economy dominated by globalization and competition. It was no easier at that point, and we are talking about the early 80s, we're talking before glasnost.

Q: How was your Russian?

FLOYD: I got up to 4+/4.

Q: So basically you were very comfortable.

FLOYD: Yes. I can do pretty much anything in Russian I can do in English. I can't discuss quantum physics in either.

Q: You were there until 85?

FLOYD: And then I went back to the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you feel that by this time you were part of the Eastern European, particularly Soviet, clique?

FLOYD: Oh absolutely. To the extent that when I went back to the former Soviet Union - so much for open assignments - I put in one bid on my bid list. It was out of cone and out of grade, and I got it.

Q: What was that?

FLOYD: GSO in Leningrad.

Q: GSO in the Soviet Union?

FLOYD: Yes. The US Navy had assigned my husband back to the Naval Support Unit and he was sent to Leningrad. And I said if you don't send me and let me work, I will go on leave without pay.

Q: Were you getting a feeling by this time that there was a change in the Soviet hands? I mean we had had this thing – goes back to George Kennan, Chip Bohlen, Tommy Thompson and all that. I mean this is an elite of an elite.

FLOYD: I remember that Ambassador Bohlen's daughter worked with me on the Soviet desk. Avis was in multilateral affairs. So there is a certain passing from generation to generation.

Q: I'm interviewing Avis. I've been doing that. I'm going back to her I think it's next week.

FLOYD: There was not so much a change, but I would just say it was more preparation of the next generation. There were certainly some folks – I point to Sherrod McCall – as a tremendous example of someone who was conscious of needing to develop the next generation of American diplomats and Soviet experts.

Q: Did you feel yourself part of an elite?

FLOYD: The Soviet desk, the Soviet specialists in the State Department, particularly back then, were into and of themselves. May have been technically part of the European bureau, but couldn't have convinced them of that.

Q: You all knew each other. Looking at this later, was there almost too much group think, do you think? I keep asking questions of people who served in the Soviet Union trying to unwrap the puzzle, what happened that we didn't see the collapse of the authority there?

FLOYD: I think you would probably have better luck if you talked to a sociologist, not even a political scientist. Humans tend to identify patterns in predictability. The type of break that happened in part was only possible in a country like the Soviet Union because the change was not societal, it was not that deep. When you've got one, two, three, four, five percent in the party who constitute the ruling class, you really only have to convince them. And they were not the ones that were immediately accessible. And I would suggest they didn't know themselves exactly where they were taking this.

Q: Oh quite obviously Gorbachev had no conception of what he would bring about.

FLOYD: And it was the strangest little things that convinced me that something was really going to happen. When we left Leningrad in 87, we had a going away party. During my tour there, we had gone through the tit for tat of kicking Russian diplomats out of the UN and they kicked some of our guys out and then they ended up pulling all of the FSNs. So as the GSO I had learned to

do a whole bunch of new things I never thought I was going to have to do and came in contact with a lot more Soviet officials than normally was the case. Meaning we had to deliver our own invitations, so ran into an awful lot of door keepers. We had to go pick up our own shipments. So ran into customs officials and port officials. And when we left, the consul general had a farewell reception and we sent out invitations to all the officials we came into contact with. And they showed up, and they showed up with spouses. It was the first time that I knew of that Soviet officials had been able to make a social decision based entirely on their own concerns. It was so strange to see, primarily wives, coming out of the woodwork, and to see a real cross section, a real mix, of Soviet officials. They usually came in blocks. It was the first time I ever saw them act as individuals, not on instructions. They were allowed to engage in normal human relations without direction, and that was revolutionary.

WILLIAM P. KIEHL
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1977-1978)

Cultural Affairs Officer, Exhibits
Moscow (1978-1979)

Press Officer
Moscow (1979-1980)

Soviet Union Desk Office
Washington, DC (1980-1982)

William P. Kiehl was born in Pennsylvania in 1945. He received a BS from the University of Scranton in 1967 and an MA from the University of Virginia in 1970. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he was posted in Belgrade, Zagreb, Colombo, Moscow, Prague, Helsinki, London and Bangkok. Mr. Kiehl was interviewed in 2003 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: So I think this is a good place to stop. Where did you go in '77?

KIEHL: Where did I go in '77? If you remember, Jock Shirley always promised me Moscow. So I went back for a year of Russian language training.

Q: All right, we'll pick that up at that point then.

Q: Today is the fifteenth of December, 2003. Bill, where'd you take Russian language training?

KIEHL: I returned to Washington and started at the Foreign Service Institute, which was then over in Rosslyn, at what we used to call the "high-rise slum." I think it was 12 to 15 stories, but it was a pretty run-down building, one of the legacies of the Pomponio brothers, who developed that whole area. Of course, FSI (Foreign Service Institute) at that time, I don't think it was even

contemplating a move, so people were quite content to be there.

Q: You did this from when to when?

KIEHL: Let's see. I came back in June of '77, so I started in August. I must have had home leave, although it's one of those home leaves I don't recall, but in 1977, in August, we started language class. We were in temporary lodging in Washington because we came back with the intention of buying a place to live, since it had been quite some time (six years) since we had been here.

I remember splitting my first couple of weeks between trying to comprehend, re-comprehend, Cyrillic, slightly different Cyrillic from the Serbian, of course, and trying to absorb Russian, and chasing around with real estate agents and looking at houses, most of which were not in our price range, all over the District of Columbia. Why DC? At that time it was an advantage to stay in DC as a Foreign Service officer because as such you weren't subject to DC income tax.

Unfortunately, Jesse Helms put an end to that little perk for the Foreign Service—congressional staff and the military still retain it as far as I know.--, I think back in 1986 or so, or sometime thereafter. We were determined to live in DC. We looked at everything from Logan Circle, north and west basically from there, and ended up getting a place on Connecticut Avenue, a condominium, in the old Harry Truman building at Chesapeake and Connecticut, where Harry Truman lived when he was vice president.

Q: Oh, yeah? Now, you took Serbian, so you would have gotten out in '78, I guess, is that it?

KIEHL: Russian.

Q: I mean Russian.

KIEHL: Sure, it was a 10 month course, with the eclectic Russian teacher, Nina Delacruz, who probably taught more people Russian than everyone else combined.

Q: How did you find the transfer between Russian and Serbian?

KIEHL: Well, Russian is a far more complicated language. Serbian is kind of the country cousin, you might say, to Russian. Russian is much more sophisticated, much richer vocabulary, I suppose because of the influence of literature, and just the large numbers of people, makes for a more complicated language. Serbian was easy. Of course, I was younger when I learned Serbian, although I had studied Russian in college, but it didn't make much of an impact. It was that kind of language study which was in one ear, out the other. So I'd say it was difficult for the first couple of months, to make the transference. One of the problems, particularly in the first couple of months, was the fact that three of us, who all had some Slavic language background, were in class with an officer's wife who had another language background, but it was Chinese. She was native Chinese, so she spoke, or tried to speak, Russian with a Chinese accent, which actually drove us all absolutely crazy, because we didn't know what was what, what was accurate and what wasn't.

One fellow's Polish interfered with his Russian, and for two of us, the Serbian interfered a bit with the Russian, but nothing compared to the Chinese. With some guilt on our part, we got together and went to the linguist and said, "Look, you've got to get that lady out of our class, because we can't handle this. We hear it wrong, pretty consistently, more than we hear it right, so we'll never learn the language." They did jiggle around a bit, and then they jiggled it around to the point where they did something that I don't think they should ever do, and that is to put two married couples together in the same language class. There were four of us, my wife and I and another married couple, were in the class together. Now, we all had some Slavic language background, so there was some rationale for it, but putting two husbands and wives together in the same language class is not a good idea.

Q: You got out of there in when?

KIEHL: I got out in June of '78, and went right out to the Soviet Union, and I was originally going to go out as the Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer to run the speakers program in Russia, but an opportunity came up to do the exhibits, which was an Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer just for exhibits, which meant that you would travel around the country for a year which was a unique opportunity. I was young enough and crazy enough to think it was a good deal. The only thing I said was, "Well, you've got to make some position for my wife, because she can work in Moscow but what's she going to do in the middle of Kazakhstan? So there was a provision figured out for that, she was going to run the library for the exhibit. It was a \$4,000 or \$5,000 library, with three specialists attached to it, and another guide, Russian-speaking American guide, that would be available to specialists who'd come to the exhibit, could be steered in that direction.

Of course the theme of the exhibit was not particularly my favorite, I would have liked it to have been on photography in the USA or even technology for the American home, the themes of the previous two exhibits but that was not to be. It was *Selska Hosaistva v SSha*—"Agriculture USA." [End Side]

KIEHL: As I said, I grew up in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, but my experience with farms mainly was speeding by them on the highway. "Agriculture USA" was a learning experience. I got to learn an awful lot about agriculture in the United States, just by osmosis, if nothing else. Of course, the specialists who came out, there were three agricultural specialists who came out to each city that we traveled were very useful. They were interesting people, they were professors of agriculture and viniculture or animal husbandry or you name it, at various universities around the United States. They were all knowledgeable people and they all had a wealth of information about some aspect of agriculture which you couldn't help but pick up from them.

The exhibit was a real experience, I'm glad that I made that decision to go that route rather than just going to Moscow. So we went out, we had a few days in Moscow to settle all the rigmarole about this and to discover that they hadn't really made a provision for my wife's employment, so I had go into a rather tough negotiation with the public affairs officer at the time, Ray Benson. I remember we were sort of chin to chin, almost, about this, because I felt it was pretty important for my wife to have something meaningful to do for a year and not just sit around in the middle of central Asia. Fortunately, reason prevailed and she was hired and off we went.

We just missed Kiev, the first stop on the exhibit because of the language schedule, and it probably was a good idea we missed it, because two of the exhibit guides were expelled from the country for activities incompatible with their status. In fact, they very well might have done things that were incompatible with their status. I wasn't there at the time so I have no first hand knowledge.

Q: What did you gather? What were they doing that would have been incompatible?

KIEHL: The one fellow was Ukrainian by birth, and he worked for the Voice of America, at one time. He was a very nice guy. I think he was put in a position where his latent nationalism rose to the surface because of what he saw and tales that he heard from people, and the fact that he, as a native speaker of Ukrainian, was a focus for the Ukrainian-speaking nationalists who would come to the exhibit. As a consequence, the intelligence authorities, the KGB, was on his tail all the time, and probably, I would imagine, was trying to get him to do or say something that would require them to expel him. Whether he did or not is, frankly, immaterial. They were bound to get him eventually.

The other guy, I think, was just psychologically unfit to be an exhibit guide. He did some strange things and I think he was just a person who wasn't screened carefully enough for such a high pressure situation.

Q: This period, while you were on this tour, '78 to '79, how would you describe the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States?

KIEHL: At that time, of course, relations were warming. If you recall, there was the Carter-Brezhnev embrace in Vienna, in fact, a kiss on both cheeks, which, however distasteful it was to some people, nevertheless indicated that the Russians and Americans were trying to come to some terms on things. All in all, the overall relationship was on the upswing throughout that entire period, although it wasn't particularly reflected by our work on the exhibit. You have to understand that those exhibits were negotiated with a lot of blood, sweat, and toil over many years. They first of them was the famous Kitchen Debate in '59, the Nixon-Khrushchev Kitchen Debate, and so on. That exhibit had 70 American guides with it. It was only in one city, but it was there, I think, for three or four months.

Then eventually they became traveling exhibits, usually six cities over the course of a year, with about 25 to 30 Russian-speaking American guides and staff, usually one American embassy officer attached to the exhibit as the protocol officer for the exhibit, that was the job I had. There were a couple of exhibit specialists, who actually ran the exhibit, there was an exhibit director, a deputy director, who was usually a pretty good Russian-speaker, who had had previous exhibit experience, a couple of technicians to help, getting the sound system and the lights and the video and all that to work. It was a pretty complicated undertaking, and in fact, in smaller places, where there wasn't a large exhibition hall, the guides, under instruction from these technicians, would build a geodesic dome, a Bucky Fuller geodesic dome, with Mylar fabric over it, and the exhibit would be put into that. It was a pretty complicated technological, or technical, undertaking. These technicians were usually out of the regional exhibits office in Vienna. They

traveled on all the exhibits.

Q: Agriculture, of course, is ...

KIEHL: Culture.

Q: Yes, but it's almost goes to the guts of a country, particularly a country such as the Soviet Union, and they had, apparently, at that time anyway, by all accounts, they had an abysmal delivery system.

KIEHL: Oh, they did. It was a failed system.

Q: It was a system that wasn't working. Did you feel that we were showing people a system that could work, or were we just showing sort of bits of equipment and all that?

KIEHL: Well, that was the whole object, to point out that in a free society and a market economy, a smaller number of people can feed many more people and have a decent standard of living in the process, and everybody benefits by that, as opposed to, of course, the system the Soviet Union had, where everything was a wreck. I think the focus of the exhibit was very much in the vein of the family farm. There were a lot of photographs of family farms, there was a lot of anecdotal information there about family farms, et cetera, when the real success of American agriculture today, of course, are corporate farms, these gigantic things that resemble nothing more than state farms of the old Soviet Union, except that they are privately held rather than state held, and they have a profit motive, and they have an efficiency that the Soviet Union never had.

Anyway, it was the family farm. There were a series of black and white photographs that the exhibit designers loved, but which we felt, and we knew from the Russians who were there, were boring propaganda pictures that were kind of insulting in them. What they were interested in was the tractor and the combine and the color pictures of county fairs and all that sort of thing, because that's something that they didn't have. They had lots of black and white pictures, artsy pictures, I mean, they could produce those themselves, but exhibit designers were rather detached from the reality, they were artists and they wanted their artistic license. We ended up removing a lot of that and changing it to get some more pizzazz in the exhibit, in fact.

These exhibits were monumental undertakings. Even in those days the exhibit cost about \$6 million. It was seen by about a million people over the course of the year, so it's about \$6 a person, to have an experience like that, which was usually a day long experience, from the time they got in line to the time they got home again, and an opportunity to talk to Russian-speaking Americans. For most Russians, outside of large cities, and tourist areas, they never would have such an opportunity. So it was money well spent. It was a way to get into these isolated parts of the former Soviet Union.

Q: What were you getting from the guides and all, the reactions to what we were doing there?

KIEHL: It was fascinating. It was a little bit of everything. You had professional provocateurs sent in by the KGB, obviously, to either create tension in the crowd and to try to make one of the

guides lose their cool so that they could be complained about. You also had all manner of honey-traps and that sort of thing lying in wait in most places ...

Q: You ought to explain what honey trap is.

KIEHL: These are seemingly innocent, beautiful young women, or men, in the case of the girls there, who would essentially give you a come-on, try to ensnare you in some kind of sexual liaison, and then, of course, that would be useful for blackmail purposes, allegedly. So we had to constantly remind the guys, particularly, "Be alert for this kind of thing. Not every innocent-looking Russian who bats her eyes at you is innocent, in fact."

We had no security people with us on the exhibit. That's another interesting aspect of it. There was no regional security officer attached to the exhibit. So we had to basically keep an eye on each other, in a sense, and keep people out of trouble, and of course, all our files were probably gone through every night. So there was no way you could keep even a cryptic note about somebody who, say, wanted to defect, or who wanted to provide some information that would be anything but innocent and put that in a file, or a folder or anything, because you could assume that it would be in the hands of the KGB before morning. If you ever had anything like that, you had to really keep it on your person at all times.

I remember many times I was carrying around notes on my person for a couple of weeks before I could get it out to Moscow, either myself, or to give it to a courier to take back to Moscow for reporting purposes. I did a lot of reporting while I was there, for INR, basically, on everything from the conditions in the marketplace and the prices of goods to acquiring phone books for provincial cities, which were as good as gold because there was no way to get them otherwise, except to physically get one from the kiosk when the five or six copies that were available a month would come out, or to borrow them from somebody, photocopy the entire book, which perhaps wasn't in print for five or 10 years, and then send it back to Moscow and on to INR. Very crude HUMINT (human intelligence), you might say, but it was the only way, because we were the only people who ever traveled to these places.

The first place we went on the exhibit was Tselinograd, in northern Kazakhstan, which of course now, under the new name Astana, is the new capital of Kazakhstan, but in those days it was the Virgin Lands, and it was populated by displaced Ukrainians, a few Russians, lots of Volga Germans, and the indigenous Kazakhs, none of whom liked each other, by the way, or got along very well. They all had their own newspapers and they all went their own ways when the factory whistle blew, but it was a vast steppe of Russia, and there was absolutely nothing to do, but we were plunked down there in this little town, because, for one thing, they had an exhibit hall, and it was the first time we could have an exhibit there, and it was the Virgin Lands, so agriculture was a logical choice. After much negotiation, we managed to get in there. We were the first Americans to spend the night in Tselinograd since, I suppose – actually, for any amount of time, because it only began to be populated about 1954, 1955.

Q: With Khrushchev's Virgin Lands program and all – by that time had it pretty well run its course, I mean as far as not working or not, or ...

KIEHL: It never really worked, it was always marginal, it was always to give a little bit of a cushion to the big wheat deals and grain deals that Ukraine and the more agriculturally rich parts of Russia can produce. They were always the breadbasket of Russia, of the Soviet Union.

This area was marginal. It was relatively arid, it was a lot like the Great Plains, the western Great Plains, which tend to be drier, the soil is poorer. It's great for growing grasses, native grasses, and we actually took a bus trip to go to see some Virgin Land. It was the only little plot left. It was perhaps a couple of hundred meters by a couple of hundred meters of vegetation that was the originally steppe, untouched by human hands. The rest of it was stunted wheat – that's what it was, stunted wheat. Yields were perhaps a third of what they were in a place that was more suited to agriculture.

Q: The day is over in these little towns – the guys were all young, weren't they, practically?

KIEHL: You'd be surprised. A lot of these people were kicked out there during the war, because they couldn't trust them in Ukraine, or they were Volga Germans and other displaced types. They would put them on a rail car and send them out and then said, "OK, you're out here," and drop them off at the rail head like so many cattle, and they had to survive out there. So, some of the people were relatively – well, I shouldn't say really old, there weren't very many really old people because the life was so hard that people didn't live that long, but there were certainly a lot of middle-aged people, as well as young kids.

Q: I was wondering, I mean, your crew were mostly young people?

KIEHL: Oh, yes, they were all mostly graduate students.

Q: The exhibit's over in the evening. Did they go to the equivalent of the local taverna and get together or ...

KIEHL: Well, in Tselinograd they didn't have tavernas, unfortunately. They had one or two *pevo* [beer] bars. *Pevni* bars, or beer bars, were pretty rough places. There were constant fights, people getting cut with broken bottles, people were just drunk out of their minds in there. They would drink shots of vodka and beer chasers and you could go by these places in mid-afternoon and people would be drunk out of their minds. They were very violent places, so that wasn't really a good option.

What most people in Tselinograd did, they would get blind drunk every night on vodka, and beer, or beer and vodka together, but mainly vodka. That's basically what they did. That was the only real entertainment there. I think there was one movie house – we're talking about a city of probably 30,000 to 40,000 people. One movie house, two or three *pevni* bars, no theatre, real theatre at all, almost no cultural life. People would hang beef cows in their – we were there in the summer, or I guess you might say beginning of summer. This is a place where it's 40 and 40, 40 degrees Celsius in the summer, and -40 Celsius in the winter. There's not much difference. It goes from summer to winter to summer again. There's almost no spring or fall.

People would get a cow, in the summertime, and slaughter it, and hang it in their balcony at the

beginning of the fall, and it would pretty well freeze over the winter, and they would hack pieces of that cow off during the winter and bring it inside and cook it. This is the level of sophistication you had in Tselinograd.

We experienced some incredible things. Of course, we ate pretty well. They shipped in special food when we were there. People would come up to us and say, "Thank God you Americans came, we've seen butter for the first time in three years because you're here!" They brought in, one afternoon, a truckload of frozen chickens, all sort of frozen together like a modern sculpture, and they took this and threw it onto the floor where it would sort of break apart. They kept throwing them down until the pieces would start breaking off. Before long, there was a riot, women punching and kicking each other to get the pieces of chicken, because this was a once a year treat. The Soviets put 200 cases of Bulgarian cabernet red wine in the little grocery store across the square from our hotel. We were the only people who bought it, because even though it was the equivalent of a dollar a bottle it was too expensive for Russians to waste their hard-earned rubles on this when they could get vodka or spirit, (190-proof alcohol) and drink that and become oblivious in a matter of minutes. The wine would take forever to get to that stage, I'm sure, so we were the only customers of that wine, as far as I know, and in two months we made a pretty good run on it, I have to say.

Tselinograd was a city where very rarely were we actually invited to someone's home, unlike many other parts of the former Soviet Union. I think, in Kishinev, for example, in the two months we were in Kishinev I must have been in 50 different Soviet citizen's apartments for dinner, or for drinks, or just to see it and to talk, because there was a tremendous curiosity about America, but also almost a compulsion to tell someone what their life was like, just so that somebody else would know. Why, I'm not quite sure, the psychology of that is somewhat complex. I think there are a lot of reasons why people do that. It wasn't necessarily that these people were dissidents, or were people who are dissatisfied with the regime. They were just ordinary people. They felt a need to express themselves to someone because they couldn't really talk to other people without possibly being reported as being anti-Soviet, or a troublemaker or something. I got the feeling that outside the very close friends and family, people didn't really communicate about anything important, but they could communicate to us because we were a kind of magic slate. Once we went away, that slate was lifted and, you know, it was all right.

Q: I assume that, of the countryside, this is not – this was pretty primitive, wasn't it?

KIEHL: It was pretty primitive. We were in an unusual situation. They took a hotel right on the square there, and they cut it in half, or roughly in half, and they put, literally, cement-block walls halfway down the corridors so that you couldn't go from one wing of the hotel to the other. The one part of the hotel remained pretty much decrepit as it was, the other wing of the hotel was spruced up and painted and some sort of surface that I swear had diamonds in it, it glittered, and if you touched it would cut your hand, it was sharp. They had this all over the walls, some kind of really crude stucco. This hotel was all fixed up, as best as they could fix it up. One could even get a small refrigerator in the room. It was really elaborate, the kind of thing that most Russians would never be able to see.

That's where we were housed. There were, in all, perhaps with a few spouses and the technicians

who came in and out and so on, perhaps anywhere between 35 and 50 people at any given time, Americans, a couple of Austrians, a German or two, the technicians, housed in this wing of the hotel. We were kept, particularly in Tselinograd, very isolated. One time we invited a couple of young Russians that we met to join us for dinner in the hotel, and we managed to sneak them into the hotel. We were having drinks and when they left, an amazing scene ensued, because we could watch out one of the windows. They had an instant meeting of all the watchers at the end of the square, which they didn't think we could see but we could see, and there were people there of all descriptions, *babushkas*, teenagers, or at least people who looked like teenagers, war veterans, you name it, they were all congregated, and they were given instructions, because they lost these two or three Russians that had come in to see us. They didn't apprehend them when they left the hotel, so they had to get all these people together and go for a search to try to find these people. There must have been 50 people out there, surrounding the hotel in various guises to keep an eye on the hotel and to apprehend the young Russians who were leaving our company. That gives you an idea of the kind of oppressive situation we were under.

Q: How long were you in this first place?

KIEHL: Two months.

Q: Where did the people come from? You've got 30,000 living in the city.

KIEHL: The collective farms in the countryside.

Q: Did we bus them in?

KIEHL: They bused them in, and they bused themselves in, because the exhibit was advertised on Voice of America, and Radio Liberty, and so word did get around that this exhibit was there. We had Germans who came to the exhibit, dressed in a rather old-fashioned way, whose only book was the Bible, in German, lived on collective farms, 100 to 150 miles away from Tselinograd, who the last leader of the Soviet Union that they knew was Stalin. They really didn't have any connection with anybody, they were really in the middle of nowhere, and yet some of them found their way to our exhibit.

We had a couple German speakers with us as well, and so we talked with the Germans quite a lot as well, whenever they would come in, because they were close to being the majority population in northern Kazakhstan, all of whom were displaced from the Ukraine and the Volga, and about a year after that exhibit was there, reports reached Moscow of riots in northern Kazakhstan. The Germans wanted an independent, autonomous area in northern Kazakhstan, and some of the people that we met there were people who were mentioned in this movement. There was a newspaper, kind of a *volksstimme*, a "Voice of the People", a German-language newspaper, and that became more nationalistic after we left. I don't say we had any direct influence on it, but it was part of the simmering undercurrent, even in northern Kazakhstan there was this undercurrent that finally broke to the surface about a year later.

Q: Where did you go after that?

KIEHL: Well, let's see. From Kazakhstan we went to – let me think – Dushanbe.

Q: Dushanbe being...

KIEHL: Tajikistan.

Q: Tajikistan.

KIEHL: We got there – of course we did August and September, or September and October, in that area. It was 40 degrees, 45 degrees Celsius some days. I think it got up to 48 or 50 on occasion. I remember that was one of the places where we had to put down a kind of parking lot surface – the Russians actually did that for us on a contract, and then the geodesic dome was built over this parking lot, and stretched with Mylar and the exhibit was housed inside there. There were a couple of out-buildings, as well, where the library was,.

That was memorable for a couple of reasons. For one thing, it was so bloody hot that we had to run hoses over the top of the dome all the time to cool it down and all the guides were given smelling salts in case anyone fainted, because if they fainted, the crowds were such a crush of humanity, they could be trampled quite easily. Anyone who fell to the floor could be trampled quite easily. It was essential for the guides to have smelling salts with them at all times in order to revive people who fainted because of the heat the closeness of the crowds. The exhibit was closing in a couple days, and it was the last day before all the students had to leave school and go help with the cotton harvest, and so there was such a crush of humanity that day. I don't think we ever got an accurate count of how many people came in. I mean, they literally stampeded into the building, and so at one point we all had to link arms and make a human chain in front of the building to keep them back and threaten to close the exhibit if they didn't stay back and come in in orderly groups of 100 or 150. What we had to do was funnel them through, as soon as a 150 people left another 150 were allowed in. We stayed open late just to get the crowd through.

That was a really scary moment. You really wonder, I mean you're standing there linking arms, and there's a crowd of God knows, 100,000 people, pushing in, wanting to get in to that exhibit.

Q: What interest did they have? Was it just that you were foreigners?

KIEHL: Well, Americans. Not all foreigners are of interest to these people. We were Americans, we were the country that was so on their minds, for good or ill. America was the only country that Russia wanted to compare itself to. A continental power, diverse nationalities of a couple hundred million people, who else are they going to compare themselves to? Certainly the Russians and Ukrainians in central Asia were almost obsessed with the idea of an invasion by China, the "yellow peril," another Genghis Khan, and that sort of thing, and they were almost pathetic in their appeal to us as fellow Christians, Caucasians, as a bulwark against the "yellow peril." It was so, evidentially, racist, but it was – I don't think that they even rose to that level, it was almost kind of a gut reaction of their history, that they lived in constant fear that the Chinese would come back, or the Asians would take them over again.

This was evident among the Russians and Ukrainians in central Asia, but obviously the

indigenous people there had no interest in this kind of philosophy at all. They felt themselves subjugated by the Russians and Ukrainians.

Q: When they would come in, you had to respond of course, to them. Were they interested in the farm equipment?

KIEHL: They were, they loved it, and they couldn't believe that a tractor would have air-conditioning and a radio. They said, "Ah, *pakazuya*, this is just for show." But in fact, most tractors in the Midwest have to have radios and air-conditioning. Nobody would go out in a tractor all day without it.

A lot of the video and film presentations about a glass of orange juice in the morning, in New York City, how it came there in 24 hours from Florida, the processing and all that sort of thing, the trans-shipping and suddenly the guy walks down to the grocery store and get a jug of orange juice and has it for breakfast, this was a revelation. This was magic to most of these people.

Q: Was there a problem of trying to be concerned about the pride of the people and all that. We were saying, "God, we can do this a lot better than you can."

KIEHL: In fact, it was the other way around. The Russian expression is *U nas luche*. "We have it better." That was the immediate response to anything that they saw. *U nas luche*, we have it better. Of course it was just a way of trying to save face.

We tried to go out of our way not to rub this in the faces of the people visiting the exhibit, that the societies were so unequal in terms of wealth and quality of life, particularly in these backwaters in central Asia. We tried to do that, but the whole exhibit was designed to make America look good, let's face it, and to make our system look good, particularly, and as I say, in the one area that I think it was probably to excess, the focus on the family farm, because in America today, the family farm is not doing all that well, and wasn't doing all that well then, either. Of course, that fit into the ideology of a free society and free market.

Q: Where else did you hit?

KIEHL: After Dushanbe – and by the way, Dushanbe was an interesting place, too, in that we really got to know a lot of the Tajiks. We were able to interact with people a lot more. Now, a lot of these young Tajiks were *Komsomol* members ...

Q: That's the ...

KIEHL: Young Communist League. So they were establishment, young establishment people, but they, still, their attitudes were so obviously anti-Russian. When they could get away from the Russians and talk with us they were entirely different people. They became really quite different people, and maybe the best example of that – one of the things I used to do is, because I was the embassy protocol officer, was try to call on local officials and talk to them and see what their concerns were, and what their life was like and get a little biographic information on all these people, of course, and then report it back to INR. So I was constantly pecking away at our

Russian keyboard typewriter to make little notes of requests for meetings, and calling people, getting a hold of a phone book so I could call officials and say, “Hello, I’m so-and-so, from the American embassy, I’m here with the exhibit, which I hope you will attend, and we’ll be happy to give you a special tour, et cetera, and I’d like to call on you, and blah blah blah.” Sometimes I was successful, sometimes I wasn’t, it was really hard slogging, and of course it was all at the whim of the local KGB guy, my opposite member was always the local KGB guy,

The exhibit directors’ opposite member was KGB also who traveled with the exhibit as a “fixer” for the exhibit. He was the opposite number, a Belarusian, Ilya Nosev was his name, and he was with us the whole year, and then there were some transportation people for the Russian railway system, because all of this stuff had to be shipped by rail. You think about this, how this evolved, could we ever do this again, anywhere?

My local guy was always the local KGB guy, Moldavia was the little Moldovan guy with a little pencil thin moustache, and in Tajikistan it was this Ukrainian guy who was my opposite member, he was the local KGB guy, et cetera.

We got pretty close to the Tajiks there, even the KGB local was a Tajik, although the young people from the *Komsomol* wouldn’t talk with him around. They told us how resentful they were of the Russians and Ukrainians running everything. I managed to call on the first secretary of the city and the second secretary of the city Communist party, in Dushanbe, but both Tajiks. I walk in, the two Tajiks are there, and a Russian minder. So, we’re talking, and it’s very stilted, truly stilted, and they pretended not to speak Russian so everything had to go through the Russian as an “interpreter,” and for some reason or another he got up to get tea for us. The moment his back was turned, these guys started talking a mile a minute in Russian to me, kind of trying to be friendly and nice instead of officious idiots, which is what they were when the Russian was there. Since he was coming back they pulled back again. That was the clearest – really, you rarely get such a clear indication of how things really work.

In most of the cases in central Asia, the first secretary was always a local person, and the second secretary usually was a Russian or a Ukrainian. The real power was the second secretary of the party. You could sense at even at that high level, they were big shots in the local communist party, they too were resentful of these Ukrainians and Russians running things, so it was even more evident among the *Komsomol*, and then something that even the casual observer would immediately notice, at 3:30 or 4:00, when everything let out, people would come pouring out of the buildings, a mix of Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Tajiks, et cetera, all come streaming out of these government buildings, they would all form up separately.

All the Tajiks would be in one place, all the Russians and Ukrainians in another, it would be almost like the South in the days of segregation, but it was segregation by choice for these people. First of all, they would live in different parts of town, most of the center-city area was Russian-Ukrainian, most of the Tajiks lived on the periphery of the city, so they had different bus lines and trolley lines to go to. They’d never talk to each other. You’d almost never see a Tajik and a Russian together, a husband and wife or friends, male friends, or female friends, except in the business place. As soon as they left the building they’d split, and it just seemed so – even from a very casual observer, you could see that there was something wrong here in this society.

Then, of course, that proved to be the case later, there were a number of riots between the Tajiks and the Slavs in later years, and of course, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union there are precious few Slavs left in Tajikistan, I'm sure.

Q: You went to Moldavia, and where else?

KIEHL: After Dushanbe we went to Moldavia, then up to Moscow, for the showing of the exhibit in Moscow, where we actually moved into our apartment, which was waiting for us up there, one of those Soviet-style apartments, and then the last was Rostov na Donu Don, Rostov on the Don [River], in southern Russia, which was probably most notable for "RosSelMach", the Rostov agricultural machine *kombinat*, which made the sort of caterpillar-tractor type agricultural machine, and they even had their big theatre there, was even in the shape of caterpillar tractor, it was amazing piece of constructivist style architecture.

Q: Well, actually, caterpillar was sent over during the '20s and '30s, they built factories for the ...

KIEHL: So each of the agricultural areas had a point to it, obviously there was grain, wheat in Tselinograd – well, in Ukraine it was really fruits and vegetables – but in Tselinograd it was wheat, Dushanbe it was cotton, in Kishinev it was all viniculture, so we drank a lot of wine and a lot of brandy there. In Moscow, it was kind of general, obviously, and then Rostov was mechanized agriculture.

Q: Were you picking it up – you know, one goes back to the '20s and '30s and those Soviet films where boy meets girl, boy sees tractor, boy meet girl and falls in love with tractor-type things. Has that romance sort of gone – I mean, were you picking up the spirit of the collective farm at this point?

KIEHL: Oh, yeah, but the spirit of the collective farm was dispirited, to say the least. Most collective farms were really in pathetic condition. Young people left them, so most of the people were, if not middle-aged, older than middle-aged, very ineffective and inefficient agriculture, essentially. People just were very poor, they spent all their money on vodka to forget about it all, I mean, it was really the worst kind of grinding, rural poverty.

Some of the state farms were in better shape because they were basically factories, and the people were wage-earners, and they got wages for their work, but in the collective farm you didn't get wages for your work, you shared the profit of the collective farm, and the collective farms rarely made anything close to a profit. So people essentially ate what they grew and bartered for other things like vodka.

Q: By the time you finished this whole thing, did you find that you were coming back with a perspective on the core of the Soviet Union that your colleagues in the embassy just didn't have?

KIEHL: I would say I had a more realistic view of the Soviet Union than my colleagues who stayed in Moscow. Now, I went from the exhibit to Moscow, to pick up my tour as a press officer thereafter, but most of my colleagues at the embassy, except for relatively few who were

able to work with the dissident movement and so on, or the Jewish community, or the religious dissidents, Pentecostals and so on.

They didn't have the opportunities to meet ordinary Russians very much. They led a pretty prescribed life in that embassy, and in the foreign residential compounds that were there. Those of us who were with the exhibit, even though there was a lot of watchfulness over us, and a number of provocations and that sort of thing, we were able to get out and about. The Russians had figured it out, that if they met you in a public place, at a restaurant or on the floor of the exhibit, and they spontaneously invited you home for dinner, and you went, and you talked, and you had a good time or whatever, and you never saw each other again, it was OK, because when they got called in by the secret police, and said, "What were you doing with that guy?" they could say, "Well, I spontaneously invited him, out of hospitality, to join us, and we had an inconsequential conversation," and they could relate the conversation or whatever, and that was it. There was no follow-up; nothing would have to happen to them.

In fact, that's really, literally what occurred with a lot of the people with whom we met. Unless they habitually met with a foreigner--then they could get themselves in big trouble, where they would have to become a provocateur, or become an agent of the secret police in order to survive, but if they just did this once, one evening, kind of a fling, somehow the Russians understood that, that the spontaneity of human beings is such that how could you help but, just out of curiosity, want to talk with this foreigner? And then, of course, never see them again.

Q: Did you have our agricultural attachés pay visits to you, to find out what you had, and sample what you were seeing?

KIEHL: There were three agricultural attachés, three Americans in the agricultural attaché office in Moscow. One would come out for the opening of the exhibit in each city, but they really couldn't cover a whole country like that, three people in Moscow, and they were essentially, like the science attaché's office, travel agents for visiting firemen of all descriptions. I mean, the science office was actually a joke. They were five officers who were the science attachés; there was one real science attaché, who actually had a degree in something scientific. All the others were Foreign Service officers who didn't have a clue about science, but they were essentially a tourist office for the enormous numbers of American scientists who would come on exchange programs with Russian scientific organizations.

The science attaches would set it up the visits and they would dutifully attend the meetings and take notes and do reporting. That's all they could do. There really wasn't enough time or manpower to do anything else. The agricultural attaches, to some extent, were trapped by that, too, because there were exchange visits and programs with which they also had to deal.

The agricultural attaches would, of course, go on drives out to look at the crops, and they actually could understand whether a crop was stunted or not, unlike us. We'd have to say, "Well, it was that high, that's stunted," or "What color was it?" "Well, it was kind of a grayish-brown," we'd have to describe these things, and they would understand what that meant. They were on top of that.

The agriculture office was quite interested in the market-basket reports that we would do. Every city we went to, and between the various cities where we were for two months, the time it took to ship the exhibit to the next city, we were free to travel, and so it would cost the government just as much to keep me in a hotel in Moscow as to pay me to travel around the former Soviet Union. So we would travel all the time, for a couple of weeks or even a month, it took about a month for the exhibit to be transported from Dushanbe to Kishinev by rail. Every city we went to, I would do the same thing. I would see if I could get a phone book, do a market-basket report, and write up my impressions of the city and the people I talked to, and again, we'd be in hotels and people would figure out we were foreigners and Americans. As soon as they knew that, they say "Oh, come home and I will give you *uzbeski plov* [Uzbek pilaf] like you have never eaten." OK, sure, we were up for anything, why not? Off we'd go and take endless trolleys to the periphery of town and go up into the tenement, and there the husband and I would cook *plov* together, on a stove about the size of a modern microwave-- all cooked with lard, spices and all kinds of junk. My wife and the Soviet wife would talk about the children and schools and things like that, and we would talk about more manly things in the kitchen, while chugging down some brandy and then we'd all get together for dinner and they would show us their wedding pictures and that was the end of the evening.

I remember one time in Tashkent, the husband was showing me his wedding pictures and then out comes a photo of the Soviet Union's equivalent of a 747 and then I learned that he's a foreman in the factory that makes these, this is the new Russian plane which nobody had seen yet, the jumbo, the Russian jumbo jet. I thought to myself, "Well, the door is going to fly open right now and they're going to have camera's flashing for proof of my "doing something incompatible with my diplomatic status." But it didn't happen. So I could, say that I was probably one of the first Americans ever to see the Russian jumbo jet, because the foreman in the factory had shown me a copy of the picture.

This kind of thing would happen fairly consistently throughout the whole year, in some cities more often than others. I mean, central Asia was kind of fun. Kazakhstan was probably the worst experience. It was the first city we'd been to, we'd gone through -- the people on the exhibit were traumatized by the Kiev experience, which was really quite nasty. It was very confining there, the way they had set it up, we were really prisoners in that hotel, but in the other cities, by and large, we could go where we wanted and we were constantly meeting people and going to peoples' flats and having a meal or eating some pickles or drinking vodka. So we'd have a chance to talk with a large variety of people, something which most of our colleagues in Moscow couldn't hope to achieve. And I also saw what was out there in the countryside. So I think I had a more realistic impression of the Soviet Union, how poor it really was. I mean, it wasn't Moscow. Moscow was the best of everything, and St. Petersburg was the second best of everything. Well, we were at the ninth best, terrible conditions, and most of the country was like that. It wasn't a rich country; it wasn't a very efficient country. We saw the trucks breaking down, military vehicles breaking down on the roads, all the time. The ones in Moscow didn't break down, because they were the show pieces.

I think in that sense I had a lower estimation of the power of the Soviet Union than I would have had, had I spent the entire tour in Moscow. I'm not so sure that anybody would have been any different.

Q: What about provocations while you were there? You had these young guides and all, Americans, did people fall in love ...

KIEHL: Yes. We had to send a couple of people back over the course of the exhibit, but the first, the city of Kiev was really the worst, and after that – the guides were pretty intelligent, they weren't nineteen years old, they were graduate students. They had seen what could happen in Kiev. They were, I think, mostly very well-disposed toward Russia. They loved the Russian language and culture. They only lasted six months, we had two groups of guides, one would switch out and the new one would come in, the second half. The staff would remain the same, however.

By the time the guides were in their third city, they were pretty cynical, and awfully antisocial. So what it did is it took eastern establishment liberals and turned them into right-wing fanatics, after three cities of the KGB trying their best to mess up your mind and get you in trouble. But by and large it was a wonderful training ground. Not only for the foreign service, because a lot of these guides are in the foreign service now, but also the intelligence agencies and the academic world. I'm thinking offhand, with our group, the guy was the GSO (General Services Officer) for the exhibit is now the DCM in Moscow. One of the other staff members is in Senior Assignments in the Department right now. Another is married to the DCM in Moscow and is a Foreign Service officer also. I can just sort of go through the list, and if they're not in the Foreign Service or the intelligence community, they're in something to do with Russia in business or in commerce or something. Another guide is the head of the Russian desk at the Department of Agriculture. He was actually a Russian speaker who was also a farm kid, so he was the perfect guy for that. Two or three of the guides went their way into the foreign agricultural service.

So the exhibits were wonderful training grounds for young, potential recruits for the Foreign Service.

Q: How did your wife find this whole experience?

KIEHL: Oh, she loved it. She's, I suppose, more interested in Russia than I am today, if that's possible. She did her Russian at FSI also – she wasn't a Foreign Service officer then, although she joined later, and she did her exhibit duty in the exhibit's library. She and one of the guides ran the exhibit library, where the three agricultural specialists hung out, and so she actually met a better class of person, in other words, the people who would get a pass to go to the library were people who the guides – each guide had a limited number of these passes and so they were told, "Give these passes to legitimate researches and people who are interested in agriculture on an academic level, or people that we needed to talk to for other reasons." If that were the case, then we would kind of talk to them – in other words, if they had some story to tell or something really important to convey. If the guide could get a flavor of that on the floor of the exhibit, he would give them a pass to the government library where there weren't any Russians overhearing the conversation.

Q: Speaking of that, how did you find the hand of our station, the CIA group in Moscow, I mean, for what you were doing?

KIEHL: There was no connection that I could discern between the station and the exhibit. For one thing, it was a USIA exhibit, and USIA was almost paranoid about cozying up with the other agency, as you know, I mean, it was an agreement that was brokered at the White House in the mid 1960s, to keep the two agencies apart, because it would destroy our credibility if any connection were ever shown there. Of course, in the early days of USIA that was less of a concern. The intel people could brief us on what the Russians were doing with us. In fact, in our exhibit, they had a list of us and what our alleged intelligence connections were, according to the Russians. The KGB had put together a little list – I was CIA, of course, but other people were ascribed to military intelligence, or the National Security Agency, or whatever. So that was noted after each of our names, and they also told us, in fact, that they had gotten information that they were now using fiber optics in our hotel rooms so they could have video, as well as audio, of everything that went on in our hotel rooms.

Other than that kind of debriefing there was never a request from the station, or from Washington, on behalf of the intelligence community to collect anything, or to do anything. Now, it isn't beyond the realm of possibility that one or two of the guides were undercover which I didn't know about. That's perfectly conceivable and frankly would make a lot of sense if that were the case, but because I didn't know about it, I can't tell you.

Q: Your guides, were they all men?

KIEHL: No. Men and women, both. Probably, my guess is probably something like 65-35, two to one male to female, maybe.

Q: Then you went back ...

KIEHL: My wife accompanied me, and the director of the exhibit, who was an exhibit professional, and his wife accompanied the exhibit as well. I don't think there were any others.

Q: You finished this when, '79?

KIEHL: Yes, '79. Summer of, let's see, it would have been in the beginning of June of '79, in Rostov.

Q: And then you did what?

KIEHL: Then we took a month's vacation on the Adriatic coast because I had not had a day off for an entire year. The exhibit worked six days a week and we were off on Tuesdays, but on Tuesdays I programmed the agricultural specialist to lecture at various universities, and I would go with them to the universities. So I was working seven days a week for a solid year, and while in retrospect I can't believe I was so stupid, it didn't bother me at all. It was an interesting life and what would I do differently on a day off in Rostov?

But at the end of that time I had nothing to do for a month and we just went to the Yugoslav coast and vegged out and ate a lot of fish and relaxed for a month and then went back to Moscow

and picked up right where we left off in our apartment, got into the embassy routine. I was a press officer there.

Q: So you were press officer from '79 to '80?

KIEHL: Yes, I stayed through the non-Olympics.

Q: I was going to say, this was a really critical time.

KIEHL: Well, exactly. You see, very shortly after I returned to Moscow, all that upward momentum in U.S.-Soviet relations came to a crashing fall with the Soviet invasion.

Q: Prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of '79, were events in Iran resonating at all, or was this just another country far away?

KIEHL: No, they were resonating a lot. If you remember that was the period when there was – I mean, it was kind of an early warning of what could happen in that part of the world. You had events in Iran, you had the attack in Mecca, if you recall, you had the burning of the American embassy in Pakistan, you had the assassination of Spike Dubs, all this was at about that same time. I'll never forget the room just outside my office is where all the wire tickers would come into the embassy, and I remember one day in particular, it was that coincidence of three of these things happening at the same time, I never heard the bells ringing on those tickers like that ever before or since. Of course, they don't have those kind of tickers anymore, so I guess I couldn't, but in the days when they had wire tickers, I never experienced hearing those bells ...

Q: The bells would ring if it was important, breaking news.

KIEHL: Yes, that's right, breaking news. Right. And the more rapid the bells would ring the more urgent – well, it was almost constant. In a sense, being in Moscow, which we all considered the center of the universe, of course, the most important embassy in the world, et cetera, we immediately looked at this at how it would related to U.S.-Soviet relations. Everything was centered around U.S.-Soviet relations.

To some extent, that was a little foolhardy, because obviously the Dubs assassination had a U.S.-Soviet connection.

Q: It was a really strong Soviet connection ...

KIEHL: Because it was the Russians who precipitated Spike Dobbs's death by attacking that hotel room. But in the case of Pakistan and the burning of the embassy there, I'm not so sure that you could really say there was any kind of Soviet connection to that, and the attack on Mecca – these were indigenous elements. It was early terrorism, basically.

Q: When you got back – this is prior to the Afghanistan business – when you got back, in the first place, who was the ambassador and how did you find the embassy as such, and how USIA fit into it?

KIEHL: USIA was not USIA in Moscow. As in most of Eastern Europe, it was the press and cultural section of the American embassy, because the U.S. Information Service was expelled from all these countries in the early '50s as a subversive organization. So while technically we no longer had to do a paper transfer to the State Department, and our paychecks were really USIA paychecks, to the world, we were the press and cultural section of the American embassy, whether it was in Prague or Warsaw or Moscow.

In Moscow, we had a pretty big operation there, because from '56 on, when we had officers there, it was the beginning of things like the exhibits, exchange programs, the magazine, *America* magazine, and of course the radios, which were the most expensive part of the USIA operation to that part of the world. So those operations got to be fairly large. In Moscow, we were called P&C up and P&C down. P&C up was largely on the 7th floor of the main building, of the embassy building, which was beyond the vault door, essentially, and that's where the press operation and the public affairs operation was. P&C down was essentially the cultural office in the North wing, near the consular section, if you remember the layout. That North wing was the consular section and the cultural section, P&C down, as they called it. And P&C up and P&C down rarely talked to each other, by the way.

P&C down was cultural exchanges, speakers programs, that kind of thing. When I went to Moscow, I was in P&C up, of course, as the press officer. My job was the Russian press and *America* magazine. That was basically my daily duty. There was another officer who was the embassy spokesman and dealt with the foreign press. There was another officer who dealt with radio and TV. The cultural section was summarily split up. My wife actually then got a job in the cultural section, working with the Fulbright program as a local hire.

Of course at that time, if you remember, that was the time a consular officer made, I should say, a big mistake, and allowed someone to come into the consular section with a bomb. That was in that same building. It didn't affect the cultural section too much. That was before we got there.

Anyway, the two section were ostensibly under the same boss, the Public Affairs officer, but because they were in two separate wings of the embassy, and one was essentially closed to any visitors and the other was open to visitors, particularly American exchange students and grantees and Fulbrighters and journalists picked up their mail there, so you had 50 American correspondents permanently stationed in Moscow coming in for their mail all the time. And occasionally Russians would be able to get into the building and talk to people, and that's where they would go, either there or the consular section. My wife and I often said we were the link between P&C up and P&C down because we talked to each other. So she would tell me what was going on there, and I would tell her what was going on up here.

The other thing that was kind of interesting is that my office was one of the few that had a balcony right over *Ulitsa Chaikovskaya*. It was on that balcony that the microwave measuring device was installed, because I was the embassy officer that the media would call –

the Associated Press, routine as anything, every month, would call and say, "What can you tell me about the microwaves?" And I would say, "The level is constant," or "There's increased

activity.” I was authorized to give that kind of vague information, and it was based on the little device outside my office.

Q: What was the feeling about these microwaves?

KIEHL: Nobody really took it that seriously. They had these aluminum, well, screens, essentially, for our windows which allegedly kept the microwaves out. Everybody had heard all kind of stories. They knew where site A was, they knew where site B was. I mean, I could look across the street at site A. That’s where they were beaming the microwaves from. Of course, that went up in flames just before I left Moscow, you know. An accident, of course, and site B was over near the commercial section, which was in another building down the street a little bit.

People didn’t take it that seriously. Some people probably were worried for their health, but frankly, most people didn’t consider it really a serious matter.

Q: Who was ambassador at the time?

KIEHL: When I first arrived, Mack Toon was the ambassador. In fact, when I got there, the first week, before shipping off to Tselinograd, I just sat in the back of his press conference. He had, occasionally, press conferences in an old auditorium down at the commercial section – he was ambassador when I was in Belgrade, also – so he looked out, and you have an idea of what a friendly fellow he was, he said, “Kiehl! What the hell are you doing here?” And I said, “Well, Mr. Ambassador, I’m assigned here.” He said, “Nobody ever tells me anything.” That was the greeting I got from him. But anyway, I didn’t see much of him thereafter. By the time I got back to Moscow they were about to change, and in fact, Mack Toon, who was Mr. Hard as Nails, chew you up and spit you out for breakfast, was probably the wrong ambassador to have at a time of increasingly close relations between the two countries, because he made no bones about his distaste for the Soviets.

Tom Watson replaced him. Avuncular Tom Watson of IBM, whose memories of the Soviet Union stemmed from World War II, when he flew B-17s into Mirmansk. Of course, he arrived just before the invasion, when relations went to hell, and of course he was just the wrong person to be in that situation, too.

Q: Prior to the invasion what were you doing?

KIEHL: Prior to the invasion, what was I doing? Well, I was distributing *America* magazines, I was working with Soyuz Pechat’ – actually, Soyuz Pechat’ was the outfit that ran all the kiosks, a lot of kiosks – to get our magazines distributed. That was a beautiful correlation between the state of U.S.-Soviet relations and the number of *America* magazines that were sold. In fact, I tried to prove this point by plotting out a chart of our circulation and indicating pluses and minuses in U.S.-Soviet relations, and they tracked beautifully. All you had to do to figure out what our rating was, as a country, with the leadership of the Soviet Union, was to find out how many newsstand returns we got of *America* magazine. A lot of people just didn’t understand that, no matter how many times you could prove it. And so, in those days, for example, when our relations were good, we were averaging about 1200 or fewer newsstand returns out of 60,000

copies. Post-Afghanistan, of course, there were over 10,000 returns. Of course the Soyuz Pechat' people with their dead pan humor would tell me that people just simply wouldn't buy this rag.

I spent a lot of time working on that, but my main job was the Russian press. So I was cultivating people in the Russian press, going out to lunch with *Izvestiya* and *Pravda* commentators and getting to know them. Of course, they were important conduits of information passed to the embassy through them, to us. That was the whole point of these lunches. I wasn't going to convince them of anything, and they weren't going to convince me of anything, but it was a way of getting messages across, and it worked pretty nicely. I had a lot of good lunches with interesting people.

Q: Did you find that – I mean, there's the one side of the Communist press, which was just all this gobbledygook, political talk ...

KIEHL: Right. It made it easy to read, because they're all formulas.

Q: Yes, I mean, the whole idea was to rate the code, which I guess was really quite easy to break, basically. You come up to whatever paragraph the guts of the thing was in, but how about for the rest? What was your impression? Was there a fairly good news system within the Soviet Union?

KIEHL: There was a very good news system, it just wasn't available to the general public. There was, just as in Yugoslavia there was a thing called Black Tanjug, which was the external wire, and Red Tanjug had the internal wire of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which had all the news that they couldn't put in the papers in *Borba* and *Politika*. So, too, they adopted that from the TASS wire, internal TASS, which was full of important news. Occasionally, I would get copies of this, through just dumb luck, maybe, or perhaps to show me that something was in that issue. But in any event – I mean, it was a substantial document, and full of the major news of the world, from American media, from French, German, and so on, all in translation, so that the leadership of the Communist party and the government would be up to the minute on world news and world happenings and commentaries. So they were very well-served in terms of news. It was the general public that got a much more restricted diet, of course.

Q: When, at just about Christmastime of '79, the Soviets moved into Afghanistan, what was the reaction within the embassy?

KIEHL: Outrage, of course. Not that there was any shock and disbelief, because most people in the embassy had the feeling that the Russians were capable of doing anything, but I think the timing was kind of surprising for a lot of people. There really was a feeling that relations could get a lot better, but they didn't, obviously, and this was the central issue of why they didn't. Most people were surprised by it, and I wouldn't think disappointed so much as outraged. A lot of people sort of gave in to the underlying anti-Soviet feeling that they had, because unlike almost any other place in the world, the "clientitis" that people used to talk about in Foreign Service posts abroad, which there is some credence to, didn't ever exist in Russia. Everybody who came to Russia was essentially anti-Soviet, and the people who taught Russian studies in America were anti-Soviet. So they had a lot of hard work to do to try to convince people that they weren't the devil.

Q: Were people trying to speculate – I had never really had a –

KIEHL: You mean why did the Russians do this?

Q: Why they did it, I mean, even today I talk to people, and it doesn't seem to parse very well.

KIEHL: Of course the ostensible reason, a lot of people speculated, was that the Russians were using Afghanistan as a stepping stone to Pakistan and India and warm-water ports in the Indian Ocean. Well, of course they already had an alliance in everything but the formal sense with India. So they could use Indian ports for their navy anyway, and they didn't have a big enough navy to handle a third ocean.

Q: And they could use Cameron Bay, too.

KIEHL: That's right. They eventually did for a while. But they didn't have enough navy, actually, to make it worthwhile, and anybody who knows the geography of the area knows that Afghanistan is a place you're going to get bogged down in. Why use that as a stepping stone to Pakistan? It didn't make any sense. I think it was a miscalculation. I think that they got themselves in a situation where they had supported indigenous local Communists and they were ready to take power and they took power and they couldn't handle it and the Russians just started helping them out and helping them out, and the slippery slope. I think they just didn't realize what they were getting themselves into, and they trapped themselves in Afghanistan. Not the first people to do it and probably not the last.

Q: What were you doing after this, up through – I mean, all of a sudden we started putting the squeeze on Carter and what were you doing and so was the rest of the embassy? What changed?

KIEHL: Of course, there was again, a big propaganda offensive, worldwide, about the Russians in Afghanistan. Obviously there was a limited amount of that you could do in Russia. We found that, very quickly, most of our contacts dried up, as relations went south. Everybody sensed that this was not the time to be chummy with Americans and so, very quickly, all the marginal people that you'd want to have contact with went away. I was stuck with the *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* correspondents, the guys who were supposed to feed me information and get the line from me, to report back. It worked fine for both of us because we both had a good lunch on the government, whichever government had to pay for it. But essentially, that's what it restricted itself to. And, very soon, the numbers of newsstand returns from our *America* magazine escalated.

It became pretty grim. I remember one time, it was winter, it was freezing cold, and a spontaneous march on the embassy was about to happen. 10,000 Arab students, and Muslims of various stripes, were going to march on the American embassy and present a petition and perhaps stone the embassy. At least this was the word we got. So a couple of us, who actually could speak Russian at the time, were positioned to liaise with the police. We were put outside the gates. The gates were closed behind us, and we were there with local cops and we had a signal to get back in if we needed to, but we were out there liaising with the local cops out on the street, *Ulitsa Chaikovskaya*, in the freezing cold, for a couple of hours. I'm thinking to myself,

“How did I end up doing this?” I’m a press officer, what am I doing here, standing with this cop?

Anyway, again, it was a language problem. As much money as we spend on training people in languages, people who are stuck in the embassy in Moscow weren’t able to speak. They could read the papers beautifully, but they couldn’t speak with a cop coherently and quickly. Whereas those of us who were bouncing around with exhibits, around central Asia, we picked up that facility. So those of us who could do that were out there with the cops. I’m thinking to myself, “Here I am, it’s beginning to snow, I’m here on the wrong side of the gate with this cop, and he’s not going to protect me and 10,000 Arab students are coming to stone the building. This is beautiful.” I’m thinking, “Well, maybe it’s about time I hit the doorbell and get inside,” when one of the cop’s associates comes running over and says, “Oh, you Americans always luck out--it’s starting to snow so heavily they all ran home.” They were afraid of the snow. The crowd was melted away by the snow! That was nice.

Basically, it was a very tense time. Nobody was willing to extend any friendship to the U.S. among the Russians, and our contacts shriveled back to the core, the kind of Cold War core, where I had a couple of people that I would be exchanging signals with, and the same would be true of other people in the embassy, and the people who were associated or close to people in the embassy, who were Jewish dissidents or Pentecostals and so on, they really got the pressure put on them. Essentially it drove the embassy in upon itself.

Q: Did the KGB pick on Americans at that time more than they usually did?

KIEHL: It depended. In Leningrad, in particular, they were very nasty. A colleague I went to language school with, who was in a branch office up there at the consulate ...

Q: Who was that?

KIEHL: Chris Arcos. He later became a political appointee and Ambassador to Honduras. He’s over at Homeland Defense now. He’s Tex-Mex but his wife’s Cuban-American, and so he got very friendly with the Cubans in Leningrad, St. Petersburg, so he came to the attention of the KGB and they assumed that he was CIA. They almost ran him off the road a couple of times, with his wife and kids in the car. It was pretty nasty. One of the people that I was in language class with, that quartet that I was talking about, was punched in the face in a hotel in Kiev, and her bag was taken from her, because they thought she might have something in it of use that had been passed to her. A dead-drop type thing.

So they did occasionally push the buttons. I didn’t have any great things happen to me. I had probably 30 flat tires on my car, all four at a time. They just let the air out, they wouldn’t slash the tires, so it was just a matter of pumping it up again. That’s how they let you know that they didn’t like what you were doing. One of the things that was interesting, when we were in Moscow, is that we had made friends with people out in these various central Asian places and so on, but when they came to Moscow, we were perhaps the only people they knew in Moscow, so they called me up, and I’d have them over. I’d have to pick them up at a subway stop or something, and then drive past the mili-man [Militiaman] who was glaring at them. We’d go into the apartment and we’d have dinner and drinks and they would be wowed by our apartment

which I can tell you was really a dump, and they'd be fascinated by the bright lights of Moscow. Actually, after about six months out in the boonies, when you came to Moscow, you were looking around at the lights because you didn't have of that out there. That was their big trip, coming to Moscow. I would take them out again, and fingers crossed, we'd pull up to a subway and then they got out and into the subway and I'd hope that they wouldn't face any repercussions about it, but you never knew.

It was nice to catch up with people like that, but then again, they were taking a great chance, particularly in those days, when things were ratcheting down, and probably your average Soviet citizen really wouldn't be aware that things were much more dangerous for them to see an American now as opposed to six months before. They weren't, I don't think they were as sensitive to that as we were, because we worried about it more than they did, most of the time.

Q: As things went – particularly the Olympics, and the fact that we were ...

KIEHL: Oh, yes, the non-Olympics.

Q: That must have really seared the soul of the Soviets.

KIEHL: That really upset them about America, the average Russian. They were really hurt about that. They didn't really understand this Afghanistan stuff, but that's something that they really felt, that the U.S. was gratuitously hurting them. We did a lot of stupid things, I say we, the U.S. government. One of the things we did is that we had a cover and a whole issue of *America Magazine* devoted to the Olympics, and American athletes of the Olympics, when the Olympics was on. Of course, nobody stopped it. It was moving along and it was being printed, and then shipped to us, and then it went on *Soyuz Pechat*' automatically. And then we got our copies and we saw that, "Oh, the Olympics, I wonder..." No sooner had we gotten these copies than a rocket came in from Washington, saying, "Do not distribute that magazine! Get all the copies back from the Russians!" We looked at each other and we said, "What a stupid idea that is. All we're going to do is make a big deal of it, and we'll never get all the issues back. Are you kidding? It's already out, and what difference does it make, it just tells the Russians about all these great athletes who aren't going to be coming to the Olympics."

So we went back and we said, "This is a bad idea, for the following reasons." And they said, "We don't care. Do it." So we did it. We went to *Soyuz Pechat*' and we said, "You know those 60,000 magazines that were delivered, except for the dozen or so that we have, we'd like those back, please." And they said, "What?" "Oh, yes, there's a printing error, we'd like to pulp those." Arrangements were being made to ship these to Belgium, so they could be pulped in Belgium, because they wouldn't trust anybody there to do it. We had to send these to Belgium to pulp 60,000 copies of the magazine. They said, "Well, we'll let you know." Of course the next day a commentator for *Novosti* was on Russian television – *Novosti* [APN] being the most obvious KGB outlet--with a copy of the magazine, saying, "Look what the Americans are trying to do now. Idiots! We have obtained a copy of this magazine, here's the pictures," et cetera. So the cat is out of the bag, right? We then said, "Since the cat's out of the bag, what's the point of getting 60,000 copies of the magazine back, going through all these conniptions, then putting them on rail cars and shipping them to Belgium and having them pulped?"

[End Side]

Q: You were saying is, that what's the point?

KIEHL: Yes. Actually, this would serve our interests. It would show to the Russians that we have all these great, talented athletes that we're telling can't compete for higher national interest, right? We're not about to lose the Olympics. It's not because we're too inept to play the sports, it's because of political reasons we're doing it. Well, it didn't work.

I spent a thoroughly miserable couple of days at *Soyuz Pechat*, sipping tea with a couple of barnacled old *Soyuz Pechat* bureaucrats as the conveyer belt went by with boxes of magazines, up and onto the truck. 60,000 magazines, and I had to count every box to make sure these boxes, I think, each contained 25 copies, I had to make sure that every single magazine was returned. We were not worried about newsstands returns, you see. I spent a couple of days doing that, then they were on the truck, then they went to a railcar which was to be sealed, then we sealed the railcar and the railcar went off to Belgium where the magazine were, presumably, pulped.

Then, of course, the next issue coming had the wrong number and date on it. So they had to ship them all to Belgium again – I don't know what the deal was with Belgium, that they were very good with glue, or what, but all the stuff was shipped to Belgium, where someone with some team of ladies, I suppose, laboriously pasted on a new date and number on the next issue of the magazine, so that we wouldn't lose an issue, you see. Then that was shipped out to us. Of course by that time we were getting 10,000 or 12,000 returns because, according to *Soyuz Pechat*, the "Soviet citizens could not stomach this magazine any longer", even though a copy of American Magazine would bring 25 to 30 rubles, the equivalent of \$40 on the black market. That's the way it was.

Things were pretty grim, so we then figured, "OK, now we have to figure out what we're going to do with the Olympics." When the Olympics was going to be the Olympics, a couple of us were assigned the Olympic coordination team, when there was going to be an Olympics. So the front office immediately said, "OK, now you're the Olympic dis-coordination team, and what you need to do is see what's going on with the Olympics, in other words, talk to the other embassies, find out from the sports committee and under committee who was participating, at what levels and why, and all this kind of thing, and then you guys need to monitor the Olympics. Talk to people who are coming to the Olympics and find out why they're coming there and what their feelings are, et cetera, et cetera." All this ancillary reporting, which I'm sure is lost in a vault somewhere, and that's what we had to do, and that's why, instead of leaving, as I normally would have, in July, or staying around to watch the Olympics and getting a pass for it, we didn't go into the sports events, of course, because that would be construed as supporting the Olympics, we had to hang around outside the events and talk to Polish tourists about what they saw inside. That's what we did, through – I guess that was the middle of September it was over. Then I went back to Washington.

Q: When you went back to Washington what did you do?

KIEHL: I went back as the Soviet Union desk officer for USIA, in charge of the Soviet desk, which I rapidly had changed to the Soviet and Baltic Affairs desk, because nobody was handling the Baltic states in USIA. They were handling them pretty well at VOA, because they were broadcasting to them all the time, but USIA's headquarters didn't have anybody specifically with a Baltic portfolio. Having just come from there and realizing how important that would be, I petitioned to include that as part of the Soviet desk, so we did. So it was Soviet and Baltic affairs, which got me two nice national days, the addition to the Soviet national day. The State Department, I think, traditionally has the Balts with the Hungarians. The Hungarian desk, in EUR, also handled the Baltic states, but in USIA, nobody handled the Baltic states, which really didn't make sense, especially since we were investing a lot of money in the radio broadcasts, and there were a lot of Balts on exchange programs with the Soviet Union, and we did still recognize them as independent. I made the case, and it was a pretty easy case. No one had ever thought of it, I guess, or hadn't thought of it in many years.

So, yes, I came back to do that.

Q: You did this for how long? From '79 to ...

KIEHL: No, September of '80 to September of '82.

Q: Well, one of the things that I've noted on interviewing people who worked for USIA is that overseas is seen to as very active and very much involved in policy matters. When you get to Washington, you're kind of a personnel guy, there isn't much policy. How did you find that?

KIEHL: It was a little different, I think because of the Soviet Union. I came back, you remember, just as the Reagan administration came on board, so obviously I wasn't seen as the Soviet desk officer, Charlie Wick was the Soviet desk officer, and a guy named Ron Trowbridge, who was the head of the education exchange bureau was the deputy Soviet desk officer because he was probably the most right-wing person in the administration, and then eventually, it trickled down to the Soviet desk. So there was a lot of focus on the USSR Desk and because there was a lot of focus on it, it probably did have a lot of policy issues. Because of the U.S.-Soviet relationship having been soured by Afghanistan, we had very strict instructions as to who could visit the Soviet Union and who could – what kind of programs could be mounted there, et cetera, which came down, unfortunately, to me, having to clear every cable that went – every USIA cable that went to Moscow or Leningrad, literally. That's a lot of cables, so that was a very time-consuming thing.

Now, I wasn't the only Soviet desk officer, I was the Soviet desk officer, but I had a deputy. I also had a Russian émigré named Juri Jelagin, who was a Russian musician, who used to play violin for the Houston Symphony, who was then the editor of the Russian dialogue magazine (*Dialog*). He was also part of the Soviet desk. I also had an intern, who was in Russian studies, who ran the distribution and records system for Moscow, the computerized list of contacts, out of Washington. So we had a little coterie of four of us to handle this portfolio, whereas most other desk officers, one person handled Poland and Hungary, for example, handled two or more countries. We had some luxury of backup, but there was a lot of cable traffic to clear. And anybody who had to go there, we had to interview them, to see if they would pass muster to go.

That was a very time-consuming deal. The other thing was that once martial law was declared in Poland, for example, the, shall we say, the real right of center folks in the government wanted to shut down all the exchange programs with Russia, which we saw as about the only lifeline open in order to have access and understand what the Russians were up to. So it came down to a point where I was called by the director's office to say that associate director Trowbridge, who was the head of the e-bureau, was acting USIA Director that day, and he had determined that the Russians activities were so incompatible that we would immediately end the Fulbright program with Russia, and all exchange programs would cease with the Soviet Union. I put down the phone, and I said, "This is really stupid." I talked to my boss, and he said, "Yes, you're right. It's really stupid." He was the director of the bureau, and I said, "Well, look, maybe there's a chance we can stop this, if I get the State Department to say that it's a bad idea."

I called the Soviet desk, I was pretty close to the people over there, I was the only non-State person who was allowed to go to their meetings, so I was adopted, I suppose, in that sense. I called them and I said, "Look, this is the situation. What I need from you is something which would say that this is not in the national interest, and so it shouldn't be done." They said, "Good idea. Why don't we do that? Why don't we say that?" I hung up with them, and I went down to Trowbridge's office and I said, "Well, I can understand your feelings, sir, but I've just been on the phone with the State Department, and they say that it would not be in the national interest to do this, and so we should not do it." He said, "Oh. All right, well, I'll wait until Charlie [Charles Z. Wick, USIA Director] gets back, back from California." I said, "OK."

Well, of course, Charlie Wick was smarter than this guy and he knew that this would have been a disaster – he actually was a pretty intelligent guy. He understood that this would have been really counter-productive. So that little initiative died, but if that guy hadn't been told not to do it, he would have sent out a press release ending the exchange programs, and then, of course, he couldn't have reversed it. It would have been very difficult. This is what you had to put up with if you were a Soviet desk officer in those days.

Q: Of course the exchange programs were probably one of our most effective tools all around the world.

KIEHL: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I think that's still true, that it's the single most important thing. Now, in the case of the Soviet Union, the exchange programs were relatively small. The Soviets wouldn't allow too much, compared to the size they became after 1991, 1992. They became enormous. So I would say probably the exchange programs, and the radios, and the things like *America Magazine* and the exhibits were all very important in a place like Russia, which was a closed society. But certainly, the value of exchange programs has certainly become obvious since the collapse of the Soviet Union, with those enormous numbers of young Russians who have been able to travel here and back again, and the networks that they've formed throughout the former Soviet Union. It's the one thing that's made a return to Communism almost – certainly, in my view, an impossibility, because there's now a network of people who would actively fight against that.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss before moving – while you were doing this Soviet

job?

KIEHL: Oh, you mean in the Soviet Union?

Q: No, in the desk back in Washington.

KIEHL: It was probably the ideal time to be in that position, because there was a lot happening, and it was very interesting to experience it. I think probably one of the key things, aside from this incident with the exchanges, and martial law in Poland, was the program that Charlie Wick had dreamt up, “Let Poland Be Poland,” have you ever heard of that?

Q: Yes, I’m trying to think – yes.

KIEHL: There was a worldwide television special transmitted via satellite around the world, with components from all over the world on the theme, “Let Poland Be Poland.” In other words, release your iron grip over poor Poland, Russia. This was the brainchild of – the brainstorm of Charlie Wick. I think, at the time, those of us who were professionals in public diplomacy or whatever you wanted to call it in those days, probably thought this was absolutely ludicrous, but Charlie Wick was convinced of it, and I think, actually, it was probably valuable for the Poles, because they got the feeling that the world was behind them. In the long run, it probably was positive. So the conventional wisdom was wrong, and the upstart from California, Three Stooges movies, actually proved to be a genius at this.

Q: There is a problem of the Washington conventional wisdom, which feeds on itself, and sometimes it takes an amateur or a maverick to break through. Normally conventional wisdom is more or less on track.

KIEHL: It’s more wisdom than convention. In this case, it was more convention than wisdom. Anyway, of course, one of the things that was a little ridiculous is that people had to call the various posts and say, “Well, how many people would you say saw the program?” and that kind of thing, and then come these wild estimates of millions and millions of people, 30 million people in Italy saw the program, and all this data was packaged and sent over to the White House.

All that aside, which was so much internal brouhaha, the fact that it was done and the fact that all these people put something together and it was broadcast around the world, probably did a lot for the Poles. It didn’t do much for the rest of the world, I don’t think. In other words, people who thought the Soviets were beasts before thought they were beasts after. People who didn’t, didn’t, but the Poles got a charge from that, that in fact, the world was paying attention. The world was listening. So it really probably was worthwhile. That was one of, I think, the sidelights of that time in Washington.

Two years goes pretty quickly. I remember when martial law was declared I was down in North Carolina, and they tried to reach me down there and couldn’t, I was staying at my sister-in-law’s, but in the morning I opened the door and the *New York Times* had the headline, “Martial Law Declared in Poland.” So I called our operations center and they said, “Oh, yes, we’ve been trying

to reach you. Get up here, right away.” I said, “You realize I’m in North Carolina?” “Well, yes, but...” So I barreled up 95, collected my wife and we hurriedly said our goodbyes and barreled up 95 at a record speed, no doubt, and got there, and pulled up, and got out and went up to the operations center USIA, up on the 8th floor of the old USIA headquarters. I said, “OK, I’m here!” and they said, “Oh, it’s OK now.” I said, “Well, thank you.” This was before cell phones, they couldn’t have called back. They said, “It’s OK, we’ve got everything under control right now, but you need to come back first thing tomorrow morning, we have a meeting scheduled.”

It seemed like an awful lot of dashing about for nothing, but as it turned out they were really kind of shorthanded because the Soviet desk officer was away and the Polish desk officer was away, and they were the two principal countries involved in martial law in Poland. They had no expertise on hand for USIA, but I guess the world survived it, as it would.

MARSHALL BREMENT
Soviet Desk, National Security Council, White House
Washington, DC (1978-1980)

Ambassador Marshall Brement was born in New York in 1932. He received a bachelor’s degree from Brooklyn College and a master’s degree from the University of Maryland. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1952-1955. Ambassador Brement’s career in the Foreign Service included positions in Hong Kong, Moscow, Singapore, Djakarta, and Saigon, and an ambassadorship to Iceland. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on April 11, 1990.

Q: I am going to skip over your Madrid period and go right to your NSC days because I realize time is running out. You were with the National Security Council from ‘79 to ‘81. What were you doing there?

BREMENT: I was in charge of Soviet affairs.

Q: And this was under the Carter administration?

BREMENT: The Carter administration, Brzezinski was the National Security Advisor.

Q: How did you get the job?

BREMENT: I was in Madrid and Brzezinski called me on the phone one day and said would you like to do this? And I said that it was an offer I couldn’t refuse.

Q: Would you talk about Zbigniew Brzezinski. He is a very controversial figure, and how did he operate and how effective was he do you think?

BREMENT: First of all, I would say he is a very quick mind, one of the quickest minds I have ever come across. And indeed it was sometimes frustrating to deal with him, just to talk with

him, because he was always turning the corner before you reached the corner. And sometimes he was turning the corner the wrong way. I found the best way to communicate with him was in writing. He is very conscientious and, unlike some people, makes a point of reading what his staff sends him. He is a speed reader, and got through his in-box every day, so that you could send him a note and get an answer back the next day. So in terms of somebody to work for, he was a jewel, a joy, because I think the most frustrating thing that you can have as an employee in any bureaucracy is to keep dropping things with your boss and having the feeling they are going down a deep well, never getting read and never getting acted on.

He would turn material around. If you had ideas they would get to the President very quickly. I have often had the experience of, say, writing a memo on a Thursday afternoon, and indeed if Brzezinski thought it was worth his while he would hand it to the President the next morning at 7 a.m. and so by 9 a.m. I would have Presidential marginalia on the memo already.

Carter also was a workaholic, and one who got through his in-box. So in that sense you really had a feeling you were doing something when you were working on the staff. Indeed there is something about being in the Executive Office Building -- my office was the same one that Franklin Roosevelt had had when he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy. And when you are looking out the window you are looking at the West wing of the White House -- where the action is. So I found it an extraordinarily stimulating, and worthwhile place to work. I enjoyed it very much.

In terms of Zbig's effectiveness, he had great skills as a National Security Advisor. He was meticulously fair. He had strong opinions, but he was meticulously fair about presenting other people's opinions. And he is the best person I have ever encountered at summarizing what already has taken place. I've been at several meetings where the President walked in and the meeting had been going on for as much as an hour, and he would say, "Zbig what's happened?" And in three minutes Zbig would summarize beautifully exactly what it was about, the position of everybody at the table and so forth. He has that wonderful academic quality of being able to take what is happening and put it into paragraphs and sub-paragraphs, in an outline form, like the outline button on a computer. He gets it in outline form in his mind and he remembers the three points and the four sub-points. So he is very good at that. Being so quick, he has the drawback of being somewhat flip on non-important matters occasionally. I think he can go off the reservation sometimes. But by and large I think he was a very effective National Security Advisor.

The real thing that you learn by working on the NSC staff, and one should really learn it around Washington but few people do, is that it is the President who calls the tune, it is not the National Security Advisor or the Secretary of State. If you want to find out what is happening and why it is happening, look at the President. Brzezinski working for Carter is a very different person than he would have been working for Nixon, say, and it would have been a very different NSC staff.

Q: But what in your field, Soviet affairs which was obviously the keystone, what was Carter interested in?

BREMENT: My own criticism of Carter is that he didn't have a grand design. Brzezinski did. But Carter didn't. I don't think he had a world view of the Soviets. And I don't think he was after

anything. He had a clear short term view of what he wanted from the Soviets. He wanted certain things. He wanted the SALT agreement. Arms control was a good thing, according to Carter, and therefore we should move ahead with the SALT II agreement. But the Soviets throughout the period were doing things that should have evoked a much sharper response from the President, from the State Department, but did not. That in my view was very unfortunate.

Q: Obviously the war in Afghanistan was the big one, you arrived there...

BREMENT: I arrived there before Afghanistan. I arrived there just in time for the Soviet brigade in Cuba mini-crisis, which everyone has forgotten now.

Q: That was a non-crisis really, wasn't it?

BREMENT: It should have been a non-crisis. But it was a crisis.

Q: Would you explain what that was?

BREMENT: Essentially the U.S. government went public with the allegation that the Soviets introduced a brigade into Cuba, and that this brigade indeed had to be removed because this act contravened certain gentlemen's agreements between us. And several Senators indicated that if this brigade was not removed, they would not ratify the SALT II treaty, which was a cornerstone of Carter's foreign policy. So the aim of the government was to try and get the Soviets to remove the brigade. The unfortunate fact was that the Soviets had not introduced a new brigade at all. They had had that brigade there for twenty years ever since the Cuban missile crisis. But the United States government simply forgot about it. We didn't know it was there.

Q: This is part of the problem of no institutional memory.

BREMENT: That is definitely a problem of no institutional memory. And, oddly enough, we had the photographs. It is not as though we didn't have photographs. But we just simply didn't have any analysts who were looking at those photographs with any real interest because the doings of a small brigade of 4,000 men was of no military consequence and no intelligence interest.

Q: How was Carter responding to this as far as you were seeing from reports or requests to you?

BREMENT: Carter was talking continually to various Senators and other politicians, including foreign leaders, about it. But he did not get into substance much. On that I simply think Carter said, lets settle this damn thing. And he left it up to Vance and Dobrynin to figure out some kind of solution.

Q: How was the thing worked out?

BREMENT: Well, finally, we sort of had to just put it aside. There was a limit on what the Soviets could be expected to do. That is essentially what Carter did. He made a speech saying that this is a bad thing and we have to worry about it. And indeed we are going to establish a Rapid Deployment Force to deal with threats such as the Soviet Brigade. But it is not important

enough to gainsay the important work we are doing on the SALT II treaty. I am still for the ratification of SALT. This is just the way it is and we have to live with it. That's the bottom line on that one. But an awful lot of work went into that. It certainly wasn't the line I was recommending.

Q: Well, let me ask how. Here you are in charge of Soviet affairs on the NSC. How did you get your information and how did you work with the other agencies, including State and Defense?

BREMENT: I got all the cables that the State Department gets and I had contacts with people in various positions in the various agencies. There was an NIO for Soviet affairs in the CIA, Arnold Horelick; Assistant Secretary for Europe in the State Department, George Vest; there wasn't one person in the Defense Department who was an exact counterpart, but I would deal quite a bit with Walt Slocum on the brigade crisis. We formed a group at the Under Secretary level of the various departments. It included David Newsom, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the State Department, Deputy Director of the CIA Carlucci, Under Secretary of Defense Walt Slocum and we would deal with it. I would call meetings and we would go over it almost day by day to make sure we were all reading from the same script. I can't think of anything special that we did that would be surprising, but using the NSC position is the natural way to get various agencies together.

Q: What I am trying to get is the picture. This is not saying, "Oh my God we've got a crisis here in Afghanistan" so you would run and sit down at your typewriter and type out something...

BREMENT: Well, what would happen when you say "Oh my God we've got a crisis in Afghanistan" is that there will be a meeting of the real National Security Council, chaired by the President. To prepare the President for the meeting I would write a memo from Brzezinski to the President and a covering memo from me to Brzezinski, getting the President and Brzezinski ready for that National Security Council meeting. Then, growing out of that National Security Council meeting, there would be decisions taken of various kinds. Since they were Presidential decisions it would be my function to see that those decisions are indeed implemented, which would mean in some cases, if it was clearly a State Department function, I would simply liaise with the Assistant Secretary of State who dealt with the matter. Or if it was an inter-agency question, as in say Afghanistan, then I would call a group together and we would deal with certain basic questions on how we are going to handle it. And then indeed if some special committee grows out of this work, like I ran an inter-agency committee on getting the word out on what was happening in Afghanistan, that would be a different group of people, at a lower level, but always making sure that everybody was aware of what was going on.

Q: Were there any injunctions on you all, not you specifically but anyone within the National Security Council staff, Brzezinski or anyone saying "Don't go around and say the President wants this or the President wants that." You know this idea that other departments get somebody sometimes from the National Security Council staff speaking as though this were a direct order from the President. Were you under caveats to watch out for this or not?

BREMENT: I can't recall any specifically, but it is quite possible that he may have said something like that in a general staff meeting. I am pretty careful about things like that myself.

But it is true that a lot of people on the staff suffer from White House sickness, and just can't get over the awe they feel at being there. And they indeed try to make anything they do sound like the President just told them to do this. It comes from a certain inferiority complex, because you are dealing in almost all cases with people who are well above you in seniority.

I was certainly doing that as a Foreign Service Officer, because the people I dealt with were usually more or less at the same level. But on important matters I dealt with the Assistant Secretary for Europe, or the Under Secretary. These were people who were very eminent within the Foreign Service and I was just another senior officer at the time. And so you have got to get used to that. But indeed when some people are placed in that kind of a position, they tend to not handle it with grace. But it was a very thin staff. I really had nobody working for me. So I would go to these interagency meetings and if there were tasks to do, everybody else would go back and have somebody to do it, whereas if I had to do it I had to do it by myself.

Q: Probably a healthy inhibitor sometimes.

BREMENT: It is, yes. I am convinced of the importance to the United States of having a strong and very capable NSC staff with really top people in it. That is absolutely essential to our system of government. But I think the staff should be small.

Q: I've heard that he was suspicious of the Foreign Service. Did you find this?

BREMENT: I don't think Zbig was suspicious particularly, of the Foreign Service. He had a number of Foreign Service Officers working for him. I think he was pretty contemptuous of the State Department. And indeed I think that even if you are a Foreign Service Officer, when you sit over there in the White House and see what comes out of the State Department for the President of the United States, you grow pretty contemptuous of the State Department.

Q: What's the problem?

BREMENT: It's a repeated problem. It is just that the State Department functions for the Secretary of State and they will send something over to the White House uncleared by anyone of importance that they would never send to the Secretary of State. It's a question of overloaded staff work. I am talking about routine stuff. The problem is roughly this: you are coming up to an Economic Summit and you get a request for a talking paper from the State Department. The President is going to see the Japanese Prime Minister, and what should the President say to the Japanese Prime Minister? So the request goes to the junior guy on the Japan desk who has just joined the government and he sits down and writes his idea of what the President should say to the Japanese Prime Minister. And then he sends it out to 38 offices for clearance and they all come back with their own particular axe to grind. He should definitely raise the question of the Honda plant in Harlingen, Texas, or whatever, where they are not using union labor or some such thing. He dutifully puts it all in there. And so by the time he is finished he has a whole tome on U.S.-Japanese relations, which runs 7 or 8 pages single spaced.

Unfortunately, what happens is that this then makes its way through the bureaucracy, through everybody who is busy with other things, particularly if there is a Summit coming on. And you

get it over there on the NSC staff, and you have this 8 page single spaced document and you look at the schedule and you find that the President is only going to be talking to the Japanese Prime Minister on a drive from the Canadian Embassy to the British Embassy.

And so you file it in the wastepaper basket and write your own memo saying you are going to be seeing Nomura on a ten minute drive to the British Embassy and the only thing you should really raise with him is the question of supporting the exchange rate which you talked about the last time, because the Japanese really haven't been doing anything about this other than putting us off. And then you send that in to the President. And if you feel nasty you send the State Department's memo in to Brzezinski, with a little note saying this is what the State Department thinks the President should say to the Japanese Prime Minister in a 13-minute limousine ride.

The State Department simply doesn't function well. President after President feels, with good reason, that the State Department has its own agenda. It is not there to support him. It spends its time explaining and is supporting the other side. And that's often the State Department position. They feel obligated to present the Canadian position, say, which is fine. You should present the Canadian position. But then you shouldn't defend it. If the Secretary gets captured by the State Department, then he begins to be seen that way.

Q: How was Vance seen by you all in the NSC?

BREMENT: One of the real problems of the Carter administration was that Vance and Brzezinski both had world views and these world views were diametrically opposite. Carter, I think, thought this was a good thing because it gave him the chance to judge between them. But the net result was that the United States position on issue after issue would be decided by Carter based on how he felt that particular morning. Since he didn't have any grand world view, there was never any consistency in what was being conveyed, so that the Soviet Union for one, simply shrugged their shoulders and gave up. They couldn't figure out what the United States was up to. I mean when the Soviets sent a Soviet general to Ethiopia to command Ethiopian troops using great hunks of Soviet military equipment to combat the Eritrean rebels and to go up against the Somalians, we didn't say boo. We didn't say a word; we didn't do anything when Sharansky was sent to Siberia.

Q: The well known dissident...

BREMENT: The well known Jewish dissident, we indeed made representations and we cut off a few exchanges just to show our displeasure. Well what the hell are the Soviets going to make out of that one? They are going to make out of that they could do whatever they wanted in Ethiopia and the United States really didn't care. But that is a mistake, that is terrible. It sends the wrong signal. In that sense we have a heavy responsibility ourselves for the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan. The Soviets could not appreciate what the American reaction was going to be.

Q: This was a period of expanded adventurism in Africa.

BREMENT: Yes, indeed, and we'll get to Afghanistan in a minute.

Q: but ...

BREMENT: Also Southeast Asia.

Q: How were you responding, you were writing up things for Brzezinski...

BREMENT: Well I came at the end of it. So much really happened before my time on the job. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia was in the spring of '79 and I didn't get there until June of '79. So all that, the various things in Africa and Ethiopia, Angola, and so forth had taken place from '75 to '78 really.

Q: Well, where was Brzezinski standing on these?

BREMENT: Brzezinski was saying that the Soviets ought to be talked to about this. Vance was essentially saying we don't want to get into this kind of thing with the Soviets.

Q: When you were there what were the major...I suppose the major thing was Afghanistan?

BREMENT: Yes, the Soviet brigade in Cuba, followed by Afghanistan.

Q: Would you tell how you saw the Afghan thing and our reaction to it? And some of the players from your vantage point?

BREMENT: Well, the thing is we had enough indicators to see the Afghan thing developing. It looked pretty ominous, to the point that at the beginning of December we actually made some representations to the Soviets, but in a halfhearted way.

Marshall Shulman, who was Vance's advisor on Soviet affairs, was very much of the school that what we should be doing with the Soviets was increasing exchanges and trying to increase our links to the greatest extent possible; and that we shouldn't care what they do in the third world, which really wasn't of any major importance to us, shouldn't let it get in the way. These are bad people and they are going to keep doing bad things. We all know that. But there is a whole society out there that we have to reach. I think that was the general philosophy. I hope I am not misstating that. But the whole focus of the Carter administration in the fall of 1979 was on getting SALT ratified. So we were really under great pressure not to enlarge the Soviet threat unnecessarily. And the brigade in Cuba thing had been a fiasco, and made SALT II ratification almost impossible. Everybody understood that. So we were concentrating on playing down anything that might be happening with the Soviets other than making some representations when we caught the various indicators that they were building up along the border and it looked like they might be up to something. They indeed had sent Pavlovsky, the head of their infantry forces on a 10 week visit to Afghanistan during that period. And he was clearly looking around very carefully at the ground. But we couldn't really read that one and we weren't suppose to know about it so we couldn't complain. But it was too late. That was only a week or two before the adventure started.

Q: How was Carter responding to these developments?

BREMENT: I don't know if he was really being kept abreast of them or not. Essentially, that would be the function of his intelligence briefings, which I was not privy to. We certainly had enough indicators so he must have gotten some whiff that something might be in the offing. A full-scale invasion of Afghanistan clearly took him by surprise, as it did the CIA. In fact, he made a famous statement -- "I learned more about the Soviets last night than I did in my three previous years in office." This wasn't greeted by his Soviet advisor with great applause.

Q: Did you feel after this...Christmas eve wasn't it? that this was a whole new ball game as far as what you would be sending up?

BREMENT: Yes, it was clear right away that, first of all, the major aim of the administration, the SALT II agreement, was dead, and that it would have to be withdrawn from the Senate. That was the first thing. But it is an interesting example of the way the government functions that when I was looking around for ways for Carter to respond -- because there was a political necessity for the President of the United States to respond to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was too important an act for the President of the United States to simply shrug off. Yet when you started to look around at what the President of the United States could do about it, the answer was not too damn much. And so I spent the next couple of months fighting the battle of grain embargoes, and the battle of the Olympics, and those were the only two ways we thought we could respond to this horrendous development in an appropriate manner.

Q: You were looking around, these were think sessions, or what do you do? How to be beastly to the Russians?

BREMENT: Well, for instance, in December of 1980, when we thought they were going to invade Poland, as soon as something like this happens you think about every possible contingency and you make a list of thirty things that the President can do, which includes various military deployments, demarches, speeches at the UN, and so forth, but only very few had any teeth, would make any difference. And indeed when we thought about Afghanistan, we knew the things that were available right away. It didn't take any great imagination because you really can't come up with new ideas that have not been thought of before. A grain embargo was one thing. So we stopped selling grain to the Soviets and tried to get others to join us in an embargo to express international displeasure. We were singularly unsuccessful in doing that. Then we boycotted the Moscow Olympics. And indeed we put great pressure on various people to do that as well, to Helmut Schmidt's great displeasure. He claims that Warren Christopher had told him when he went through Europe that the United States was not going to boycott the Olympics and so Schmidt announced that the Germans wouldn't boycott them. And then he was told that we would. It made him feel very uncomfortable with the U.S. government. Of course Schmidt hated Brzezinski, and felt great contempt for Jimmy Carter.

Q: This was almost visceral would you say?

BREMENT: Visceral, yes.

Q: One last thing and then I will let you go. You mentioned concern over the invasion of Poland.

I recall this. This was 1980 when it looked like the Brezhnev doctrine was going to be re-done. How were you seeing it from your point of view?

BREMENT: From the intelligence coming in it seemed clear that they were going to invade. And we...I can't remember what I can say about this because it was all Top Secret at the time. I know that Brzezinski has sort of opened this up because he has written an article about it. But essentially we reacted in a way that led Brzezinski to claim that we stopped it. And this was of course at a period when Carter was very much a lame duck President.

Q: Did you have the feeling that Brzezinski was more Polish than American? I mean I'm not talking about loyalty, but I mean as far as his instincts, and all this, that he thought as a Pole and was centered on the Soviet Union?

BREMENT: I think Brzezinski was very conscious of the fact that he was Polish born, that he had an accent. And the fact that he was in the White House doing this job was a very important thing for him personally and a matter of great honor and trust that he would never treat lightly. But he was certainly a Polish-American and he used to have long conversations with the Pope in Polish. I remember being in his outer office listening to him talk to the Pope, but I think his focus was completely American. I think his Polish heritage influenced him in his view of the Russians. Yes, I think there was a certain visceral feeling there and I think they cordially returned it but I don't think it got in the way of policy decisions or judgments.

Q: One last thing, how do we view Brzezinski, he wasn't quite doddering...this was towards the end, but this was '79 to '81 did you feel that Brzezinski was pretty much in command of things?

BREMENT: Oh very much so, yes. Very few people in the government were as in command of their in-box, if any, as Brzezinski.

Q: Excuse me, I have said this completely wrong, I meant Brezhnev.

BREMENT: I was wondering about doddering. Yes, Brezhnev was in bad shape. We knew from intelligence that he was working two or three hours a day and even at that he was having trouble concentrating. When he met with Carter in Vienna, in June '79, when Carter would raise something, one of Brezhnev's aids would hand him an index card, and he would read the answer. He was not capable of handling it by himself. He was sort of the living dead.

Q: Was this sort of disturbing to everyone, because who was in charge? Where do you...?

BREMENT: It really was disturbing. And indeed I think the invasion of Afghanistan might well have been different if the Soviets had had a leader who was fully in command of the situation and the entire broad picture. I am always curious to know what Gromyko did about that. He presumably should have had the function of arguing against it, because of the way it would affect relations not only with the United States, but with the West, the third world. It was an absolutely disastrous decision for the Soviets, the beginning of the end of the Brezhnev security system, that Gromyko had worked so hard to set up.

THOMAS R. HUTSON
Consul General
Moscow (1978-1980)

Thomas R. Hutson was born in Nebraska in 1939. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska in 1962 he served in the US Army from 1962-1967. His career has included positions in Teheran, Belgrade, Winnipeg, Moscow, Lagos, Taipei, Belgrade, Bishkek, and Mazar-e-Sharif. Mr. Hutson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 1999.

HUTSON: Finally, I should mention that I was assigned to Winnipeg for three years. One day I received a call from Bob Barry who was then the head of EUR/SOV. He told that Ambassador Toon would like to have me in Moscow to be his consul-general. I told Barry that I would be delighted with the assignment; I then asked whether he had checked with the Office for Security. I mentioned that because I had been nominated twice for assignment in the Soviet Union and SY had turned me down because my Latvian wife had relatives there. Barry thought he could take care of that problem and indeed he did. Later I saw my records and this transaction was straightforward. The ambassador had been asked; he was aware of the issue, but didn't think it should be a barrier to my assignment.

Q: We are now talking about 1978. Did you take any Russian training before leaving for Moscow?

HUTSON: Having studied Russian extensively previously, I went to FSI for just some brushing up for about six weeks and then left for Moscow, arriving in September, 1978. I stayed there until February, 1980. As I said, I was the consul general.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet Union when you arrived? What was the state of U.S.-Soviet relations in 1978?

HUTSON: I had learned to have a great fondness for the "Great Russian Soul." I got largely from the White Russians with whom I had studied in Monterey. I had learned all the old Russian songs, etc. So I really was looking forward to my tour in Moscow. I had considerable sympathy for the people - not the system. I was immediately struck by the system. I changed my views in a hurry from someone who thought that eventually the system would change drastically to one who came to believe that the system had be terminated. It could never change enough. I agreed with Reagan's description of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." I saw so many people who had been adversely affected by the system. Of course, that is the nature of a consular office; it sees many more dissatisfied people then any other embassy section.

The embassy was a "zoo." We did not manage the work; it managed us. During my tour, we witnessed the greatest emigration of Russian Jews in history. It was arranged by the Dutch, who set up a route through Rome and Vienna which eventually brought many of the emigrants to the U.S. In 1979, there were 50,000 Jewish emigrants. What is not well known is that in the same year, 10,000 Armenians also left the Soviet Union. Included were a number of "undesirables"

that the Soviet authorities added to the flow.

It was also the year in which the seven Pentecostal Christians took refuge in the basement of the embassy. President Carter had given specific approval to giving this group political asylum. There were also three Armenians with them. Ambassador Toon called me and told me that he did not want any more refugees in the embassy. He was one of the best ambassadors I ever worked for. So we managed to get the three Armenians out. I worked assiduously to find another “home” for the Pentecostal Christians. That took five years! (Long after I had left).

Q: What did you try to do to get them out of the country?

HUTSON: I talked to them to try to convince them to leave. I talked and talked and talked to them. We negotiated with the Soviets who maintained that these were Soviet citizens and therefore subject to Soviet laws. They gave us no assurances not to prosecute. They would not tell us whether the Christians had violated any Soviet laws, which gave us concern. This group turned out to be a major work-load. We had two staffers who essentially spent all of their time taking care of them; they were also responsible for answering the large volume of mail that we received about the Pentecostals; the letters came from all over the world and were unanimously supporting them. I had been exposed to Pentecostal Christians in other parts of the world. They are essentially strong believers in their faith; the ones who took refuge in the embassy had literally walked across the Soviet Union and managed to slip by the Soviet militiamen guarding the embassy. And they refused to leave the embassy to return to their country. They were convinced that anyone who entered their room - and there were many who wanted to help and talk to them - had been sent by God to help them. So they trusted all their visitors. We had other devout believers who came from the U.S. to see them. Among the seven were three teen age daughters. We even heard that some of these people might try to impregnate them so that the children could be born on U.S. territory and therefore be able to claim American citizenship. That, some thought, would have increased the humanitarian rationale for letting them emigrate.

Then of course we had major attention from the press. I remember one time when Dan Fisher, the correspondent for *Los Angeles Times* wrote a scurrilous piece suggesting that we had deprived the Pentecostals of a Christmas tree and toilet paper. We did try to prevent these people from receiving items that might be considered illegal or contraband by the Soviets. They didn't have diplomatic privileges so that we tried to stick by the rules as much as we could. But the newspaper article was completely false and even though I was very friendly with Dan, I told him that I thought he had done a terrible thing.

So these people were a major work-load for the embassy. Toon, whom as I said, I greatly respected, used to vent periodically and insist that I get the Pentecostals out of the embassy. He used to say, “This is my embassy. Get them out of there!” I would then go to talk to them, without avail. Toon was replaced by Thomas J. Watson, Jr. - the retired chairman of IBM - ; he spent a lot of time with the Pentecostals talking to them, unlike Toon who didn't want to see them. He did agree to meet with them on a couple of occasions. Also to no avail I must say that their stay in the embassy was quite an educational experience for me. After I left the Foreign Service, I moved to Texas. There I ran into one of the organizations who criticized us the most for the way we handled the Pentecostals. It was called “Christ for the Nations Institute,”

headquartered in Dallas. The Vashchenkos and Chymykhals have a world-wide following, particularly in Switzerland and the UK. During the 1978-83 period, they wanted to know why we cooperated with those God-hating heathens - the Soviets. They suggested we put the seven into diplomatic pouches and fly them out that way. So when I was living in Houston, I called the executive director of this organization - a woman by the name of Freda Lindsay. I called her in 1982 on the fourth anniversary of their asylum which this organization was celebrating. Ms. Lindsay invited me to come to Dallas; she said she would give me three minutes to speak in their celebration program.

She didn't realize that I was a former gospel singer. I had also done a fair amount of preaching in my life. So I took 33 minutes. I may not have spoken "in tongues" but they did tape my sermon and sent me a copy. I have never let anyone else listen to it; it was so far out of my normal speech that it would almost be unrecognizable. But since this is my oral history, I will mention that episode. It was a unique experience.

Q: When you arrived in 1978, what did you conclude about the state of U.S.-Soviet relations?

HUTSON: That was the number one issue on the U.S. agenda. I remember Senator Baker visiting Moscow; he was heading a very large CODEL. They were interested in assessing prospects for the SALT treaties. I should mention an interesting aspect of this visit. One of the members of the delegation was Senator Jacob Javits of New York. He was a brilliant man. He was part of the delegation, but didn't travel with it. He came in his own private plane. I was the nominal control officer, although the real "control" officer was Armand Hammer, the head of Occidental Oil. All the details of the visit were handled by Hammer personally. I used to call him frequently to check and get his approval on every move the delegation might make. One of the meetings was with Yevgenii Primakov who was then heading an economic research think tank. I remember Javits commenting during the meeting that he thought that someday the Soviet Union would have to deal with international economic and financial institutions, perhaps to seek their assistance. He told Primakov that the Soviets better figure out how they would approach those institutions. I was reminded of that comment when later Prime Minister Primakov was flying to the U.S. to seek the assistance of the IMF. He never got here because in mid-flight he had to return to Moscow because we started the idiotic bombing of Yugoslavia.

The relationship between the two countries was as good as it could be. Brezhnev was still in charge. I will never forget the first Marine ball that we attended. It was held in Spaso House. It was attended by at least a thousand people. Soviets came and one could feel the warmth of *detente*, despite some tensions. A Marine colonel, the assistant naval attaché, was at odds with the ambassador. He was a great supporter of the Pentecostals. In fact, on my own, I had taken him privately into the "tank" - the secure conference room in the embassy - to talk to him about the issue. He was giving information to British Pentecostal organizations in England which he would not give to the embassy. He was obviously conflicted by his faith and his official duties. I told him that and suggested that he decide where his loyalties lay. His wife went after me during the Reagan administration in an attempt to blemish my record. I heard that she lobbied against me having a political appointment in the Reagan Administration because I allegedly tried to defend the State Department in the Pentecostal affair. So we had this tension at the Marine ball which was obvious when the ambassador and this senior Marine colonel met at the ball.

I think the colonel, as well as others, thought that through our actions we were pushing for the emigration of Soviet Jewry, but didn't really care about the Christians. He kept pointing out what we had done for the Jews and asking why we weren't doing more for the Pentecostals. That was the tension. I think for a U.S. military officer not to share information with his own embassy which he will share with representatives of foreign governments is a little beyond the pale.

Q: Did you detect any bias in the U.S. policy which supported Jewish emigration more than Christian?

HUTSON: I think that slowly but surely a balance was being achieved. It was slow in coming, but there was a beginning. At the time, the Christian fundamentalists were not as strong politically in the U.S. as they are today. In retrospect, I do recall that Billy Graham was active as was Olin Robison, the president of Middlebury College, whom Carter sent as an envoy to assist the Pentecostals. The major difference is that Soviet Jewry had an established infrastructure in the Soviet Union. There were a number of well publicized cases, such as Sakharov, Ginsberg, etc. The consular section was the point of contact in the American embassy and the Jews could enter our facilities to discuss consular matters; they were not allowed into the chancery to discuss political matters. So we became quite familiar with these émigrés and talked to them regularly.

There was a Ukrainian priest, a Mr. Moroz, who got considerable help in his efforts to emigrate. But most of the assistance went to the Soviet Jews.

Q: Was there any sentiment among your contacts that we were giving preferential treatment to one group of Soviets and not others?

HUTSON: Not very much. I already mentioned to you the one case of tension in the embassy, but it was not a widespread view. There was an assistant air attaché who had views similar to the Marine colonel's, but I didn't sense that view in information we were receiving from the press or CODELs or other visitors.

Q: Tell us a little about your contact with Soviet officials.

HUTSON: The Soviets had known of me for quite a while, starting from my first assignment in Iran. They knew I spoke Russian. I had a "friend" who later became chief of the Soviet KGB station in Iran. So my dossier was quite full. I was a known commodity to them when I appeared in Moscow and I assume that they were not unhappy to see me since they knew so much about me already. I would describe my relations with the Soviet authorities as "correct." I had one close contact, who was probably a KGB agent, who was an expert of Soviet emigration. His wife was an administrator at the Bolshoi. That gave us an entry and enabled us to get tickets to the Bolshoi whenever we needed them. I used that route on a couple of occasions, but I knew that it was always available if needed. I had very frank discussions with the KGB officer about Soviet emigration policy. He was very frank with me which just reinforced my view that he was indeed a KGB agent.

At the time, I was writing a new policy paper which I called "the depoliticization of Soviet

Jewish emigration.” I thought we should let them go to wherever they wanted to go rather than have having go through this tortured route through Rome and Vienna and then go to Israel.

Q: How was the process for getting people out of the Soviet Union?

HUTSON: For us it was relatively simple because the Dutch did all the paperwork. One year I visited the Dutch embassy on Christmas Day. I saw the cheerful Dutch consul - Geoffrey Van Fleet - personally issuing over three hundred visas on that day. For years, I have tried to get him to tell his story. He kept copious records on the applicants - where they came from, their family backgrounds, their histories. Eventually, the Dutch ambassador wrote a book - several years later - about this process; VanFleet contributed to this book, but never wrote a full exposition of his experiences. He always thought that the story was not his to tell; it was Israel's whose interests the Dutch were representing. I contacted a number of Jewish organizations to see whether they would not be interested in VanFleet's story. I thought he was a latter day Raoul Wallenberg; he did incredible things. He bribed people all over the Soviet government to help Jewish emigration. The political dimension of the emigration by this time had pretty well evaporated; now it was strictly a matter of income for the bureaucrats.

Q: Didn't the Soviets require reimbursement for the alleged education that these people had gotten?

HUTSON: Yes. It was a fig-leaf for collecting money. But most of the bribes went into the bureaucrats' pockets. Some must have gotten fabulously rich. I still think that Van Fleet's story would have been a great addition to the history of the times. The ambassador's tale was not first hand and was much too much an academic endeavor. Geoff's narrative would have been much more personal and emotional.

Q: Explain to us how the emigration system worked?

HUTSON: Israel had no diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The Dutch had been designated to represent Israeli interests. If a Soviet Jew wanted to leave his or her country, he or she would need an invitation from a relative living in Israel. Then the Soviets might issue an exit permit. That was the way most of Soviet Jewry left. In fact, that is how the Pentecostal Christians in our embassy eventually left. They had invitations from "relatives" (real or contrived) in Israel. So this process became the main avenue for Jewry to leave the USSR. Of course, the invitation was only the first step. A number of the Jews had security clearance from their employment in scientific or military activities, which prevented them from leaving for a period of time. The U.S. embassy became heavily involved in making representations to the Soviets on behalf of these cases. I don't think we made much of an impact, but we went through the steps. I think I can only recall a half-a-dozen cases where one could see our representation having a relatively immediate impact. For example, one such intervention was made by Vice President Mondale. When we took his views to the Soviets, there was an immediate positive response.

I took one of these cases up as a personal matter. I told the Soviet bureaucrat that I needed a favor. I was advocating an exit permit for the sister of one of our language instructors at FSI. She had mental problems; she had a daughter that essentially lived on the streets of Kiev in the

Ukraine. Fortunately, the Soviets actually helped in this case. The irony of that case is when the sister and daughter arrived in the U.S., our teacher didn't want the daughter, who then started to live on the streets of Washington. Then the sister joined her daughter. Finally we had to ask the Soviets to take these two women back, which they did. So the Soviets every once in a while would make a humanitarian gesture.

Q: So in the case of the Soviets Jews, you were essentially there to help.

HUTSON: That is right. There were at least two officers in the political section who also worked on these cases. We certainly spent much more time on Soviet Jewry than on Soviet Christians.

Q: What other activities were you responsible for?

HUTSON: The work involving the Pentecostals and Soviet Jewry was largely informational. The political section reported on these issues; we worked on statistics and we maintained contact with the various players in these dramas.

Our heavy workload came from emigration cases that became headline material. There were at least twenty-five American correspondents in Moscow at the time. A man by the name of Yuriy Vashchenko blew himself up in my office; he was trying to leave the Soviet Union. There was an American woman formerly from Soviet Georgia who tried to smuggle out ancient ceramics. These were all front page material for the American press, but a heavy workload for us.

One other part of the job - which I hated - but I think did well was to prevent others from imitating the Pentecostals. My job was to talk them out of seeking refuge in the embassy. I hated doing that. Sometimes, this would take days - 24 hours per day. We managed to get all of them out. I succeeded in my assignment, but it was not a happy one. I didn't use physical force on any of potential asylum seekers, but we everything short of that. We had teams consisting of such stellar officers as Alexander "Sandy" Vershbow, Steve Mann, and Ben Fairfax who worked with these people. Some of the embassy staff were very good at this task. I think by this time it was more or less evident that the Pentecostals had not advanced their cause by staying. They were still in the basement. We used to say to new seekers that the longer they stayed in the embassy, the greater the ire they would generate in the Soviet government and correspondingly reduce their chances of ever leaving the USSR.

If they had a basis for an emigration visa - e.g. relatives in some foreign country - or if they had some other valid rationale for leaving, then we could urge to leave with some hope. There were other cases in which we just outright lied. We did whatever we could to get these "unwanted" visitors out of the embassy. Had we not done that, we would have been overwhelmed by such people. I was commended for my efforts in this process, but in retrospect, I think I should have refused to participate. But at the time, I saw no choice except to do the job as defined by my bosses. Even when Latvians came in - and as I mentioned, my wife was born in Latvia - I would talk them into leaving, even though I was sure in my own mind that they would have been better off in an embassy asylum than outside the gates. They had a better chance of emigrating by remaining in the embassy than by leaving.

Q: Describe the process that these refugees went through. I assume they had trouble just getting into the embassy grounds. Did you find out what happened to them after they left the embassy compound?

HUTSON: There were several ways these people sought refuge. There were people who had legitimate consular business; they would bring me documents necessary to transact some action. At the time, we had practically no embassy American security; we relied entirely on Soviet militiamen; they provided security services. At the beginning, we hoped that people could pass that Soviet screening; we were not anxious to have the militiamen serve as a barrier to people who wanted to deal with us. Later of course, we changed our views 180%. So if a Soviet citizen, or any other foreigner, had a valid document - a letter of invitation, some pension claim or an estate case, etc - they would be permitted to enter the consular section.

There were others who tried to run the Soviet gauntlet in masse. They would try to rush by the militiamen and enter the premises.

Those in the first group, which had some documentation that legitimized their visit to the embassy, who wanted to seek asylum gave us more time to discuss the issues with them. Those who rushed in were awaited by the militiamen who would grab them as soon as they left the embassy grounds and probably give them a thorough beating. That made it much more difficult for us to persuade them to leave, but we had to do it knowing that their future was going to be a very rough one for sometime to come. Those were our instructions.

Q: Earlier, you mentioned a case of a man who tried to blow himself up in your office. When was that?

HUTSON: March 28, 1979. A man came into the embassy; we had no metal detectors, and was not searched by the Soviet militiamen because he was escorted by one of the embassy's officers. The son of our Naval Attaché had taken a year off from his academic studies at Yale to learn and practice Russian. He lived in Moscow with his father and spent a lot of time with Soviet people of his age. That is how he practiced his Russian. In this way, he met a former seaman who had worked on a Soviet commercial fleet. He was homeless and lived illegally on the Moscow subway. That young man began to pester the American youth about getting help to leave the USSR. That was not unusual; I think most embassy staff had been approached at least once by someone wishing to leave the USSR. We would explain to these people what the general criteria were and what the individual's prospects for emigration really were. If prospects seemed a possibility, we would invite them for an interview. We might even do that for people who had no chance, but who were making pests of themselves with our colleagues.

This seaman really fell in that second category. He had given some letters in Russian to the American, who had shared them with his father. I think the letters clearly indicated that there was something wrong with the Russian; they were not what we would have considered "normal." So in an effort to help the young American out, my colleague went out to get the seaman and brought him into the embassy; thus bypassing any screening by the Soviet militiamen. This was not really exceptional; there was a lot of this going on. Once inside the building, the seaman was taken into the consular section's "little room" - an allegedly secret room where we listened to the

stories of potential emigrants. My colleague listened to the seaman for 10 or 15 minutes and essentially said that at the moment there didn't seem to be any opportunity for emigration to the U.S., but that we would be in contact if any possibility arose.

This is now late winter in Moscow. Outside it was very cold. He was warmly dressed. He sat down in our waiting room and started to take off one layer of clothing after another. He finally came to a metal object that was strapped around his waist. That had a coat-hanger-like rod hanging from it. He then announced that unless he was allowed to emigrate, he would blow the embassy up. That was the beginning of a saga that went on for about nine hours. We cleared out the waiting room and eventually got the seaman inside escorted by two embassy officers - the one that interviewed him and another who was very good at handling people. The consular section which was on the first floor of the north wing of the embassy complex was cleared out. We got Soviet fire trucks to come stand by; television cameras were there in mass. After a couple of hours, I relieved my two colleagues and became the sole interlocutor for the Soviet seaman - as chief of the consular section, I thought that this was my responsibility. In retrospect, it was one of the few times in my life that I was glad I smoked cigarettes; that got me through a thoroughly draining seven hours. Between the two of us, we smoked all the cigarettes we had.

After many long conversations, we finally came to a bottom line: couldn't we just help the seaman out by his case considered by Moscow State University. He had been an officer in the merchant fleet and had applied to the university after he left the sea. He had not been accepted because, in his view, his family was not part of the *nomeklatura*. He viewed his turn down as the result of lack of political "strings."

We finally got a Soviet bomb expert to come into the embassy under the guise of being a Moscow State University official. He was supposed to look at the device that the seaman had, which looked like the metal back of a seat from a subway car. It had straps and was in the shape of such a seat. The expert looked at the device warily. I was sitting in the little room with the seaman. At the time, we were still using the heavy consular impression seal, which I was tempted to use as a weapon - hitting the seaman on his hand or arm before he could pull the wire to his device. However, that seal had a joint in it and that meant some different strategies than just a outright attack. I had envisioned several different scenarios.

The bomb expert seemed eager to be very helpful. He promised to help in whatever way he could. After studying the device for a while, he concluded that it may well be a bomb. As I said before, the seaman and I had smoked constantly until we ran out of cigarettes. I finally decided that we needed more cigarettes and I got up and left the room. I thought the seaman might then take the opportunity to pull the pin, but he didn't. So he was left in the room all by himself.

The Soviets wanted me to return to continue my efforts to get him out without an incident. Jerry Tolson, the security officer who was a good friend and Ambassador Toon said absolutely not. The Soviets then asked permission to take extraordinary measures to try to disable the seaman - sharpshooters or other deadly force. It would have been possible, given the location of the small room, to take shots into someone in that room. Ben Reed, the Department's executive secretary, was telling Toon by telephone from the Department not to allow any shooting in the embassy. Toon however took the position that this was his embassy and that the Soviets could do what

they felt they had to do to their own citizen. And that is what the Soviets did. The seaman was sufficiently visible through a window that he could be shot and he was. He was hit a couple of times in his arms and legs. He ran out of this small room into my office and pulled the pin. Something went off and the area became a mess. It turned out that he had a flash bomb. The seaman died on the way to the hospital having been dragged out by the Soviet firemen who had entered our building to put down the flames. They also used lots and lots of tear gas - remnants of which stuck in the rooms for months. Our safes were still open; we were ill prepared from such an invasion. The seaman was burned; he was not blown to bits, but the Soviets maintained that he died on the way to the hospital.

At the time, we had a junior officer in Kiev by the name of Vladimir Sambaier - now in EB. He had been working in the General Services section of the embassy and then had been sent to Kiev. He had just returned to the embassy a few weeks earlier. He went to work on the wreckage and had us back working within 24 hours. He received all sorts of commendations for his work - mostly written by me. He did a superb job. When I later asked him how he managed to accomplish this feat, he just said that he had paid every off - he just bribed everyone and got the job done.

I must add an unfortunate footnote to this story. The officer who had gone to help the naval attaché's son was "hung out to dry" by Malcolm Toon in an uncharacteristic way for that man. Mac Toon wasn't very fond of the officer to start with. He then thought that he had violated standard operating procedures in what he had done with the seaman. In fact, there was no SOP for such a situation. What was done was based on precedent; that is the way cases like this had been handled before and that was the way this case was managed. But Toon took advantage of the situation and made the officer accountable for something that had precedent. He was transferred to South Africa. *The New York Times* correspondent reported that this poor fellow had been sent to the U.S. equivalent of "Siberia." Eventually, this officer left the FS. I had to write his last Moscow efficiency report, in which I criticized him primarily for his lack of drafting skills. I probably would have written the same report had the seaman incident not occurred. He then went to work for the CIA; he was very bitter about his Moscow experience. I think he was a good officer who had been treated unfairly. It was not one of Toon's finest hours; he was wrong. Toon having been a Navy officer should have recognized that the embassy was his "ship"; he was responsible for its operations and not some lowly officer. He should have taken responsibility on his own shoulders! The lower level officer should not have been punished for what he did.

Q: Tell us more about the woman who "hid" her jewels on her way out of the USSR.

HUTSON: She was an American citizen from Chicago. She was born in Soviet Georgia. She had visited her family in Georgia. They gave her some very valuable ceramics -- real antiquities -- that she was supposed to smuggle out. As she went through customs at the airport, Soviet authorities discovered the antiquities. She was arrested. I went to visit her. I'll never forget that episode.

I met the Soviet official and the woman in his office. When the American found out what the penalty might be, she literally vomited on the official's desk and on him. It was either the

greatest act I have ever witnessed or the damsel was in real distress. It was a sight! The official screamed. It was at about this time that Senators Adlai Stevenson and Charles Percy were coming to the USSR -- both from Illinois. Both knew Soviet policy well. They helped us to work on this case which we finally resolved.

There was never anything routine. The moment something unusual happened, the press was all over it. That meant that we would be devoting our time almost exclusively to that event, until a resolution was found.

Q: There must have been a number of cases of people trying to smuggle out information, or people handing other people letters, or people trying to smuggle Bibles in, etc. How did you deal with such cases and how were they eventually resolved?

HUTSON: We dealt with each in a “full court press” mode. We would go to the Foreign Ministry - the consular department-which often would refer the issue to the political department, which meant that the DCM or the political counselor would have to get involved. Occasionally, even the ambassador would have to get involved. Mac Toon was very familiar with consular processes, having negotiated the consular convention between the USSR and the U.S. Mac knew his stuff; he didn’t need much prepping. That was one of the reason he was great to work for.

That changed considerably when Thomas Watson became ambassador. All consular work was new to him. He had the aura of being a “captain of industry” who had flown lend-lease planes across the Soviet Union. The theory was that the Soviets liked to talk to a “captain of industry”; that he could cut a better deal with them because of his reputation. That didn’t seem to pan out.

Q: I think that appointment was made by President Carter in an effort to change the relationships between the two countries.

HUTSON: Of course, it didn’t help that soon after his arrival the ambassador had to face the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. That pretty much soured the atmosphere for arms control negotiations.

Q: Let me go back to the issue of what happened to people who broke the customs laws and regulations. What happened to them? Was it a problem for you?

HUTSON: These really were “run of the mill” violations, but they used to escalate because of the press interest. Most of them were kept in confinement for a while and then were released, sometimes because of political pressure coming from the U.S. Probably the more effective means of exerting that pressure was through the Soviet embassy in Washington. None of these violators stayed in confinement too long. People who were put in prison were usually not kept in Moscow, but rather were sent to prison camps outside the city - usually far away which might then take 26 or 48 hours to reach. At one time, we had three Americans in one of those camps. They were caught smuggling 38 kilos of heroin from Malaysia to the Netherlands. They took a cheap flight on Aeroflot which stopped in Moscow en route. The Soviet authorities may have been tipped off or it was just circumstances - allegedly there was a malfunction on the aircraft which required a change of planes requiring going through customs at which time the heroin was

found. The three Americans were sentenced to five, seven and eight years in prison camp. This happened before I got to Moscow.

We were required to visit the Americans at least once each quarter. The Soviets would bring them to Moscow and we would visit with them in a prison there. In fact, one of them tried to write a book together with George Feiffer -- a well known writer on Soviet matters. The book would have been called "The King of Thieves." The American who would have been at the center of this book claimed that he had almost taken over the camp beating the Soviets at their own corruption game. He became a super-patriot while in this prison camp and apparently converted from being a thug to being a hero. It was a great story in which I invested both in the writing of the book and the supposed follow-on movie. I lost my house and most of my savings on that investment although the project is still alive.

There were many, many minor cases, but they were usually resolved in four or five days.

Q: I guess you were playing the customary consular game in which officials of both sides are interested in getting the violators out of the country. They are just too much trouble for both sides as long as the foreigner is kept in jail.

HUTSON: I think that was true in the USSR. In Yugoslavia, on the other hand, the officials liked to put Americans into jail. I may have mentioned earlier the story of George Sodić, a man from Chicago. He was sentenced to five years in jail for anti-regime comments. We worked and worked on this case and eventually got him released after six months. That was the toughest case I ever handled.

Q: Did you get a chance to travel around the Soviet Union on business?

HUTSON: To my great regret, no. That was because I worked seven days per week - 24/7. There was just no relief. I did go to Leningrad a couple of times, largely to go to Helsinki. The only time I managed to go on a personal trip to Riga, Latvia. We specifically did not see my wife's relatives. It turned out that while we were there the Latvians celebrated the 60th anniversary of the independence of Free Latvia. That reinforced our - and my wife's especially - disdain for what the Soviets had done in Latvia. That was my only trip within the USSR. I did fly to Washington on several occasions; we had annual consular negotiations with the Soviets and then there were some other work-related matters. The publications procurement office had a travel program and were looking for people to send to various parts of the Soviet Union. But I never had the time.

I would have liked to see the Soviet Union. Initially, I was supposed to be on a three year assignment. I certainly hoped that before the end of my tour, I would be able to do a little traveling. But I ended up resigning after about 18 months.

Q: What speculation was there in the embassy in December 1979 on why the Soviets invaded Afghanistan?

HUTSON: I think there was great dismay when that happened. There were many embassy

officers who were hopeful that U.S.-USSR relations were about to improve considerably. This is when I stopped using “hope” as a basis for relationships between countries and used the word “expectations” instead. People were hopeful that detente and the SALT agreements would work. We all joined the Foreign Service - especially those who had studied the Soviet Union - in the hope of being to contribute to an amelioration of tensions in the relationships and to the “humanization” of the Soviet empire. The Afghan invasion was a major setback for the “hopeful” people. One just had to watch Ambassador Watson; he was sent to Moscow with a very lofty goal and all of a sudden, he had no reason for being there. All prospects for improvement in relations evaporated.

We had many discussions about this event among ourselves. I had just finished a metamorphose of my own, from being willing to give the Soviets a chance to a very hard liner who felt that the whole Soviet establishment had to change - with our support. I therefore found the Carter’s administration policy to be toothless. It was nothing. Anthony Lake would hem and haw on the issue. I happened to be back on home leave when the attempt to rescue our hostages in Iran failed miserably. That was a disaster; you don’t rescue people with eight helicopters flying long stretches over a desert. That was just poor judgment by the administration. I thought at the time that we should have done with Iran what we did later in the Gulf war - use maximum force.

So when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and provoked a toothless response from the Carter administration, I mentioned my views to the ambassador. He was similarly dismayed. With Malcolm Toon, I used to discuss consular affairs especially when we played deck tennis - which was not as frequently as we played tennis in Belgrade. But Toon certainly did not need my advice on political issues. Watson, on the other hand, listened to everyone. He used to boast that as chairman of IBM he used to spend 60% of his time talking to his people. I am a talker and have all kinds of ideas about policies. I used to think that Watson should take a page from a book written by Tom Enders, who was one of the best ambassadors I ever saw. He was the most brilliant and the most effective ambassador to Canada that we ever had.

I suggested that Thomas Watson, seen by the public as an unblemished captain of industry, go on a speaking tour in the U.S. so that the American public could hear what we understood to have happened. It was obvious to me that we were in for some heavy sledding ahead. We could not bank our hopes for better relations on disarmament and arms control. We had to confront the Soviet Union; it only understood raw power. I thought that we would have to put a lot on money into such an aggressive program, which eventually the Reagan administration did in order to seem militarily credible at a negotiating table. I tried to convince Ambassador Watson to take this approach. He did make a commitment when he was confirmed that he would return in six months time and make a report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

At one stage, he suggested that I undertake this speaking tour around the U.S. So, in fact, I did go on a speaking tour - I was a “hot” product. I am not sure that this program is used much more anymore. I spoke to the World Affair Councils in Seattle, California, Omaha and a couple of other places. I gave the Omaha “World Herald” a big interview - this being my home town newspaper, I knew a lot of the staff. I found myself in an immediate conflict of interest. The grain embargo to the USSR had just been invoked. I thought I would get the usual questions about living in Moscow, the conditions in the USSR, etc. But NO; the first question had to do

with my views of the grain embargo. I asked whether this interview was “on the record.” They asked me to say what ever I could. So I said that the grain embargo wouldn’t work. That was the view of the agricultural attaché, a wonderful man from South Dakota. At a country team meeting he told the ambassador that it wouldn’t work. After the meeting, the attaché was pulled aside and it was suggested that he keep comments like that to himself because his views would leak to the press greatly expanding the debate. In Omaha, I explained the administration’s position and rationale, but then off the record I reflected the views of the agricultural attaché. So, having to defend the administration while having serious reservations gave rise to major conflicts of interest.

This conflict eventually resulted in a major debate with my wife towards the end of home leave while we were staying with her brother in Kansas City. I had been in San Francisco where I had taken it upon myself to see Laurence Silberman - former ambassador to Yugoslavia and now an appeals court judge in Washington, DC. He was part of the Reagan foreign policy team, along with Fred Iklé and Richard Allen. I had actually left Belgrade before Silberman arrived, but my wife and children had remained behind to finish school. The Silbermans had been very kind to my family; our two youngest daughters were best of friends. He was a very blunt critic of the whole Yugoslav policy -- not being tough enough.

In any case, I went to see him to seek his advice. He was very kind and frank. He asked me what I intended to do if I resigned. He asked whether I was independently wealthy. Not even close!!! I told him about some of my business ideas and even a movie concept. His advice to me was that I select a field in which I could progress and stick to that and not dabble in a number of various fields. He didn’t encourage me to resign, but encouraged me to think a lot more about the future.

While on this home-leave speaking tour, I also served a couple of weeks as a reserve officer at DIA, updating biographies on Yugoslav military officers.

My family joined me in this home leave a few weeks later. By this time, I had come to the conclusion that I had to resign from the Foreign Service because I could not support our Soviet policy. As I said, my wife had a very active argument about my views, both in Seattle and Vancouver, where we were visiting some Canadian friends. But we came to no conclusion. But we did end up in Kansas City at Easter time, with my whole family and the major argument started again. I was still convinced that I had to leave the Foreign Service in light of U.S. policy.

After my interview with the “Omaha World-Herald”, the editor suggested that I resign from the FS and run for the U.S. Senate. I looked at him open mouthed, but understood that the “Herald” could be a king-maker in that part of the country. Eventually, I bit the bullet and told my wife that I was going to resign from the FS; then I told my mother. My plan was to go on the airwaves and announce my resignation and the reasons therefore. The “World Herald” was going to print my whole radio commentary. After my mother heard the broadcast, she called and asked me not to come home; she was canceling the family reunion. She had lived through the depression; she could not understand how anyone in their right mind could give up a government job. She called me just a “little fish in the ocean” whose views would not make an iota of difference. That was certainly one of the most difficult times in my life. If I had to do it over again, I would have resigned but done so quietly.

Q: What happened?

HUTSON: I had one very strong personal obligation - and that was to end it correctly. I had been shown in Washington a copy of what Anthony Lake - then the director of the State Department policy planning staff - had drafted as testimony for Cyrus Vance which he was to deliver to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee - after the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan. This statement went on at some length about U.S.-Soviet relations in 1980. As far as I was concerned, it was a "nothing" statement - full of platitudes reflecting the administration's view that the tension caused by Afghanistan would soon blow away. It is true that drafts go through a lot of hands before they become a finished product and do change in that process, but what I saw infuriated me. I went around and talked to people in the department; I talked to Marshal Shulman, an academic well known as a Soviet expert. I talked to Tom Enders, then the assistant secretary for Latin American Affairs. I talked to Marc Palmer who was well known in the Soviet field. People heard me out but I suspect I left a number wondering what I was doing. I spent a lot of time doing this and then I quit - I slammed the door behind me.

I went out to seek my fortune in the real world. I changed party registration (to Republican), I worked as a speaker for the National Republican Committee. I really didn't have the "dirt" that the Committee was really looking for; I had just a strong disagreement with the administration's policy. That made me somewhat less than an attractive speaker. I always tried to explain the administration's position as honestly and strongly and I could and then I would point out where I differed with it. I remember my mother, after getting over the shock of my decision, asking me what I intended to do. I told her that I did not intend to get a job; I was going to make a movie - among other dreams.

So I set out to make a movie and other things - e.g. backing some musicians. I returned to Nebraska and started a consulting firm. I got five people to invest \$1,000 each in this effort. I managed to get a line of credit using a house that I owned in Maryland, even though it still had a mortgage on it. Everyone thought I was either crazy or the next genius. People in Washington generally turned their backs to me; I was too controversial.

There was some glamour. I was interviewed by "CBS Evening News"; I was on the front page of "The Washington Post" and "The Philadelphia Inquirer." Stories about me appeared in foreign newspapers; my daughter Bessie read about me in the "Manchester Guardian". She called to ask what was going on. Israeli friends told me that "The Jerusalem Post" had carried a story about me. This was just a "five minutes" of fame; it faded soon. Then I had to do something.

I tried to do some consulting with an agricultural corporation in Omaha. The timing was not very good because it was at this time that our relationship with the Soviet Union deteriorated badly. I witnessed often, in the USSR, Yugoslavia or Iran, people being dispatched by their American firm, even though they had absolutely no qualifications for such an assignment. Anyone who knew the situation would have been able to tell in a half an hour whether the candidate would be able to navigate in an overseas environment. So I was hired in part to participate in such a screening process. I was also supposed to "open doors" although at the time my name was not a real asset in the Soviet Union since I was advocating its destruction.

Interestingly enough, a lot of what I said was reported in the Soviet press although they were given such a spin that some of my friends in the Soviet diplomatic corps thought of me more as a hero than a villain.

MICHAEL A. BOORSTEIN
Administrative Officer
Moscow (1978-1980)

Supervisory General Services Officer
Moscow (1980-1981)

Mr. Boorstein was born in Washington, DC and was raised in that area. He was educated at Beloit College, the University of Colorado, Harvard University and the University of Turku in Finland. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, Mr. Boorstein specialized in administration and personnel, serving in Palermo, Rome, Ottawa, Warsaw Curacao, Moscow and Beijing. In addition, Mr. Boorstein played a major role in the planning and construction of US embassies in Moscow and Beijing and in the renovation of consulates and embassies throughout the globe. He spoke six foreign languages. Mr. Boorstein was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

BOORSTEIN: Off I went to Washington, left my family in Ottawa. I went to Washington and rented a sublet, rented a second story walk up apartment off the Georgetown campus above a dry cleaning store. Walked across the river every morning. I basically had one on one Russian tutoring and got to a 0+ to a 2+ in about 12 weeks. Nina De La Cruz, who was the dean of the Russian language teachers, became my teacher and it was just wonderful. My wife came down and I went up to help them pack out and came to Washington. She took a little bit of Russian in August of 1978 and we went to Moscow. That's a good place to break.

Q: Okay, we'll pick this up when you went to Moscow when?

BOORSTEIN: August 1978.

Q: You were there from '78 to when?

BOORSTEIN: July of '81, three years.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then, great.

All right. Today is the 11th of October, 2005. Mike, what was the situation in Moscow when you got there in 1978?

BOORSTEIN: In 1978, we were in basically the high point of detente. We were somewhere in, I

forget whether it was Salt I or Salt II. Malcolm Toon was the ambassador, one of our more distinguished career people at the time. He went out to Geneva. That would have been I believe the fall of 1978 to be there for arms control discussions between Secretary Vance and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko. I went on that trip not because I was part of the party, but one of the interesting benefits that people in Moscow had was that the American ambassador had rights to draw on the airfield at Rhein Main air base for basically a plane that was part of the medevac medical evacuation wing two or three times a year basically under the rubric of resupplying the ambassador's residence. Someone from the embassy would be a designated shopper and fly out commercially one way with a big shopping list from the ambassador's wife for basically non-perishables to put into the storage areas of the residence. If there were things that were needed from the PX or the commissary to help service the residence that shopper would buy those, too. It also became on a space available basis a rest and recreation means at no cost for embassy staff and their families to fly to Western Europe. On that particular trip my wife, daughter and I went to Geneva, just simply hitched a ride and went to Geneva and stayed in the Intercontinental Hotel at a good rate and then when the talks were over, four or five days later, we showed up at the airport and flew home. It was an interesting benefit that obviously there was some agreement between the USSR and the United States that allowed that to happen. Perhaps the Russians or the Soviets had some similar privilege in Washington, but be that as it may.

Our relations were for Cold War adversaries; they probably were at their best for that particular era in the late '70s. Malcolm Toon left in the fall of 1979 and as an indicator of the warming of relations, President Carter appointed Thomas J. Watson, Jr., the retired CEO of IBM, to be the ambassador. Watson was one of these people who obviously was very wealthy. He had very much been involved in the U.S.- Soviet relations from the standpoint of someone who was a big promoter of Detente and big business development and what have you and because he also, I believe, was involved in arms control. I'm not quite sure what capacity, but because of his success in nurturing the better part of our relationship, he was appointed as the ambassador. Well, be careful of a good thing because again, he arrived in mid-October of 1979 and two months and two weeks later, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Then the warmth quickly deteriorated into a deep freeze, but I'm sort of getting ahead of myself.

Q: Yes, but at the time you went out things were pretty good?

BOORSTEIN: Yes and as a matter of fact one of the things that I got involved in very early in my tour, I was the number two in the administrative section. The administrative counselor was John Condayan, who was a highly regarded senior officer and he had come out of Washington I believe. I basically was his deputy. I did all the things that you do in a large administrative section in an embassy that is in an environment such as the Soviet Union where you have government housing, government furnishing, a lot of interface with the host government to provide you with services. All of our foreign national staff was provided to us by the Soviet arm of the Foreign Ministry called Agency for Services to the Diplomatic Corps. It was a difficult relationship because basically we had to treat all of those staff as being spies. They were effective, obviously because a lot of them spoke English quite well. They knew how to work through the bureaucracy, but at the same token, we had to keep a great deal of distance in terms of the information they dealt with.

It was a busy period in that in the fall of 1978 October and November the Secretary of State visited Moscow and in the ensuing 10 to 12 months we had a series of high Congressional delegations. We had the Joint U.S. USSR Trade Council, which basically brought together at the same time our Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of Commerce for meetings with their Soviet counterparts, so that involved separate control rooms, separate delegations. As a matter of fact, I recall that for the post inspection that occurred a year after I was there, one of the things I had put in the questionnaire was what percentage of time did you spend in handling and supporting high level visits. I added up all the time and the effort and I think it was 40% of my time that first year I was in Moscow dealing with the Secretary of State's visit, two other Cabinet level visits and one high level senatorial delegation, you know, John Glenn was on it, Senator Ribicoff, Senator Dole, Senator Javits. I figured the crème de la crème of the Senate of that era; they were on that trip. Then later on that spring of 1979 there was a high level visit by Congressman Wolfe who I believe at the time was the chairman of the House International Relations Committee. That was a very large delegation. It was just a huge effort to support all these things and I was in charge of all of them in terms of the job that I had.

Q: Tell me, what Moscow being sort of unique in the diplomatic world as far as living there goes, what were the challenges that you and the rest of the, particularly on the administrative side had with operating and living there?

BOORSTEIN: Well, you're quite correct. I mean because it was such a controlled society and because the Soviet government wanted to control the comings and the goings of the diplomats, they, in the name of that control, they provided a lot of services that in effect forced you into certain patterns of behavior when they control your activities. For example, the best sources for your food stocks; particularly the perishables, were at stores that were only open to diplomats. These were diplomatic gastronomes. They would sell the goods to you for coupons that were called D-coupons "D" meaning for diplomats. You could buy them at the embassy cashier at the official exchange rate. Now, there was an active black market and the ruble to the dollar at the time, was it cost \$1.50 to buy one ruble. On the black market I think you could get four rubles to the dollar. A ruble was worth about a quarter, so it was worth roughly one-sixth of what it was officially. We were counseled strongly over and over again in terms of our own embassy policy, not to buy on the black market. I certainly was faithful to that during the time I was there.

Q: How about other embassies?

BOORSTEIN: Other embassies were looser in their moral code, if you will, in their sanctions against their people. There was a little bit of disparity. Some of your colleagues and I don't know if I want to name any countries in particular, none really come to mind readily. There were also shops that only accepted hard currency, but if you paid in dollars, you might get your change in French Francs, German Marks, Japanese Yen, and so forth. At the end of our tour, wanting to buy little gifts for relatives and friends, particularly if you were staying with people, we shopped at the hard currency store and I said to my wife, "It is payback time". We took this big jar filled with all these coins divided by currency in individual baggies and went to the dollar gastronome and got a couple of hundred dollars worth of things, went to the checkout counter and she gave me the total in U.S. dollars and I proceeded to put all the various coins in baggies from the jar on the counter. The Russian woman said to me, "you can't do that." I said "I am only paying in what

you see here. This is a collection of hard currency coins that over the course of three years we collected from you and now I want to return it and this is actual money and if you want me to buy these things and get credit for the sale this is what you're going to accept." Well, she did and it was a great feeling to be able to return all of those coins, most of which would have been totally useless to us taking them out of the country. That was again one of the more challenging aspects of shopping.

We had a whole regime. Moscow and Leningrad were designated as posts that were authorized consumables shipment, which means that you could go and shop at one of these warehouses in the Washington area, tax-free and have the things available for pickup by the moving company, and those things were added to your household shipment from Washington to Moscow and these would be a two or three year supply of toilet paper, paper towels, aluminum foil, coffee, dry cereal, canned fruits and vegetables, things that you knew you would store. Once you received these things, you would have usually a little closet with shelves in your apartment, but it wouldn't be nearly big enough, so wherever you found a square inch of space that was hidden from you like under beds or inside other closets, you would store things there because it was certainly cheaper if you could indeed find it, than buying them locally. The embassy would also sponsor probably about every three months a frozen food shipment from the commissary in Berlin. That was in conjunction also with a bulk order of non-perishable goods that you could order from the commissary in Berlin and it would be brought in overland by truck. When it came for your to get your perishables you had to be there whatever time the truck arrived, whether it was 5:00 in the morning or 11:00 at night. You had to be there, and you had to stake out your own little area and you had a number and that had been coordinated with the people in Berlin to pack it and you would go and pick up your stuff as it came off the truck with your number on it and put it in your area, and then you'd settle up and write a check right there on the spot, or you'd put it on your bill and take it home because there was no room in the main commissary in the embassy because it was just in the basement and was a very small shop given the size of the mission, but that was the only space we had.

There were also things like whether it was quarterly or semi-annually a fresh meat air shipment from the United Kingdom. You would order ground beef and steak and lamb chops and fresh chickens and things like that that would be flown in and it would arrive fresh. It was refrigerated and you would pick it up and immediately take it up and typically wrap it up and put it in your freezer.

Q: This was from the UK?

BOORSTEIN: Yes.

Q: You can't give blood now because of that.

BOORSTEIN: Really?

Q: Maybe they haven't caught you if you give blood. I've been giving blood religiously three or four times a year, but if you've been getting because of Mad Cow. Maybe this was.

BOORSTEIN: This was 28 years ago.

Q: Yes, well, they're still playing with it.

BOORSTEIN: Well, I'll keep that in mind. That was more on the quality of life side. In terms of the embassy operations, the Soviet Union, they were very sensitive about where diplomats could travel. You had a regime that if you traveled by overnight train or by air I think there was a 24-hour notification if you were going to another city where you had a consular post. In the case of the Soviet Union that was only Leningrad when I arrived. You could not, for example, take the day train between Moscow and Leningrad. You could take the overnight train because it was thought you couldn't see everything out the window. If you would travel elsewhere for political reporting to pay a call on a provincial mayor or governor or whatever, the people in the political section did, that required, I don't recall exactly, the 48 or 72 hour notice via diplomatic note. You were given a map by the Foreign Ministry of the entire Soviet Union that showed what areas are closed and what areas are open. Sometimes, you would have open cities within closed areas which meant the only way to get there was to fly. Now, on the basis of reciprocity, we had a similar map of the United States. I really wish I had taken that map as a souvenir because it showed what cities are open and what cities are closed to Soviet diplomats. Later on, after I left Moscow I had a tour on the Soviet desk and I was often involved in telling primarily their journalists and their visiting scientists where they could go and where they couldn't go. It was great fun.

Often, sometimes without warning they would declare an open city closed because there was a particular reason why they didn't want us to go there at the time or it was done in retaliation that we had done on this side if we caught a Soviet diplomat doing something in a place he or she should not have been or done something in a place, done something even if it was in a place that they were allowed to be in. That was a big problem that you had to sort of watch where you went. You did all your planning. You couldn't just go to your local American Express office and book a ticket to any place. You had to go to the embassy's Miscellaneous Services Unit. To do anything you had to go through the official channels. If you wanted a ticket to the Bolshoi Ballet, you had to go to Miscellaneous Services. If you wanted to take a day train trip to Zagorsk or one of the other areas in and around Moscow for the day, you had to do that through the local services place. The same thing, you couldn't exactly put an ad in the newspaper saying you wanted to hire a plumber for the embassy. You wanted a maid; you had to do it through official channels and pay their rates, which were exorbitant. Needless to say very few people other than the ambassador and the deputy chief of mission had household help.

Q: How about au pairs coming from somewhere?

BOORSTEIN: Those were mostly brought in by the military attaches, mainly because by nature of what military attaches do, they spent a lot of time traveling and because of the rule the embassy imposed where you could not travel by yourself, you would travel in pairs as a way of protecting yourself, the attaches would often travel with their spouses and the spouse would have their way paid to travel around. Even if they had kids the au pair, the nanny would stay there and take care of the kids. It really wasn't a problem for the nanny to get a visa to come in. Typically, the nannies came from Finland. They were a great source of female companionship to the

Marines, many of whom married Finnish girls who were nannies.

Q: How about while you were there, let's say, was there a dividing line, but problems of the people that you were involved with were the KGB harassment, that sort of thing.

BOORSTEIN: Not me personally. I was never deemed a threat or a target even though obviously I had a full clearance and I sat in on the meetings and I was privy to a lot of information that obviously I could not, would not and did not share with anybody else. If you were undercover and either in the rubric of how we operate overseas often our intelligence assets are declared to those countries because there's a degree of intelligence cooperation even with countries that are considered our adversaries. If you were not a declared intelligence asset, you obviously were undercover and you sometimes were doing things that I didn't even know about and other people that were not part of that group would not know about and if they were caught they were often asked to leave the country. When that happened there was a period of tension. Sometimes there was some additional harassment. You heard stories of earlier times in the mid '70s where people would have their tires slashed or they would find their windshield wipers bent or there would be little gifts of human excrement left in apartments or people would come home and find windows opened or papers strewn about because the KGB wanted people to know that they could get into their places. We were told if we had any sensitive personal papers, bank statements, personal correspondence that might make us vulnerable for compromise that those things should be kept in your safe in the embassy. I personally have no issues with that, but there was a lot of sensitivity to that and as part of the in brief from the security officer that these things were emphasized quite a bit. We were even told if you're having a very difficult argument with your spouse and you don't want other people to hear it, to be picked up by bugs, you can arrange to come in and go in a particular protected room in the embassy and go at it. I never took advantage of that. My wife and I just kept our arguments above board or we'd go outside for a walk, but again there was that level of awareness in the community and looking back on it and I commented on it after we left that there was a degree of stress and tension because of all of these factors that I mentioned. You didn't necessarily know that it was there until you had reason to leave Moscow and go to the West. If you went to Berlin or you went to Helsinki or you went anywhere else and you were in an environment where these things were not on you, you felt the absence of those oppressive stressful factors. When you went back to Moscow the weight returned. That's why we got the hardship pay.

Q: Since you were dealing with the major Soviet Russian workforce, how did you find it?

BOORSTEIN: They were quite efficient as a matter of fact. As a matter of fact there's a number of interesting incidents that happened while I was there that are worth mentioning here. I believe it was the fall of 1979. There was a group of Pentecostals from Siberia who came to the embassy seeking immigrant visas. I don't know whether they had any appointments or they got through the gauntlet to get to where they were. My recollection is that the militia guards in front of the embassy wouldn't let them through and so they as a group, there were seven or eight of them, they rushed through the embassy past the militia guard and sought refuge in the consular section and we let them stay and while they were rushing into the embassy, an Armenian woman with one or two children took advantage of that and just on the spur of the moment decided to rush in the embassy also. Here we were with these two families that didn't know each other figuring out

what to do. The Pentecostal group and the Armenian group, I don't know remember whether they were kept together or separate, but they were kept on the compound. Again this compound had a lot of housing units for embassy staff. The deputy chief of mission's apartment was there. All the major counselors' apartments were on the compound and then at the opposite end of the spectrum we had the Marine house, we had the Navy Seabees who were part of the maintenance of the secure area of the embassy. They had their own housing. We had a number of single communicators and secretarial staff who had housing. In that wing that housed the secretarial and communications staff in the basement we very quickly put together a couple of apartments for these people and of course the Soviet authorities wanted us to release them. What ensued and again I don't know exactly why we treated the two families differently; we were able to cut a deal with the Soviet immigration authorities. The acronym was OVIR, O-V-I-R. We persuaded the Armenian woman and her children to fly back to Yerevan and to go into the local immigration office there and they would be given permission to leave.

I got involved in helping with the travel arrangements for this woman and her children to fly from Moscow to Europe. I had to go to the travel clerk; Nina was her name, to make the arrangements. Nina was extremely helpful. She made all kinds of calls. Traveling in the Soviet Union was a nightmare to begin with. I mean flights were canceled, they were late, it was a whole mess. She was just hell bent on getting it right and so she did. The Pentecostal family on the other hand, they refused to leave, they felt they were going to be shipped to Siberia, probably put in some Gulag and persecuted. Through negotiations and they were there for several months, we finally got them immigrant visas, so they came over to the United States the winter of 1980 sometime and I think most of them went to Montana. Maybe that's where they still are. Again, the facilitation of that, the people in the administrative unit were very helpful by and large. There was a Soviet woman. Her name was Galia and she manned the main telephone in the general services office. If you had a problem in your apartment and you submitted a work order, you submitted it to Galia. She would take in the work order and she would mark it in and distribute it to the plumbers, or the electricians or the carpenters or whatever and she was a real powerhouse, power force and we nicknamed her the colonel because we felt she had a high rank in the KGB. I remember one day for whatever reason our phone in the apartment didn't work. I came into the office and went to Galia and I wrote a work order and I said the phone doesn't work. She said to me, "Well, have you been playing around with it trying to fix it?" I looked at her and I said, "Your people are the ones who play around with the phone. I don't touch it." She laughed. That was basically the supposition. She arranged for it to be fixed. Sometimes you'd have an emergency after hours and you would have to call the duty plumber or electrician and they were quite effective.

Q: On these things there were two sort of administrative nightmares that happened. I don't know whether they happened on your watch and all. One was the Sergeant Lonetree episode with the Marine guard.

BOORSTEIN: That was after I was gone.

Q: And the fire.

BOORSTEIN: Well, I tell you, there was a big fire in Moscow in 1977, the year before I arrived

and the people that were still there in 1978 sort of had this red badge of courage almost like they had a "we survived the great Moscow fire tee shirt," and we newcomers clearly didn't know what suffering was. So, there was a bit of a rift to the community until finally all those people left. I mean I remember actually going up to the attic and seeing the charred timbers. It was a serious thing and fortunately nobody was hurt or killed. The ambassador had to make a judgment to let people in. By the time we arrived, most of the renovations were in the upper offices. It was mainly offices that were affected, not apartments. That work was still going on a year later and finished everything a few months after I arrived. There were other fires afterwards, but none during the three years that I was there.

Q: How much did, in the first place was there microwave business going on or not?

BOORSTEIN: That also predated my arrival, but not by much. That was very sad because there were some people who contracted cancer. There was an officer named Gordon Shouse who was in the junior officer class right after mine who died of cancer. His wife, Eloise, also had breast cancer. She entered the Foreign Service I believe after her husband died and Johns Hopkins did all of these epidemiological studies to see if there was truly a link and they found that it was moderate, but there was some statistical aberration. We knew exactly where the microwaves were coming from. As a matter of fact during my tour there was a big fire in the place where the microwaves emanated from and then they just stopped.

While I was there they discovered that the Soviets were successful in implanting some sort of a listening device capability into the electric typewriters that were not shipped securely. We used to be able to figure out if they were okay. You would take an IBM Selectric typewriter and when you turned off the electricity and pushed the spacebar, if the electric current continued to let the carriage go across a few more seconds you knew it was okay. If it stopped immediately it alerted you that there was a problem. We would often test our typewriters in that way. We had to ship them out and get replacements in. The incident with Lonetree in '86, '87. I was in Poland at the time and when I get to Warsaw I'll tell you stories about that, the impact of that, but we and then of course in 1986, there were some problems, the Soviet government withdrew all of their Russian staff of the embassy and that was another huge problem that impacted the American staff..

Q: What did happen, was there a change in as you saw it in your work and all after was it December of 1978?

BOORSTEIN: Oh, '79. Yes, as I was saying earlier, that first year I was there I was really busy with high level congressional delegations. All these bilateral cabinet level visits that included the Secretary of State. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and it all stopped. There was a big debate that went on between Washington and the embassy about whether we should remove some staff. We had at the time one of the largest USIS contingents in the world. I think they were in excess of 15 USIS officers. Exchanges, cultural scientific exchanges, all kinds of stuff going on. I remember going to a wonderful production of The Gin Game with Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn, the husband and wife.

Q: Yes, great actors.

BOORSTEIN: It was just wonderful. There were traveling exhibits Agricultural USA where we had our own Foreign Service people acting as guides, helped them with the language, they did a lot of traveling. They would spend the first year doing that and the second year they'd come into the embassy for a job. It was a great training means for some of our junior political and economic officers. Things were booming. After the invasion of Afghanistan, it all stopped and as a matter of fact, the other main activity of that was during that first year that I was there we were making efforts to open up a new consulate in Kiev. It was a reciprocal deal because the Soviets wanted to open a consulate in New York. Obviously, they had their mission to the UN, but their only consulate in the United States was in San Francisco so again it was one for one. We had Leningrad, they had San Francisco, we wanted Kiev, they wanted New York.

We had the beginnings of a consulate, it was called the Kiev Advance Party and the head of that operation was David Swarz. I don't know if you ever met David with his oral history. He's been retired now for six or eight years. S-W-A-R-Z. David I believe is working somewhere in the Soviet Union under the auspices of the OSCE, but maybe you could track him down somewhere. Anyway, David was the head of the Kiev Advance Party and we had an administrative officer, we had a consular officer, a few other assorted people down there. We had property and were renovating an office building and were renovating housing and we were all prepared to put in a communications unit and open it up sometime in the spring of 1980. There were teams and I was part of a team that went down to Kiev in the spring of 1979, the first time I visited their place and went down with someone from the foreign buildings office and there were negotiations and discussions were being, the Ukrainian provincial people on different things. After the invasion of Afghanistan as part of the sanctions, President Carter said we're not going to open Kiev and the Soviets cannot open New York so we closed it all down. That was a complete flip-flop and for the rest of the time that I was there for a year and a half, the only Washington visitor outside the State Department to my knowledge that came to Moscow was Congressman Solarz, Steve Solarz. He came by himself and he had no appointments with any Soviet officials. He simply wanted to have some consultations with the ambassador and embassy staff. It was the deep freeze. It didn't impact on me in the administrative section other than it freed up a lot of my time. I didn't have to deal with these official visits anymore. My third year in Moscow I actually switched jobs. I went from being number two in the administrative section to being the supervisory general services officer, handling the motor pool, transportation, housing and furniture, supplies. It was a big job. I wouldn't say that I was bored, but it was not as frenzied a place. The people who were bored were all the officers from USIS what we called the press and culture section. They had nothing to do. For optics reasons it was decided that they wouldn't be moved.

Q: How did you find in your varying jobs living in Moscow? There was a high rate of divorce, and things of this nature, children.

BOORSTEIN: Well, surprisingly little. In the late 1970s the medical division started recruiting and hiring psychiatrists and Ph.D. clinical psychologist. Now of course we have them at a number of regional places around the world. The first embassy to have a resident psychiatrist who traveled around regionally was Vienna of course. Paul Eggertsen was assigned there as the regional psychiatrist. He traveled 70% to 80% of the time. Every six weeks he was in Moscow,

every six to eight weeks. He had a lot of clients. I didn't have any particular huge problems, but I found it comforting to talk with him, just one on one, talk about the stresses in the family, talk about the stresses at work. It was all of course very confidential. It wasn't done in any secure environment, so whatever the Soviets learned, they learned. He would do workshops on stress management, looking for signs of alcoholism. He would consult a lot at the Anglo American School. There were kids that were having some particular problems that were emotionally related, he would talk to the teachers and talk to the administration, perhaps even observe the youngsters in the classroom. It was an enormous benefit to have that asset. He was just a good guy. Moscow was the post he visited the most. His territory included Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, so he was on the road a lot. I can't think of any marriages that broke up while we were there. Nothing comes to mind. Maybe I'll have to ask my wife if she remembers.

Q: Well, no, some posts do and I think probably Paris and Rio de Janeiro had their problems, too.

BOORSTEIN: Yes, I'll get to my time in Caracas. That was the Peyton Place of my Foreign Service career, but you would kind of wonder why, but it was just the people who were there. I don't recall Moscow having, if there were issues they were kept pretty quiet.

Q: How about our post in Leningrad, were there any particular problems that you saw with keeping it going?

BOORSTEIN: Well, you know, I visited Leningrad maybe a half a dozen times during my tour. It required a lot of attention from Moscow. Leningrad had the benefit of being geographically close to Finland. You could literally go up for the day, cross the border, do some shopping and then drive back to Leningrad and that was great morale booster for people there. The local secret police or whatever, the KGB, were more active up there. There were a lot of efforts to attack the embassy in terms of implanting bugs and doing things. We devoted a lot of attention to the internal security posture. Those problems continued well after I left. There were constantly renovation projects going on there. There was a very small number of school age children. There was a branch of the Anglo American School of Moscow that operated up there that may have had 10 kids. They had an American teacher and his wife. They both were teachers. They were credentialed and they had a small group of kids that they taught. Nothing really stands out as to anything that happened while I was there.

Q: What about the bugging? Did one just say well its there and relax or what did you do about it?

BOORSTEIN: Well, you know, we had secure conference rooms, which we used a lot. Now, you know, I was there as we, one of the main things I wanted to convey, I was there as we were ramping up to start the construction of our new embassy in Moscow. The notoriously failed project. So, the first year I was there the foreign buildings office at the State Department hired a cadre of native Russian speaking top secret cleared American engineers and architects. These were people that, as I said, Russian was their native language. They predominantly were people who were either born or grew up in Yugoslavia. I don't know whether after the revolution their parents went from Russia to Yugoslavia.

Q: It was a significant sort of White Russian colony.

BOORSTEIN: Yes, that's probably where they came from. They were recruited. Like I said they were American citizens, they had top secret clearance and they represented a series of the trade expertise in electrical, mechanical, civil engineering, architectural security aspects and there were probably 12 of them. There was a project director named Vic Vespertino. He's now retired. It would be marvelous if you could talk to him, too. I really think the State Department should commission its own history on that project. They're afraid to do it, I don't know. They had an administrative officer. They rented actually apartment units for them in a new building, brought in new sets of furniture from Denmark and they were all set to go. This was all tied in to the history of the effort for us to build a new embassy in Moscow which was done on the basis of reciprocity because the Soviet Union wanted to build a new embassy here and they had their site at Mount Alto and this dates back to the signed agreement that provided the sites in Moscow and Washington was signed in 1969. Then there were three years of negotiations between the Soviets and the Americans on what are called "Conditions of Construction." In other words, how were materials going to be imported? What kind of security would be guaranteed by each party? What was the regime to approve the drawings inspect the facility. Everything that you can think of that goes into this, but to do it in a way where we on the American side felt that we would have a secure facility. Now, we were looking back on it we were incredibly naïve and had a degree of hubris that ended up being very harmful to us because we allowed the Soviet authorities to say: "You know, we have a lot of experience of foreign governments building embassies in Moscow and here's what we do for all of them. We can't treat you any differently." They insisted that their state corporation have the contract for the construction and that we could provide our own people to observe how the concrete was poured, how the bricks were put together, how the wiring was done, etc. for the main super structure of the building. In those areas that were secure then we of course could then take it over and without any use of any Soviet people do the final fit out ourselves. That basic contract I believe was \$55 million and a mere pittance of what it costs us to build an embassy that size and scope today. It was a comprehensive project. It included 125 apartments, 10 representational townhouses, a school, a Marine House, an indoor swimming pool and gymnasium, a bowling alley and as I said a huge project. It took three years to negotiate the conditions of construction and these talks would have dragged on longer, but Nixon apparently was scheduling a trip to the Soviet Union and he told Henry Kissinger "I want these talks concluded, I don't want this to be an impediment to my visit." So, whatever concessions we were resisting I can't tell you which ones they were, but the lore is that we sort of caved in and signed the agreement in 1972.

From '72 to '78 we were developing the design, we were getting funding from Congress. We were arranging for all the logistics. In the meantime at a faster pace the Soviet Union was moving forward with their project on Mount Alto. They had an American contractor and they did whatever they did. The stories came out years later that the CIA and the FBI were keeping a pretty good eye on what was happening. It was a tunnel that they discovered later, this was all in the open press. I knew nothing about it at the time, but in the spring or the summer of 1979 there was a formal ground breaking for our project and the senior U.S. government representative who was there for the groundbreaking was Daniel Boorstin the person who everybody thinks I'm related to. He was the Librarian of Congress at the time. He flew out and he was the senior

American official for the cutting of the ribbon. I still have my invitation for that event. So, for the rest of the time that I was there, there was a lot of earth moving and pouring of concrete and this, that and the other thing. I left in the summer of 1981 and of course the project came to a screeching halt in 1985 when the bugs were discovered in the concrete super structure. That is a whole other story, but that was the major focus of my section and what I was doing during the time I was there, building up to that.

Q: Just to give in a fill in later, but you were not hearing any people say, oh, God we shouldn't be doing this?

BOORSTEIN: No, absolutely not.

Q: There were no sort of warning bells coming from others?

BOORSTEIN: I mean, look, even though I was in the administrative section because the foreign buildings office had their own unit, it was pretty self-contained and if there were discussions they were handled at a higher level.

Q: I'm just saying that there were no warning flags going up?

BOORSTEIN: No, not that I heard of and I certainly didn't think any of it myself. Again, that group was a big presence and there was a big focus on that project as it got underway.

Q: Did you get any reflections about the hostage taking in Iran?

BOORSTEIN: Yes, thank you for mentioning that. It happened obviously while I was there and that was a source of considerable tension. We were on high alert. I remember riding on the school bus with some concerns that the Iranian militants that might have a presence in Moscow were going to highjack a bus of American school children. For several days parents and I had a daughter, at the time she was fifth or sixth grade, I rode the bus in my official capacity. Obviously nothing ever happened, but there was obviously heightened concerns and major concerns that our people were vulnerable. Our security posture was beefed up. The embassy was right on the street. There were no threats. We felt, again the good side of being in a totalitarian state like the Soviet Union, if anybody was going to move against it was going to be their own people.

Q: Mike, you left in 1980?

BOORSTEIN: '81.

Q: '81. That's a fairly long tour there isn't it?

BOORSTEIN: Yes, that was the longest time I had spent at any one post. As a matter of fact, I went there on a direct transfer from Ottawa and took home leave after being in Moscow for a year and then went back for two more years. One of the things that was an added dimension to my job was that I was the ambassador's representative on the school board of the Anglo-

American School in Moscow and that was an added feature. My wife taught second grade at the school and my daughter was there as well. I was the treasurer of the school board and the chairmanship would rotate. The three main embassies that had an interest in the school were the British, American and Canadian embassies. The chairman was always either British, American or Canadian. The deputy chief of mission's wife Betty Garrison was the chairwoman for one year. The British cultural attaché was the chairman for one year and the Canadian was the third year I was there. Just very active, the cadre of the teachers came primarily from those three countries as overseas hires. It was an excellent school. It probably had about no more than 150 students and the way the Soviet government dealt with the education for foreigners first of all they didn't let any of their own children go to this school. They also did not acknowledge that the school existed as its own entity so in effect what they said was that these were three schools. There was the American school, the British school and the Canadian school. It so happened that the building they gave us had three stories to it and so there were three leases. One was with the British Embassy, one was with the American Embassy and one was with the Canadian Embassy. Now, for purposes of accreditation by an American association and accredited schools, the school was an entity and it was called the Anglo American School of Moscow and actually was formed in 1949. Because of the way under the Soviet system that they wanted to again control the kind of things that were taking place in their midst, they structured it in such a way that its clout and its authority was limited.

There were no real incidents that I can think of that happened other than there typically was a flea market that the school would sponsor once or twice a year and eventually it got out of hand because what it was a place where embassy people and sometimes even Third World people would basically bring all of their second hand clothes, socks, underwear and have them up for sale. The Soviet citizens would come in and swarm the place and buy things either to use them themselves or to resell them. While we were there the Soviet authorities said, "look this is getting out of hand; you can't do this anymore." After that the annual fund-raiser and you could raise maybe \$5,000 or \$10,000, not a lot of money. It was handled more as a fun fair and you would do things like be able to sling a water balloon at the principal or pay a certain fee. I remember my wife organized that one year and we had fun because the night before we had bought this huge supply of these huge bricks of vanilla ice cream, which were delicious in the Soviet Union. That's all you could get was vanilla ice cream, but what we did we had a whole array of flavors. We would add chocolate and strawberry and this and that and we'd invent the names of these ice creams. We had Lenin Lime and Khrushchev Chocolate and Stalin Strawberry and we would mix them all together and sell them. That was the time Baskin Robbins had just decided they were going to come in, they came in after we left. We basically were doing a little play on having a Baskin Robbins, 31 flavors, but we really had about five and for the other ones we had names for, we wrote up in Russian "Nyet," which means is not available which often happened when you went out to a restaurant. So, we had a lot of fun with that.

The school group was a big source of social entertainment for my wife and me that sort of augmented what we had within the embassy. It was a lot of fun. I remember twice going up with the school director to drive back a new van the school ordered in Helsinki. The school paid my way to fly to Helsinki and the director and I would drive back and it was a two-day trip to come back in the overnight in Leningrad. I enjoyed it immensely and I ended up doing a lot of stuff the school board subsequently in Warsaw in my tour, but that was the first time I had served on a

school board so it added flavor.

Q: Well, I'm just looking at the time. It's probably a good place to stop Mike. Where did you go in '81?

BOORSTEIN: Yes. I came back to Washington and had a tour on the Soviet desk. I think there are some more things I can talk about in Moscow.

Q: All right, well, sort of make note and next time we'll do that.

BOORSTEIN: All right. Now, let me give you a call when I get home either today or.

Q: Okay, today is the 20th of October, 2005. Mike, before we get to '91 where you went to.

BOORSTEIN: '81.

Q: What?

BOORSTEIN: '81.

Q: '81 I mean, if you want to you said you wanted to talk a little bit about the relationship business.

BOORSTEIN: Yes, as I said earlier, my parents had emigrated from pre-revolutionary Russia and met in the United States and married. On my father's side he had two older sisters who remained behind. He actually had four, two of them died in the '20s in a typhoid fever epidemic, but the other two married and had children and whatever and these were all people that I listed when I got into this, when I was applying for the State Department and they were doing my security clearance and they also, the State Department was aware of them when I went for my assignment and I reported to the security officer on arrival that I had these family members both in Moscow and in Leningrad and I had an expectation that I would see them because I had seen them as a teenager when I traveled there with my parents. He said, "fine, you can see them, but you have to abide by certain ground rules and they are don't go alone, take your wife, take your daughter, take an embassy colleague, you take a colleague from a friendly embassy, the Canadians, the Brits, the Aussies or whatever and if there's ever any hint of difficulty either towards you or towards your family you have to report it to me as the security officer and you have to break off the relationship until the matter is deemed to be okay." So, I followed those ground rules scrupulously. There really were no incidents regarding well in Moscow I had a first cousin and she was a widow and she had a married daughter and that married daughter had a husband who had just returned from military service in Afghanistan, the Soviet army and they had two young children. I would see them on the average of about once a month. We would bring them into our apartment on the diplomatic compound. I'd have to meet them there and it was a very enriching part of the experience because they were family. None of them spoke any English so it was a matter of another dimension to my Russian language use because it was very much family and home oriented. During my assignment there my mother came to visit. Two of my sisters and their family came to visit. It was a great opportunity to acquaint. You know, my

mother had met, these were actually on my father's side, but she had met them before on other trips. That was a good element, aspect of the assignment.

The family in Leningrad also one of my aunts was still living and she had two children, a son who had completed a career in the Red Army and he after retirement was working as an instructor at a military academy in Leningrad and the daughter was a Ph.D. chemical engineer and she worked in the defense industry as did her husband and they had one daughter. They were a little nervous seeing me. They wanted to see me and my family and I made fairly frequent visits to Leningrad and occasionally she would come down to Moscow. We did spend time in their apartment and again when my mother and sisters came out a variety of visits we saw them as well.

There was one occasion where I flew to Helsinki with the director of the Anglo American School to pick up a new van for the school and drive it back to Moscow, which was a two day trip. The first day was by road from Helsinki across the border into Leningrad and we had arranged to stay in a consulate apartment. When I got settled in I called my cousin in Leningrad and said I was in town and had not called ahead of time and would it be possible to see her. She responded looking back on it now or afterwards with quite a nervous voice saying, well you know our apartment is really kind of a mess. It's undergoing renovation. In Russian they use the word "remont" all the time for anything that's undergoing renovation. She could meet me outside a particular metro stop and we could have a chat. I thought this was a little strange, but nonetheless I listened. I got to the metro station and typically as a family member and a close relative we would hug and kiss each other when we would see each other. She greeted and said in Russian with her eyes not making contact with me, don't hug me, don't kiss me, just walk with me. So, we walked and obviously I knew something was amiss and she proceeded to tell me with a great deal of emotion that her husband had gotten into trouble at work because he was confronted by his superior who said he had knowledge of the fact that against his signed contract as a security cleared chemical engineer in the defense industry he had had contact with foreigners and relatives to boot, even though it was his wife's relatives. As a result he was told he could not see these relatives any longer, nor can his wife who also was employed and that he was going to be watched very carefully about his loyalty and so on. It was a great deal of emotion when my cousin told me this and I said, well, does this apply to your brother? Does this apply to your mother? The answer was "no, you could still see them," but I could have no contact, no phone calls, nothing with them until further notice. This was, I still had about a year left in my assignment. That was disturbing and I reported this to the embassy and nothing further happened and I did not see my cousin again until I was back on a temporary duty trip to Moscow when I was assigned in Washington following my tour in Moscow and she actually was visiting my other cousin in Moscow and I saw her there. Subsequently, this family, unlike my family in Moscow, had been quite vocal in trying to find a way to immigrate to Israel. They wanted me to help and this was in the late '70s, early '80s and I said, "this is not the time to do this. It's very rare. They're cracking down on the dissidents and you just have to lie low." Well, ultimately by the late '80s when the situation improved they did immigrate to Israel and they are still there now. That was a bit of a troublesome aspect of the tour, but we all survived it unscathed. Again it is sort of representative of the way that the Soviet government looked at relations with foreigners. I wanted to mention that, but at the same time, primarily with the family in Moscow, it really was a very satisfying part of the assignment.

I remember taking my cousin to at the time USIS had a traveling exhibit called Agriculture USA and my cousin in Moscow was just absolutely floored at the slideshow that showed a supermarket in Minneapolis with all the array in winter of fruits and vegetables. She basically said, "this is American propaganda." I kept assuring her saying "it is not at all." The other interesting vignette was that in those days the embassy had access to a film circuit, these 35-millimeter big rolls of film would come in. Depending on your position in the embassy or whatever you would have a projector at home that you could use and we had one and I remember on the film circuit the movie The Russians are Coming, the Russians are Coming with Theodore Bikel, came in and I showed it to my Russian cousin and her family and there was a line in there where the young sailor says to the girl in I think its Nantucket.

Q: Yes, it was Nantucket I think.

BOORSTEIN: That he was surprised at how warm and friendly she was because they had learned in school how much Americans hated the Russians and I'm translating this all along to my cousin and she just looked shocked and said, they never taught us that in school. They were never taught how much the Russians hated us and whatever. Anyway, or Americans hated the Russians, but anyway it was kind of amusing. I learned a great deal about Russian cooking and culture and just their way of life. It was good. I did talk the previous time about the nature of the work and what the environment was like in the embassy and the embassy projects. Let's move on.

In July of 1981 I left Moscow and my family traveled ahead and actually went to a beach in the Adriatic in Italy and I stayed behind for about two weeks and then on the way out as part of the development of the embassy dacha project that I was in charge of, the second summer house, I traveled via Helsinki to consult with the architects and then from there flew down to Italy to join my family. We had a wonderful vacation in a little town called Pesaro on the Adriatic and then from there I think we pretty much flew straight back to the States. We settled into a, we rented a house in the Virginia suburbs. My daughter entered the eighth grade and my wife got a job just by answering an ad in the Washington Post at a small Episcopal day school called St. Patrick's off of Foxhall Road in Washington, not as a teacher, but as a program director. She was in charge of fundraising bazaars and other kinds of things that supported the education programs. She had that job for five years and enjoyed it quite a bit. We had entrée into a whole range of sort of upper crust Washington society.

For example, when Kenneth Dam became the Deputy Secretary of State, his son went to the school and I remember when he first moved to the area and every morning my wife dropped me off at the State Department and Kenneth Dam would deliver his son to our car and she would then take him to school until they got settled in. George Will the columnist his child went to the school, so it was quite a socially prominent school population.

PHILIP C. BROWN
Information Officer/Press Attaché, USIS

Moscow (1978-1981)

Mr. Brown was born in Massachusetts and raised primarily in Pennsylvania. He was educated at College of Wooster (Ohio) and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving with the Voice of America, in 1965 he joined the United States Information Agency Foreign Service (USIS), where he served several assignments at its headquarters in Washington DC. His foreign posts include Dakar, Douala, Yaoundé, Paris, Vienna and Moscow, where he served twice. At these posts his assignments ranged from Assistant Branch Public Affairs Officer to Counselor for Information, Press and Cultural Affairs. Mr. Brown was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012.

Q: You stayed there until '81.

BROWN: I would be there for three years. Today I can talk about the first year.

Q: Who was the ambassador there?

BROWN: The ambassador was the late Malcolm Toon. This was his fourth ambassadorial post. He had been ambassador in Prague, Belgrade, Tel Aviv and Moscow, a true career ambassador.

I had a career ambassador in Yaoundé, Cameroon but this was the first time I had really encountered someone who was as steeped in the Foreign Service as Malcolm Toon.

The general impression of Mac Toon was that he ate young or even mid-level Foreign Service officers for breakfast and that the first time I screwed up, I would be out on my ear. I was in a very exposed position. My title was Information Officer but really I was the press attaché. I was the first point of contact for journalists. The first time I did badly, I would be tossed out on my ear.

I think I was introduced to the ambassador in a very perfunctory way. It was not long after I got there but there was no formal introduction.

I don't want this to sound boastful but I connected with Mac Toon. I did a job that he liked and I really liked working for him. I really felt comfortable. To get to him, I often had to go through the PAO and the DCM who were both fine individuals, very professional, but they had to clear on my memos or whatever. When I got to Ambassador Toon, I felt a degree of comfort, professional comfort that I could then do my press attaché job well.

He took a liking to my wife and me. I knew that when, early in our first year, we found ourselves invited to Spaso House for a family dinner on the second floor along with the British ambassador, his wife and one of the correspondents and his wife. I knew Mac Toon liked me both professionally and personally. It was a source of satisfaction.

He was renowned for his briefings, generally done on Friday afternoon, for the American press corps. These were background briefings and to be attributed to a "senior Western diplomat."

Back in Washington, on Saturday, if they read anything that said “senior Western diplomat,” they all knew this was Mac Toon speaking. If they knew that in Washington, I am sure everyone else knew it.

He was pretty candid but to be honest, we had limited exposure, limited first-hand exposure to Soviets. I can remember one time he came into one of these briefings and he had actually seen at some sort of activity a member of the politburo and the journalists must have spent half an hour just asking him questions about this individual. It wasn't a high member of the politburo but just what he looked like, what clothes he was wearing, what his health was, how he comported himself. Mac Toon had no sympathy for the Soviet Union and he came up with some wonderful quotes that the journalists liked and he didn't mind seeing himself quoted in the press.

There was a time when he said something that got him in a little trouble in Washington, a little hot water. Something I had then said maybe compounded it. He said to me later on, “Did you see that back in Washington they don't like what I said?”

And I said, “Uh huh” thinking I was then going to get in trouble myself. He smiled and said, “I could care less.” The way he confided in me was great for my ego and, of course, made me feel very loyal to him.

In 1979, he went to the summit meeting in Vienna between Jimmy Carter and Brezhnev where they signed a SALT agreement. At the end, I don't know what led him to do it but Ambassador Toon did a special briefing for the American press corps. He said, “I haven't yet decided whether I will support the SALT treaty.”

Well, that was pretty much out on a limb, shall we say? It later came to the attention of Secretary Vance and Mac Toon back in Moscow had to say yes, he had now studied it and he would support the SALT treaty because there was adequate verification. He didn't mind being an independent operator.

I will mention him more because I really liked Mac Toon. Just another anecdote:

Early on, there was a fire in a building directly across the street from the embassy -- the embassy was located on the Ring Road in Moscow -- from where it was believed the Soviets directed their radiation at the embassy. This was an ongoing subject when I arrived, that the Soviets were directing radiation at our embassy, whether to foul up our communications or as a health issue, it was an ongoing issue and to this day, I would like to see some in depth reporting on that subject.

I went in on Saturday morning and there were fire trucks across the street; it must have been cold weather because there were icicles dripping and we quickly learned that the fire had taken place on a Friday night up on that level where we knew the Soviets had their equipment to direct radiation at the embassy.

So I started getting phone calls. What's happening? Is the radiation continuing? I worked my way up through the two levels I had to go through to Ambassador Toon's office and the question was posed there.

The simple answer was “we don’t know whether anything has changed because they operate their radiation equipment Monday through Friday and we won’t know if this fire had any impact until Monday morning.”

Toon said, “Let’s just say that.”

And I thought, “Oh, goodness. What a wonderful way to deal with a press issue. A straightforward, honest answer” and that’s what I was authorized to say to the press. “We don’t know because they operate that equipment Monday through Friday and we won’t know until Monday. Check back with us then.” They checked back with us on Monday and I was authorized to say there is apparently no radiation coming at us from that building. The fire has damaged their equipment.

That’s a long, convoluted way of saying I really felt comfortable dealing with Ambassador Toon. He was honest and direct and didn’t mind being quoted.

Q: How would you say relations were with the Soviet Union in 1978?

BROWN: On the day we arrived from Munich via Frankfurt, we were met at the airport and taken to our apartment. I say we because we arrived as a family of four plus dog and cat. We were taken to our apartment and the next morning my children got up and went across this big highway to the school and my wife set about doing what she needed to do to make our life there, to make our apartment there livable.

I rode to work with my colleague Dick Combs for my first day on the job. There were three issues already that were of interest to the press. They would say something about the nature of our relations.

Number one: We had a big delegation in for SALT talks headed by Paul Warnke and General Ed Rowney. They were meeting with the Soviets; part of the negotiation that would lead to the signing of a SALT treaty the next summer. From that point of view, relations were pretty good. These were serious negotiations. I wasn’t the spokesman for the group of anything but I was immediately dealing with journalists if there were any statement to be provided, I was the source of that statement.

At the same time, issue number two involved an American businessman whose name was Jay Crawford and who had been arrested on some phony charges; his verdict was announced on my first day, September 7, my first full day at work. You can Google Jay Crawford, businessman verdict and see more about that issue.

The third issue. Senator Edward Kennedy was in Moscow en route to Central Asia, to Alma Ata, for an international meeting on health care. I don’t recall that journalists were going with him but he was a source of news as well.

So you had the good, the bad and the in between. But for the most part, we were in a fairly

upbeat mood that year.

Q: Brezhnev was

BROWN: It was Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. There was also a nominal president but the ones we would be dealing with would be Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. This was Cold War.

We were largely out of direct contact with friends and family back home. It was a family experience. My children were at a good age (Sarah was 12 and Christine was 10 the year we arrived). They were not so young that they required babysitters or constant tending. Nor were they weren't so old that they were restless and I will say proudly that we fully integrated them into our lives there. There were many opportunities to interact with Soviets or with others and we fully involved our children in that.

They went across this huge highway, Leninsky Prospekt, that we lived on to the Anglo American Canadian School. There were minimal opportunities, almost zero opportunities to send your children to Russian school. I know that some of the correspondents sent their children to Russian schools but it really wasn't an easy alternative and the Anglo American Canadian School was excellent.

Our apartment was on the 12th floor of a standard Soviet apartment building, Leninsky Prospekt, number 83. All the various compounds where people lived had shorthand descriptions. We were L – 83. Someone else would live at L-45 or K-7 or SadSam.

We were on the 12th floor of a 14-story building. Two Russian apartments put together so we could look out at three directions. It was an extraordinary apartment. You put that apartment with that view in Manhattan today and it would sell for three million dollars. On a clear day, in the distance, we could see the gold from the bell tower at the Kremlin. And a creaky old elevator, we always hoped it would keep functioning.

It was occupied by foreigners but not only Americans. There were Brits, New Zealanders, Syrians, Japanese; a wide variety of foreigners lived in the building. All around us, the other apartment buildings were occupied by Russians; it was a Russian neighborhood. We had the dog and that dog needed to be walked and when we would walk we would quite often have conversations with Russians through the dog. One of the first phrases I learned was “*kakaya eta paroda?*” What is the breed of your dog?

This gave us a window, literal and figurative, on the way Russians lived; we could see their apartment buildings, see them going home from work. Right up the street was a store that a lot of Russians frequented. It was called the Leipzig and apparently had goods from East Germany and so if you were talking to a Russian or a Soviet, you would say we live not far from the Leipzig store. They all knew where you were talking about.

We weren't close to a metro. The metro was over near the university. Early on, I bought a little Russian car called a Zhiguli, basically a Fiat, and I would drive that little Zhiguli from the L-83 into the embassy; there was also an embassy shuttle.

From our balconies -- we had little balconies on three sides; I hate to think how sturdy they were -- we had this great view in three directions. Soon after we arrived, there was a Russian holiday and they spent thousands of dollars on fireworks, launching them from multiple sites. This experience, early on, of looking out and seeing the fireworks displays in all directions was great fun for us and for the children.

Not too far away was the Russian circus. We spent an early evening there. The embassy had a dacha, an hour's drive or so from where we lived, in Tarasovka. We would make frequent trips out there. The way it operated, during the course of a year, you would actually have a dacha weekend and that was sacrosanct. You went out there with your family, invited anyone else you wanted and you stayed in the dacha.

When I say sacrosanct, I can remember that my boss, even when we had some high level visitor, said, "No, this is my dacha weekend. I am going to be there."

There was also a smaller ambassador's dacha and a tennis court. It was a real plus as far as making yourself comfortable with this lifestyle. Behind the ambassador's residence, the famous Spaso House, there was a paddle tennis court. I got introduced to paddle tennis and learned that Mac Toon was also an avid paddle tennis player. At 11 o'clock in the morning, you might get a call from the ambassador's secretary saying, "The ambassador is playing paddle. Do you want to come?" I loved that invitation. You never cut Mac Toon any slack. He knew if you were making a call that favored him; he wanted to be treated like one of the guys on the paddle tennis court.

During that first winter, I learned 40 degrees below zero is the same on both the Centigrade and Fahrenheit scale. We had minus 40 degrees and I learned what really true cold weather is. That was the coldest winter we had. Many times, people would ask "how you stand those cold winters in Moscow?" By the end of three years, I knew the biggest climate issue I had to deal with was the hot weather in the embassy; this horrible building where there was no air conditioning and temperatures in the office where you were trying to work must have been in the 80s and 90s.

My birthday is November 7th which was also the anniversary of the great October Revolution. The kids and my Soviet friends always got a kick out of the fact that on my birthday, there was a great parade across Red Square and fireworks. It was a source of a lot of laughter and jokes and fun. "*Slava Philu,*" people would say.

These were things that made life enjoyable for us. There wasn't a PX. There were no movie theaters. There were none of those these things that you sometimes associate with life overseas but we found a lot of ways to make life there fun and enjoyable. Films would come in from Frankfurt in the pouch. The army could bring them in and they were on these big reels. People would sign up as soon as the films arrived. To carry home a movie, you'd carry this very heavy suitcase with maybe three or four reels. Various people had projectors.

In our building, where there were quite a number of American families, we did something called hot reeling. The family downstairs would start the movie and when they came to the end of the first reel, they would bring it up to another floor where another group of people would watch the

first reel and when they were done, they'd take it to another level. The movie might start at 7:30 in one apartment and 8 o'clock in another apartment, 8:30 in another. We called it hot reeling, moving movies from one floor to another.

Q: I learned to thread a projector very, very nicely.

BROWN: I learned that in Africa and it stood me in good stead in Moscow. These were Bell and Howell projectors with a big reel on top and a take-up reel on the bottom.

But we were not by any means confined to the American community for our entertainment. Early on, through various means, I had a lot of Soviet contacts or more precisely, Russian and specifically Jewish friends. We got to know any number of them. I will go into detail later. We enjoyed our American and other expatriate friends living in Moscow but we had a lot of other friends in the Russian community.

My job was information officer and there were two assistant information officers. In addition to the press corps, we had responsibility for the monthly magazine called America Illustrated, a Life magazine size magazine we were allowed to "sell" through Russian kiosks. I think the number was something like 63,000; they had a magazine called Soviet Life that they sold in the United States, the same number. Everything was controlled by formal, written cultural exchange agreement.

We also had these large-scale, thematic exhibits. They went back to the Nixon-Khrushchev kitchen debate. They would go to six cities for about a month each with 25 to 30 Russian speaking American guides. The cities would be chosen in negotiations with the Soviets and would take us all over the country – to Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine, major Russian cities.

The opening was always the occasion for a high-level American visitor along with the ambassador and local officials. In addition to the guides, American specialists would go out and interact with counterparts or do lectures. During my time in Washington, 1974 to 1976, I had actually interviewed and recruited some of these guides.

Russians, or other nationalities, would line up for hours to go through the exhibit. Inevitably, there would be problems and issues that arose and that required negotiations with the Soviets. My office was the primary point of contact with the exhibits.

There were occasional journalists who went on exchanges programs to the United States, part of the international exchange program.

But my primary duty or responsibility as press attaché involved interaction with the press corps. There were 25 American journalists representing something like 15 American news media. To this day, I could probably recall of the top of my head the names of 20 of those 25 journalists.

The two news agencies, AP and UPI, each had five correspondents. Reuters was also always represented and we always had a debate whether they were an American news agency or not. That came up when you had pools or when the ambassador did his press briefing. The New York

Times had two correspondents and the other major American newspapers had one -- The Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor.

The magazines all had correspondents -- Time, Newsweek, U. S. News, and Business Week. The three TV networks -- and there were only three then, NBC, CBS and ABC -- had correspondents. They also had a cameraman who was quite often an American or non-Soviet.

Then you had a couple of special correspondents, an American who worked for The Financial Times and a man named Ed Stevens, who had been there for years and years and had won a Pulitzer Prize and was a free lancer at the time. A whole book has been written about Ed Stevens.

I knew the American journalists in many different ways. There was first of all the standard professional relationship of the press attaché to the journalist. They ask questions. We try to answer. That goes without saying.

But we also knew them almost as clients under the Helsinki Accords and the basket three provisions which included working conditions for journalists. I don't think anyone at the time realized how important this was going to be but the Soviets committed themselves to minimal working conditions for journalists and we were constantly going to the foreign ministry press division to raise an issue of an American journalist who had his film seized at Red Square, who wanted to go on vacation, whose replacement could not get a visa. One kind of indignity or another, we would go in and raise the issue under the broad heading of working conditions for journalists.

We also knew them because journalists had privileges at the embassy that they didn't have anywhere else in the world. I think it would surprise journalists these days to know they had these kinds of privileges. They were allowed to receive their mail through the diplomatic pouch. They were not allowed to receive personal packages but they could receive letter mail and business packages. The mail came in by pouch twice a week and one of the big moments was to go down and dump all the mail on the floor and sort it out. The journalists got their mail that way. Occasionally some of them received packages and we had to go through these and say "Oops, well, we will give it to you this time but remember you guys are not supposed to get packages." It would sometimes be cookies from their mother for Christmas or something like that.

The journalists also had access to the embassy doctor and to the snack bar; in the little compound right behind the embassy was the famous snack bar. There were a couple of Italians who had come to work, I believe, in the Fiat factory. They left there and came to work with the Americans. One named Clemente ended up as the major domo at Spaso House and another, Alfredo, ran the snack bar. It was such a convenience to go to the snack bar and have lunch. It was also a place to do business. The American journalists had access but it was understood that things talked about down there were off the record. This was a time we didn't have any rapid means of communication so when you wanted to get out a message, you sat down at your phone and you dialed the numbers consecutively of all these people and communicated with them; there was no email or other easy communication so the snack bar was a great opportunity for quick

communications.

Lastly, these journalists were our age, they had families and their kids were in the American School with one or two exceptions. We very much integrated them into our social life. To this day, some of the journalists that we met in Moscow are among our closest friends. Bernard Redmont was the CBS correspondent. He and his wife are in their 90s now and in a retirement community outside Boston. Bernie and his wife were a generation older than my wife and me. He was a highly respected journalist and to this day they are very close friends.

There was a correspondent for The Christian Science Monitor named David Willis who had three children, two daughters about the ages of our daughters. It is a very long and complicated story but we went with them on a vacation to Sri Lanka. We flew Aeroflot from Moscow to Sri Lanka. David wrote a story about that vacation. My kids loved reading it because they could understand it. David said he got more comments about that story than about any of the deep thoughtful, thumb sucking pieces that he did about internal Soviet political affairs.

One of those daughters of the now late David Willis of The Christian Science Monitor is now a French horn player with the Berlin Philharmonic, one of the finest orchestras in the world. She is performing tonight at Carnegie Hall, on the stage of Carnegie Hall. We have stayed in touch with many of the journalists and with their families.

On one occasion, we were at a party that was mostly journalists and I noticed my wife and one of the journalists, Charles Bierbauer of ABC, were laughing uncontrollably; they had discovered they had gone to elementary school together.

So we had the professional relationship with the journalists but we also knew them, then and many of them to this day, as close personal friends.

Q: What would you say was the mood of the correspondents there? Were they able to do their job or were they working under siege or what?

BROWN: I think they were like the rest of us foreign services officers. Some had better Russian than others. Some managed to delve more deeply into what was going on than others. There were some really fine correspondents, some who went on to write books, people who went on to very distinguished careers in journalism and beyond.

Just to name a few: Craig Whitney of The New York Times, still one of their senior executive editors. David Shipler of The New York Times. Kevin Klose of the *Washington Post*. Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. David Satter who wrote for the Financial Times. Tom Kent and Serge Schmemmann of AP.

They all had their own qualities. Some had better Russian. Some were better writers. They used to joke about Dan Fisher. He didn't have the best Russian. He wasn't the best writer but they always say if we could only have Dan's ability of ferreting out facts. He was a fact finder. He would come up with the little details the others wouldn't find.

I can't say I read everything they wrote but I do know in dealing with them that they were enterprising, they had good language, and they had no illusions about the country they were dealing with. I think we owe a debt to these people for putting on the front pages of our newspapers really fine insightful reporting on the Soviet Union.

What was their attitude? They were as frustrated I suppose as everybody in trying to gain access to Soviet officials but on the other hand, the really good ones didn't let that stand in their way. They found ways to interact with other people. They were perhaps frustrated because the Soviets imposed restrictions on travel but the really good ones found ways to travel. I guess what I am getting at is that journalists, like anybody else, could use these restrictions as a peg to say "I really just can't do my job because the Soviets impose all these restrictions" or they could say, "the restrictions are there but I am going to find ways to get around them and do a good job in spite of that."

Q: Did you or did you get stories from the journalists about harassment from the KGB?

BROWN: Yes, and that fell under the issue of working conditions for journalists. They assumed their conversations were monitored. They knew when they met with people they had to be careful about compromising the safety of their Soviet counterparts.

Even before we got there, two of the journalists, Craig Whitney of The New York Times and Hal Piper of The Baltimore Sun, were put on trial for slander. I am just going to mention the broad issue and for anyone who wants to a lot more detail, it is all on the record. They were put on trial for slander. It was called the Whitney – Piper affair by every news media except The Baltimore Sun which, we all jokingly noted, called it the Piper – Whitney affair, putting the name of their journalist first. It involved their contacts with Soviet dissidents and what they wrote. They were put on trial in a major form of harassment. So this was certainly a very ugly way in which the KGB, Soviet authorities, interfered with the abilities of American journalists to do their job.

During the course of that first year, in April, 1979, a journalist for U.S. News and World Report named Robin Knight was traveling in Central Asia, in Tashkent in particular. We got a call at the embassy from his wife saying that Robin "is deathly ill. We don't know what has happened." The ultimate conclusion was he had been slipped some sort of drug by the KGB and was very ill, incoherent. His wife had to virtually carry him back to Moscow. He recovered. We protested. The Soviets claimed no responsibility for it.

I might as well take that story right through to the last stage. That summer in Vienna at the Carter-Brezhnev summit, Ambassador Toon met with Marvin Stone who was the publisher of U.S. News and World Report, accompanied by Robin. I sat in on the meeting as note taker.

The question was should Robin go back to Moscow to finish out his assignment or is it too dangerous? Might he be further compromised? I was really surprised to hear Mac Toon say, "I don't think he should go back. I think it is probably risky for him to return."

This seemed uncharacteristic for Mac Toon because he was a stick-his-finger-in-their-eye kind of guy. I realized afterwards that he was giving that advice on the record to protect himself. If

Robin Knight had gone back and something had happened and Mac Toon had been on record saying, "Oh, I don't think there is any problem. Sure, let him go back," he, Mac Toon, would have been vulnerable. As a matter of fact, Robin Knight did go back. He completed his assignment and there was no problem.

This same Marvin Stone later on became deputy director of USIA and came out to Moscow in the late '80s. He was a really good guy, a man I liked very much. I met him first when he was publisher of U.S. News and World Report and at that meeting in the summer of 1979 in Vienna.

Robin Knight recently wrote an article in the Foreign Service Journal about Mac Toon and his press briefings, a very thoughtful article. I would agree with almost everything he wrote except for one phrase and I will quote that phrase: "The embassy and the American media were locked in a tight embrace to the mutual satisfaction of everyone except possibly Toon's superiors in the State Department and his long suffering press attachés." By that "tight embrace," he was referring to Ambassador Toon's weekly background briefing for the American press corps. "To the mutual satisfaction of everyone except possibly Toon's superiors in the State Department . . ." Well, I can believe that. They must have wondered what they were going to read the next day attributed to a senior Western diplomat.

But not "his long suffering press attachés." There he was wrong. I was that press attaché and I loved Ambassador Toon's accessibility to the press. I looked forward to those press briefings.

Yes, at the end we had to type the notes on an old mechanical typewriter. The ambassador was asked this and he answered thus. You had to get those notes up to the ambassador by Monday, a lot of work, but if I hadn't done them, my life would have been much less interesting. I was not "long suffering." I was a very privileged.

Another thing Ambassador Toon did -- I keep coming back to him -- was to meet one-on-one with the itinerant journalist or maybe with one of the resident press guys. You couldn't abuse the privilege but you could ask for a one-on-one or two-on-one interview with the ambassador; I would sit in on those meetings and take notes.

After having done that any number of times, probably somewhere between 10 and 20 times, I heard from my boss that Ambassador Toon commented favorably on my notes. "How does he do it? Does he take shorthand? He's not taping these, is he?" No, I wasn't taping them. I said, in all honesty, that "I have heard you asked the same questions and give pretty much the basic answers so many times that I can hear it coming."

Sure, I'd take notes but I could almost do the briefings as well as the ambassador could because I had heard the same question answered a number of times. I couldn't do them as well as he could just because of the way he answered the questions, they loved that. They loved his rather gruff personality and his little turns of phrase. I was pretty familiar with what he was going to say.

Q: In your relations with the media and all, were you getting things say from the political sector saying, gee. The Soviet politburo is doing this or that. You wonder how this was playing with the Soviet public and ask the journalists could they sort of monitor it? In other words, put them on

jobs.

BROWN: No, I don't recall that kind of inquiry.

I was not the only one who had close working relationship and close personal friendship with some of these very fine journalists. I want to emphasize that point again. These were really top notch journalists. I have mentioned the names of a few; Craig Whitney, David Shipler, Kevin Klose, Dan Fisher of The Los Angeles Times, Tom Kent of AP, Serge Schmemmann of AP. People who follow the world of journalism know that this was a cream of the crop group of journalists.

There is another subject for a book; the American press corps of the late '70s in Moscow.

People in the political section undoubtedly had personal friendships. They would do background briefings with these guys and they'd probably bat ideas back and forth but I don't ever recall anything suggesting that we try to task them. We would read their copy.

Q: Were any of the press people sort of complaining that their bosses back in their home offices really didn't understand them?

BROWN: If they weren't complaining, they weren't human beings. Exactly. Sure, it wasn't easy to have people back home understand the difficult working conditions.

I was back in Moscow a few years ago and I thought comparatively what would it be like? A lot of things were a lot simpler when we were there, you know? You never had to worry about parking. The first trip I made to Moscow, when I was there on TDY, a guy I had worked with on the Soviet desk named Dick Combs who was a really fine Foreign Service officer was a political officer and I mentioned something about Red Square and he said, "Oh, I haven't been down to Red Square for quite a while. Why don't we go down?"

We drove down somewhere close to Red Square, parked and walked around. You never really had to worry about parking when I was there in 1978 to 1981, didn't have to worry much about it ten years later. Today I don't know how you get around Moscow in the traffic and how you would park anywhere.

On the other hand, we didn't have email or cell phones or any of the modern means of communication. Maybe that made life simpler in some ways, too. You weren't constantly being tasked or constantly being expected to do things you are expected to do today.

I am sure the journalists complained that people back home didn't understand.

One thing we didn't have too much of, and I don't think the journalists had too much of, was people from back in the States coming out. We occasionally had to hand hold and organize dinners but it wasn't overwhelming. I can't recall too many times when the journalists had to do handholding for visiting firemen from Washington.

I think that maybe this is the time I could turn to some of the things during that first year that made news. Hardly a week went by when there wasn't some activity, event or newsmaker. I mentioned what transpired on my very first day with the SALT negotiators, the American businessman released from prison and Senator Kennedy.

From 1978 on, we had a group of people living in the embassy called the Pentecostals. This was basically two families, close to a dozen people, who had dashed into the embassy compound to seek asylum. The way the embassy was structured, we had a couple of militia men out front but if they weren't looking, there were no gates or barriers to go through and these fundamentalist Pentecostals had come into the embassy seeking religious freedom, refuge. And in this period of human rights, we were not going to throw them out. They were given refuge in a small underground, below street level apartment where they lived for years. They were known as the Pentecostals. Books have written about them.

They were off limits to the press and the journalists who came into the snack bar understood that they were not allowed to interview them; that was one of the rules of the road. Finally, towards the end of my first year, the Ambassador decided we would allow the journalists to come in on a Saturday and film them. They were not allowed to interview but they could at least film these two different families, parents and children walking around the courtyard of the embassy. Of course, the ground rules broke down because the Pentecostals did decide to talk and present documents and everything else. That was just one of the ongoing issues. Ambassador Toon was not going to throw these people out on the street so they were always on the minds.

We had the fire across the street that I described earlier.

On March 28, 1979, the same day that I had lunch to meet the new Baltimore Sun correspondent, I got the word that there was a man, a Soviet citizen, in the consular section threatening to blow himself up; he would not leave. The issue dragged on and on throughout the late afternoon and into the evening. Eventually, it was resolved by, I believe, Ambassador Toon allowing Soviet officials to come into the consular section. The man did blow himself up. He died. From my 8th floor balcony, I saw his body being carried out late in the evening.

Prior to that, I had never experienced the smell of teargas but the smell of teargas in my office, which was quite some distance from the consular section, made a big impression on me. Our consular officer was a good friend named Tom Hutson. You always knew when Tom was coming. You could hear him singing and whistling through the corridors and after that incident, I never again did hear him singing and whistling. That one night incident, that man blowing himself up in the consular section affected all of us but no one more than Tom.

Q: What did he do? Did he have a . . .

BROWN: I don't think anyone ever really knew, because his body was taken away, whether he was just a lunatic or whether he had some serious cause. According to some news articles, his name was Yuri Vlasenko but in my little bit of research, I haven't ever found very much about and who he was and what happened. I believe one of the consular officers was faulted for bringing the man into the embassy. Perhaps some cables would shed more light.

Q: Tom Hutson has made himself sort of a name for himself as sort of a dissident. He, I think at one point, made some sort of statements when he was at the embassy.

BROWN: He was, I don't know how to describe him. He was opinionated. He has very close ties to the American Serbian community.

Q: I knew Tom when I was in Yugoslavia.

BROWN: We saw his daughter last summer, the same age as our daughter, Amy Hutson, a lovely woman.

Q: The Helsinki Accords had been signed fairly recently, hadn't they?

BROWN: In Vladivostok in 1976. Gerald Ford went to Vladivostok and signed the Helsinki Accords.

Q: I realize we were using them as sort of an instrument with the press corps. Did you realize how powerful these things were because they did turn out to be a major instrument in ending the Cold War?

BROWN: If someone claims to have realized how important those documents were, ask him or her to show you that in writing in 1976. Ford and others took a beating that this was just another Yalta type agreement.

Q: And this ended some of the disputes over territory with the Soviets wanted.

BROWN: You had the three baskets: political, economic and human rights. People said and wrote things like "We all know the Soviets don't respect human rights. Sure, they will sign anything. This is just another giveaway." The part I focused on was working conditions for journalists but freedom of movement and similar rights were covered.

I think it is pretty well agreed on right and left today that these were very important documents in the whole history of the Cold War.

I think that the people who realized most how important these documents were the dissidents themselves. They said, "Well, if our government signed these documents, then we are going to take them as true." They risked their lives and their liberty but many of them said "we are going to claim these rights." They wouldn't have had much meaning if people like the dissidents hadn't taken them seriously.

Going back to that visit by Secretary Vance in spring of 1978 when I was there on TDY, a Soviet woman who had married an American and who was seeking permission to emigrate chained herself to the fence around the embassy. She didn't set herself on fire or anything but she chose that moment to call attention to herself. She got a lot more attention that day than any of the news on the SALT negotiations or whatever Vance was doing.

Back to my first full year, we had a visit from two cabinet members in December, 1978. Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal and Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps. That said something about the quality of the relationship at that time. They were received at a high level. I rode to the Kremlin with the press pool and got to see Brezhnev and Kosygin and Gromyko. I was back in the corner with the Soviet handlers but it was my chance to see the table with Ambassador Toon, the interpreters and the two delegations. It was the kind of stuff I enjoyed, one of the fun aspects of my job.

There was another side to it and it involved a lot of running around, preparing transcripts and other reports and you breathed a sigh of relief when they left town.

Q: Who was secretary of state then?

BROWN: That was entirely the Vance period.

Another subject that we dealt with regularly was shortwave broadcasting, especially in Russian and other languages. The Voice of America Russian service was jammed. During the course of my first year, we had a visit from the director of Voice of America, Peter Strauss. I used that occasion and other similar occasions for outreach. I would invite in American and West European journalists and make it a representational affair.

We had this nice apartment on the 12th floor of our building at L-83. So the guys, they were mostly guys, would come in and we'd do a buffet dinner and someone like Mr. Strauss would answer questions or, more often in a case like that, he would ask questions. It would be a business evening but enjoyable and I received a lot of positive feedback.

Q: What was your impression of the non-American press representation?

BROWN: Equally high. One of the names that pops right into mind was Michael Binyon with The Times of London who was then and later on a very distinguished British journalist. Sam Rachlin, a Danish journalist, had deep Russian connections, was virtually bilingual and knew a lot; he also had a lovely wife and small daughter. Bob Evans of Reuters had been many years in Moscow and had an encyclopedic knowledge. Daniel Vernet of Le Monde was another outstanding journalist whom I knew in Moscow and later in Paris. Within the French, German and Italian press corps, there were people who seemed equally well qualified, had language and were there as serious correspondents. I very much enjoyed having contact with these people.

But the American press corps was by far the dominant foreign group. No one else had as many journalists as we did nor as many top notch journalists.

Q: Were you able to pick up much information or contact with what later became known as 'the stans', all the various elements of the Soviet empire which eventually broke away?

BROWN: We had been in Moscow for only six weeks when my wife and I put our children in the charge of somebody else and flew off to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan and just over the

mountains from Afghanistan. This was the first trip we took outside Moscow. I can remember walking out to the airplane, seeing the pilot checking out his plane, looking at the bald tires but it gave my wife some degree of comfort when she saw the pilot because he looked like what a pilot should look like.

That was the first of many trips we took to Central Asia and they were wonderful experiences. During my first three years, I visited every one of the republic capitals except for the Baltic States. I went to every one of the Central Asian capitals.

What made it interesting, among the many reasons for going out there, we had this exhibit called "Agriculture, USA" with American guides, staff and specialists and so I went out to observe. It seemed like a totally different world. The Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen and others were not native speakers of Russian so they were dealing with a foreign language just like I was. You would go to the markets and gape at these wonderful faces and these piles of fruits and vegetables that you'd never see in Moscow or only in very special places in Moscow. They'd hand fruit to you as a gift and they loved conversation. They loved having their picture being taken. There just didn't seem to be fear of communication with an American.

We were taken on that trip to a dam to a place called Nurek which was described as the largest earthen dam in the world. You would think this would be the kind of place that the Soviets would not allow you to go to but we went out there, spent a whole day going and coming back, traveled in and around this dam, felt dwarfed by this giant construction.

After several days, we came back to find that our children were well and that our Aeroflot planes had landed as many times as they had taken off. We were safe. It was an exciting first trip outside Moscow.

After the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Brzezinski sent out instructions that any intelligence, any sort of reporting you could bring back from Central Asia was encouraged so we had a blank check to travel to that part of the world. I didn't go back to Dushanbe but I went frequently Central Asia -- to Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, to Alma Ata, to Frunze, now called Bishkek. I think it was there I stayed in a yurt. I also went to Ashkhabad, so to all five Central Asian capitals.

Q: Did you get any feel of knowledge or coverage of the United States there?

BROWN: My recollection is that the exhibit we brought out there was a real eye-opener; anything they knew about the United States was primarily through Soviet filter. They probably disbelieved much of the propaganda they heard from their own government but our own little modest efforts, American magazines or the exhibit would be as much as they would have. Radios would be jammed but in Central Asia, especially away from urban areas, you could more easily avoid the jamming of both Radio Liberty and Voice of America. If you understood English you could hear Voice of America English unjammed. But their knowledge of the United States was superficial.

Q: America was very popular wasn't it, the magazine?

BROWN: Sure. Nevertheless, we regularly received back “unsold” copies but then we could take them on trips and give them away.

Q: There were these educational sessions open to the public of people getting up and giving lectures and all and many of our officers would go to find out. Some people would come up and say why the hell aren't you doing this?

BROWN: I don't have too much recollection of that; I didn't attend many of those events. I do remember going to one in particular about a year before the Olympics where a man stood up and talked. The countdown was on to the 1980 Olympics. I came away from that thinking what genuine pride he had that his country was going to host the Olympics. Certainly he was picked and primed to do this topic but there was a great sense of pride in the Soviet Union was going to host the Olympics. That of course, all became an issue.

I'd like to return to the year 1978 – '79 just to give a sense of how much activity there was.

As I've said, we did host representational events in our apartment whenever we had people come out from Washington. One time I hosted something for some journalists who had gone to the University of Indiana on an exchange program and one of the persons who popped in that night unannounced was a man named Vladimir Pozner. Vladimir Pozner grew up in Brooklyn.

Q: I listened to him on the radio, Radio Moscow.

BROWN: Yes, to this day is very well known, absolutely flawless English, very smooth, very gifted. I remember he went one time to the American School and spoke and the kids just came away thinking, “oh, my goodness. They are just like us” because he was so smooth, he was very candid. He would say: “We are just like your country; we have people who are smart, people who are dumb. We have people who are courteous and people who are discourteous, etcetera, etcetera.” He disarmed the kids a lot and he could do that equally well with adults but I liked him and I thought he was a very good man.

There was a problem and it goes back to that impression I spoke about our very first time. If you met somebody who either spoke English well or was willing to receive foreigners or spoke out candidly, there was an inclination on the part of some foreigners to immediately say “Oh, he's KGB. He's a colonel. You just can't trust that person.” Sometimes they would tap two fingers on their neck. I don't know how they felt so sure unless you concluded that everyone who had style was KGB; I think it sometimes gave people a sense of self-importance to say all-knowingly that someone was KGB.

I didn't know myself; maybe that was sometimes the case, but other times, these were genuinely interesting people. In any case, I didn't risk anything by interacting with them. I knew or know about a few of them to this day and I don't think they had close ties to the KGB. I think they were just willing to talk to foreigners.

New subject: One Friday night, I got a call at home from my boss, Ray Benson, who lived right

in the embassy itself. The embassy building was in reality nothing but a converted Soviet apartment building and Ray lived in one of the apartments. Ray and his wife Shirley (friends to this day) were getting ready to take a trip along with the DCM Mark Garrison and his wife. Ray said, "You need to come in here, come in here right away."

He didn't say anymore, didn't tell me what it was but by the time I arrived, the incident had ended. Once again, an apparently deranged Soviet man had managed to walk right into the courtyard with a firearm and start shooting at the exterior of the building. You could see bullet marks or chips on the building. Don't get me wrong. This building had plenty of chips but these clearly were new ones.

David Shipler of The New York Times came by and covered it and picked up a quote from me and for the first time I was actually quoted by name. My family back home was excited to read in The New York Times "Philip Brown, spokesman for the American Embassy." I don't recall what great thought I had but it was rare that I was quoted by name. That incident was a little like the man who walked into the consular section. It was a mystery what was behind it.

We had during that year a visit by the attorney general, Griffin Bell. My notes say he spent two weeks in the Soviet Union. Can you imagine the attorney general being out of Washington for two weeks and in the Soviet Union? It concluded with a reception at Spaso House where I met some people I didn't normally encounter at Spaso House receptions, including a man somehow involved in the judicial system of the Soviet Union. I shook hands with him and I looked at his hands afterwards and these hands were not like mine, soft, office hands. These were the hands of a steel worker, a metallurgist, rough, big.

I thought to myself, because he had been one of the people dealing with the attorney general, that sometimes it is amazing these people are not more crude in their behavior than they are. These are not guys who studied at the counterpart of Yale or Princeton or who have been sitting at desk jobs. These are people came up like Brezhnev and the others through the school of hard knocks. Many of them are out of the heavy manufacturing, industrial world. This man, for all I knew, might have been a steel worker. I came away from that encounter thinking that we needed to be careful not judge Soviet officials the same way we would judge bureaucrats back in the system in the United States. I'm, of course, not suggesting that we should cut them slack when they abuse human rights or invade other countries. But it was helpful to remember where they came from.

One of the things I did for Ambassador Toon was to write his July 4th speech. Every year, the ambassador was invited to tape something for Soviet TV that might then be carried on July 4th. It would be carried if he said the right thing and there were times when the Soviets either censored it or refused it in its entirety. That year, I was very pleased that the speech I wrote was approved by the State Department, virtually without change. Ambassador Toon recorded it and it was carried on Soviet TV on July 4th. That would have been after we returned from Vienna.

I got the word -- and was very pleased -- that along with one of the other assistant press attachés, I would be invited (or assigned) to go to Vienna for the summit meeting. A lot of the Moscow-based American press corps from Vienna was going and I believe that Ambassador Toon recommended that I be present.

I remember getting together for a drink with some journalists on the first night in Vienna and the question among the Moscow-based people was “when did you come out?” We used that expression, “going back in,” or “coming out.” It was not an idle question. You were out in the West. It was a badge of pride. We were on the front lines in Moscow and now, we were coming out for some sachertorte and the joys of Vienna.

I had some relatively routine assignment in the press center in connection with the summit. I did try to associate myself as far as possible with Ambassador Toon, especially for his meeting with Marvin Stone to discuss the Robin Knight incident in Tashkent and also in setting up his briefing with the American press corps. I am sure Ambassador Toon did not clear that with Washington and I am sure that journalists not invited were envious. These two events made my visit to Vienna quite memorable.

I mentioned travel besides the trip to Dushanbe. We did a lot of little trips around Moscow. We could travel 40 kilometers from downtown Moscow without permission as long as it was an open area. We had these maps that showed open and closed areas. The point being we did a lot of travel. We’d go out to Peredelkino to the grave of Pasternak, to the American dacha, to some of the churches on the periphery of Moscow.

We took a family trip to Leningrad, took the train. I had some business there but my wife and daughters went along and we visited a lot of the standard tourist spots.

We also went back to Garmisch for a week. We traded apartments. Somebody from Garmisch came in, lived in our place and we went to Garmisch and did some skiing. We also had an experience there that I will talk about later.

I have been reading recently the biography of George Kennan and, it goes without saying, I don’t in any way compare myself to George Kennan. Still when he writes “It was my sixth winter in Moscow,” I couldn’t help but think that I spent six winters in Moscow and at least some of the experiences I had reminded me of experiences Kennan had. Kennan was there in 1945, ’46, not sure when it was. The British ambassador hosted a dinner for Winston Churchill to which he invited Stalin. George Kennan and his wife were not invited to that dinner. His wife ...

Q: Annelise.

BROWN: Annelise. She said that they were not invited to the dinner but they could go by afterwards to sort of stare and she wrote “At least I can tell my grandchildren that I have seen some of the people who made history.”

I feel exactly the same way. I can tell myself that I saw some of the people that made history. I know that I was just the press attaché at the American Embassy and later on the public affairs officer but I got to see some of the people who made history.

One of the persons I met early on (I didn’t fully appreciate who he was at the time) was a man named Valentin Berezhkov. He was editor of USA Magazine, published by the USA Institute. I

also met him a second time on my second tour and knew by then that he had been the translator and interpreter for Stalin at Yalta. He was the counterpart to Chip Bohlen; the stories that man could have told.

Victor Louis was a story in himself and I won't take the time right now to go into detail. Russian-born, he became a British citizen, married a British woman named Jennifer Louis. He lived in great grand style in Moscow. He had a house. The obituary in The New York Times that Craig Whitney wrote in 1992 will tell you a lot about him. He probably was working for the KGB but nevertheless, interaction with Victor Louis was always an interesting experience.

There was a day when I came by the embassy and I cannot recall why but this man was standing out on the sidewalk wanting to go into the consular section but his entry was being delayed. I realized right away who he was and I helped André Sakharov walk past the Soviet militia and go into the consular section to do business. I can tell my grandchildren I saw André Sakharov and on more than one occasion.

It wasn't long after that, in January, 1980, that Sakharov was picked up on a Moscow street and sent into exile in the closed city of Gorky east of Moscow. It was a closed city so people could not visit him there. He had become too much of a thorn in the side of Soviet officials and so they detained him and sent him and his wife, Elena Bonner off to internal exile.

My little contribution at that time was to serve as a conduit for Sakharov's mail to a relative in Boston. What would happen was as follows. His wife, Elena Bonner, still had freedom to travel and she would come to Moscow with letters that she would give to a New York Times correspondent named Tony Austin. Tony Austin had arrived only fairly recently but of course, I knew him as I knew all the journalists there. Tony Austin and I worked out an arrangement whereby he would give these letters to me, I would put them in an envelope and send them off to my dad in Pittsburgh through the pouch. My dad would open the outer envelope and forward the contents to, I believe, a niece of Sakharov's in the Boston suburbs.

By my second tour, the Gorbachev period, Sakharov had been released and I saw him a couple times. Eventually, I would stand in line a long line on a cold winter day in 1980 to walk past his open casket.

In connection with the visit by Secretaries Blumenthal and Kreps, Averill Harriman came to Moscow. There was a meeting of something called the U.S. - USSR Trade and Economic council. I went to the airport when he arrived and because of his prominence and his history of working with the Soviets during the war, we were allowed to drive right onto the tarmac.

One day soon after, I got a phone call that I should gather up as many journalists as quickly as I could and go down to Novodevichy Cemetery where Khrushchev was buried; it is one of the great cemeteries of Moscow, the final resting place for prominent people from all walks to life, next to the Novodevichy Convent. It wasn't generally open to the public. I had a way of getting in which is a separate story. But I was to go there because Averill Harriman wanted to place a wreath on the grave of his wartime colleague, Anastas Mikoyan, who had died in October.

Sure enough, at the appointed hour, Averill Harriman and his wife, Pamela Harriman, came and placed a wreath on the grave of Mikoyan. We had half a dozen American journalists there. It was pretty much a photo event. Harriman was one of the towering figures of U.S. – Soviet relations. He didn't live too long after that.

And I can say I saw Brezhnev and Kosygin in the flesh. I don't think Brezhnev ever even mumbled a word in the photo sessions before the meetings. Kosygin would banter quite often with the people on the other side of the table. He seemed like a much "nicer" man than Brezhnev.

Early on, I got into the world of music, theater, arts. For me, this was one of two avenues for interacting with Soviets. This wasn't the primary example but Senator Mathias of Maryland came out.

Q: Mac Mathias.

BROWN: I think it was to one of our exhibits. The Soviets invited him to go to the Bolshoi for an opera. It happened to be Khovanshchina, a four hour opera. At first, it seemed long and tedious but I began to appreciate Russian opera and thereafter I would always advise people if you want to go to Bolshoi, don't go to see Verdi or Puccini. You could see that better in Western Europe. Go to see Eugene Onegin or Queen of Spades or Boris Godunov or Prince Igor, whatever. I became a devotee of Russian opera.

I got to meet a photographer named Vladimir Sichov. He later resettled in Paris. He had an amazing collection of black and white pictures, many of them published in a book called (in Russian) "The Russians seen by Vladimir Sichov." I read somewhere he had more than 100,000 pictures of ordinary life in the Soviet Union. Not just ordinary life but young military recruits in training. He also used his apartment to exhibit paintings by Russian artists and we scarfed up several of them. Of course they were delighted to sell these oil paintings so I have paintings by Vladimir Arkharov and various others.

One of the collectors was a woman named Tanya Kholodzei (or Kolodzei). She again was one of these mystery figures. She had a daughter -- I didn't know of any other family members -- and you would go to her apartment and under her bed and in closets and on walls and stacked up in corners were endless numbers of works of art by Russian painters. We acquired a few of those. In turn, we would invite her to film showings at Spaso House or events like that.

I discovered only recently through Facebook that her daughter Natasha now runs a gallery in New York. And Tanya Kholodzei still travels between Moscow and New York. I look forward to meeting her because we knew her very well in Moscow.

Facebook would have been fun and useful (and not allowed!) back in those times to stay in touch with a lot of these people.

Q: How about movies? Were American movies shown?

BROWN: No, unless they had a particular slant.

Not movies but various works of American literature would be translated and very well known, particularly if they provided a picture of the United States that unfavorable. Streetcar Named Desire was performed quite often, *Tramvay imeni Zhelaniye*, literally Streetcar Called Desire would be shown in Soviet theaters because it provided a fairly negative image of the United States. I don't recall very many if any American movies.

Q: I understood The Grapes of Wrath was shown but then again, people say these people had cars.

BROWN: It was a double-edged sword for the Soviets. I don't think they could ever come out the winner on these things. They would let in American literature that had an unfavorable slant.

Somewhere along the line, probably through my boss, Ray Benson, the public affairs officer, I met a woman named Katya Shirman. She worked at *Roskoncert*, the Russian concert agency. She learned I liked music and boy, the phone started to ring and I knew right away who it was. "Phil", she would say (it always sounded like "Feel"), "You must come to this concert" so I would go or my wife and I would go to the concert. One of the first featured a young Russian violinist named Vladimir Spivakov. Today Vladimir Spivakov is one of the world's famous violinists and conductors; at that time he was young and fairly timid but also ambitious and extremely gifted. We went after one of his concerts to the apartment of Katya and her husband to meet Volodya. It was just the first of many social encounters we would have.

We went to concert one time featuring Spivakov and another brilliant, young violinist, Viktor Tretyakov. They were both students of the same teacher, Yuri Yankelevich. There was a joke, a gag. The Russians like these quick one liners. Question: Who is better, Spivakov or Tretyakov? Answer: Gidon Kremer. Kremer is a Latvian violinist.

The point being you've got these two really fine young violinists but there is an even better one up there in the Baltics. The Russians would just throw their heads back and laugh at that joke.

A few years ago I went to a concert by Spivakov at Strathmore in Bethesda. I assembled the concert programs from all the Spivakov concerts that I had gone to both in Moscow and later on in places like Munich and Paris. I took them along. He and some of the orchestra members were amazed to see this collection. By the way, in the closed society that was Moscow, it was very easy to walk back stage after a concert and greet the performers. It was even easier for Westerners because the performers liked the attention. By contrast, that night at Strathmore, I was barely able to talk my way back stage after the concert to greet my friend.

If the KGB was keeping a file on me, they certainly did learn early on that I loved to go to the Great Hall of the Conservatory and to Tchaikovsky Hall and hear orchestras and recitals and that I really appreciated music. I loved going. I would always have great front row seats and people knew that I was American and I enjoyed cultivating that image, that I was a devotee of classical music. I am not a music critic but we heard a wonderful cross section of performers and

orchestras in a, for me, a very safe environment.

There were two problems. It was hard after a busy day at work to keep your mind on the music and not be thinking about what you needed to do the next morning and it took a little bit of time away from my children.

Q: You mentioned Ray Benson. I knew Ray. He was a 'red diaper baby'. During the '30s a number of people, leftist leaning, went to the Soviet Union to work in factories and to know the Soviet Union. As I recall Ray's parents took him there and they called him the 'red diaper baby'.

BROWN: Ray never let on at the time. All I knew was that he was born, I think, in New York City. He did not let on at the time but I believe he had a sister living in Moscow or a sister who had been born in Moscow. In any case, there were family members.

I did later learn more in detail about him. The point is that at the time, Ray was very, very discreet about this. I didn't ask and he didn't tell. He was my boss for my first year in Moscow, 1978-1979. And in 1987, I replaced him. Ray had two four-year assignments. I had two three-year assignments.

I mentioned going back to Garmisch for basically what was to be a vacation, skiing and other things. One evening, we went to the apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Posdeev where we met a Russian woman. This began what I will call the "saga of the Tanyas." We met a woman there named Tatyana Sergeovna Khodorovich. She had administered the Solzhenitsyn Fund in Moscow and was now living in Paris. I don't know exactly how she had ended up in Paris or why she was in Garmisch during our visit but she had emigrated or was in exile, a dissident. She said "you should get in touch back in Moscow with Tanya Ivanova."

So we went back to Moscow and on a Sunday afternoon a few weeks later, we drove and drove and finally found the apartment of Tanya Sergeovna Ivanova. We made two Sunday afternoon visits there and met a number of interesting people, including Tanya Velikanova who would later on spend time in Siberia, and Sergei Khodorovich, two of the directors of the Solzhenitsyn Fund. Tanya Velikanova urged us to go and meet someone named Tanya Zieman. This is why we call it the saga of the Tanyas.

Don't try to follow all that except on April 1, 1979, I walked not too far to the apartment of Tanya Zieman. Her husband, Yuri, was not there but their three-year old daughter, Vera, was. We learned they were refuseniks. Yuri had applied to emigrate and had been "refused," from whence the term in Russian.

I left Tanya Zieman's apartment that night entrusted with a package of letters – I held them under my coat -- that had been delivered to her by Tanya Velikanova. When I got back to the embassy, I pouched it, sent it out to people in the outside world. These were for people in the West who were active in the Helsinki human rights movement.

To make this long story short, Tanya and Yuri Zieman and family became our dearest friends. They now live in Boston. Vera, then three, is now a young mother living in Boston. She went to

Amherst and the Fletcher School. Her sister Galina or Galka, Yuri's daughter, was ten years older. She and her husband Viktor and their children also emigrated and live in the Boston area. For the rest of our first assignment in Moscow, we were very, very close friends with Yuri and Tanya Zieman. We always told them that if "at any time being close to us jeopardizes you, puts you in danger, tell us and we will vanish from your lives." On the contrary, they wanted our friendship and felt a certain type of protection from it.

I took journalists, visiting firemen and later on, the Voice of America director, Richard Carlson, to visit them. He recalls it more vividly than I do, going to the Zieman apartment. They finally got permission to emigrate in 1988, right after the Ronald Reagan visit. In fact, there was even in the planning stage of the Reagan visit in 1988 the idea that en route from the airport, Reagan would go by the Zieman apartment and then go on to Spaso House. That didn't happen but I can tell you, it was in the planning stage.

So through Yuri and Tanya, we had many, many indelible experiences and our children were involved. We would go out to the woods in one of the open areas, maybe Vatutinki, in the 40 kilometer zone around Moscow, and have a cookout. We would provide the chickens that we could purchase at the diplomatic gastronomie. Yuri would set up the spit and cook the chicken. You would have thought we were in Rock Creek Park on a wonderful spring day.

Or we would go to a little dacha they were able to rent. They babysat for our dog Tar one summer. It was a life-changing experience.

Q: Did you learn to identify mushrooms?

BROWN: I didn't learn to identify them but I certainly knew how important "gribi" are to Russians and I enjoyed tasting many varieties of mushrooms.

So through those two avenues -- the creative intelligentsia, particularly in the world of music but also theater, and our refusenik friends -- we had windows on Soviet society. To this day, people will ask, "Did you get to meet Russians?" We got to meet more Russians than we had time, even on our first tour.

Q: I sort of have the vision of sitting around a kitchen table drinking tea or vodka or what have you and talking about life, I mean, real discussions. This is very much the Russian spirit.

BROWN: Exactly. Much of our conversation was just as human beings, parents, sitting in a small kitchen, of course, all the time hoping that Yuri would not be arrested. He took a job as an orderly in a hospital because he had lost his job when he applied to emigrate. We were always hoping their health would be good and that they would not run afoul of Soviet authorities, which they didn't. They had almost 10 long years before they were able to emigrate. There is much more about that story I could tell but they could tell it much better.

I want to conclude memories of my first Moscow year by mentioning four world events that had an impact on our lives. I don't have them in order but one was the U.S. establishing diplomatic relations with the Chinese. All of a sudden, the Chinese Embassy was inviting us in for social

events. It got to the point that Ambassador Toon I think had to say, “Look, we need to do this in an orderly, restrained fashion. We cannot look as if we are falling all over ourselves.” So there was some sort of orderly structured way of accepting invitations but boy, did it produce very nice meals.

Q: Relations with the Chinese diplomatic life meant some damned good food.

BROWN: It certainly did. They had a huge compound. It was very interesting. They raised a lot of their food right there on the compound. They were out on Friendship Street not too far from the university.

Then there was the murder of Ambassador Dubs in Kabul. I didn't know him but some of my colleagues did.

Q: I knew him fairly well.

BROWN: It sent a chill over the diplomatic community.

Q: We have an interesting account in our oral histories about somebody who was right outside when he was shot. The implication is very strong that the KGB was in on it.

BROWN: Of course he had served in Moscow too. That was very sad.

One day after this incident in the consular section, the man blowing him up, there was a major U.S. - Soviet prisoner exchange. I think it was a three-way exchange. We sometimes forget about how these things took place. At various points, a prisoner would be freed and walk across the no man's land. That was April of 1979.

And then lastly the Vienna summit. I talked about that. That culminated my first year in Moscow. I came back to Moscow and not too long after that we went on home leave.

Let me add one quick thing to the Vienna summit meeting. There had been a report that Thomas Watson, formerly of IBM, would replace Ambassador Toon. Ambassador Toon probably knew more about this than he let on but he didn't confirm it. Thomas Watson came to Vienna for that summit and he was interviewed by journalists Kevin Klose of The Washington Post and Dan Fisher of The Los Angeles Times. The agreement was they would not run the interview until and unless Thomas Watson was actually confirmed as ambassador to Moscow or presented his credentials. I can't remember which.

Of course, he was and the stories were published. There was nothing wrong with them but Ambassador Watson didn't like them. He would write personal notes on his hand. If he was going to be interviewed by Dan Fisher or Kevin Klose, he would write on his “Fisher/Klose” in pen on his hand. They picked this up and wrote about it in the story. It was just a little thing but Ambassador Watson was offended by it. So for that reason, he always felt very uneasy dealing with the press.

That summer, we went back to our beloved cabin in Maine for home leave. I knew all along that the Watson name was in Camden. But it was his brother who had a house in Camden. Along with a little more research, I realized that Tom Watson (I never would have called him that at the time) had a place on one of the islands in Penobscot Bay and it was he who had been named ambassador to Moscow.

I screwed up all my courage and with some trepidation called that number, introduced myself to Tom Watson and explained that my wife and I were vacationing there. We had just finished one year in Moscow, we would soon be going back and we were, whatever I said, excited and pleased to know he was going to be our new ambassador.

I am not quite sure he grasped who I was or what I was saying but he said, "Well, we will have to get together. Call me back." I called him back. When he said "get together," I assumed he meant that we would get together for lunch. I had to explain to my children that they were not going to be involved in this, that this was dad's new boss and that I would have to deal with this very carefully.

So I called him up on the given morning and he asked me on the phone, "Do you have children?" All my kids heard was, "Yes, we do, two. They are 11 and 9." He was inviting us all and he said, "You know where Lincolnville Beach is?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Well, get down there at 11 o'clock and I will pick you up in my helicopter." And he did.

Q: We will pick this up in the summer of 1979.

Today is the 20th of March, 2012 with Phil Brown. Phil you said you wanted to do something and then we are going to pick this up. We left it off you were going to meet the new Ambassador to the Soviet Union up in Maine.

BROWN: In my chronology, I have reached the summer of 1979. It has been almost a month since I was here last time. For anyone who ever happens to be listening to or reading this, please note that change. It is a little hard to keep a smooth continuity.

What I am doing in this interview is to talk about what my Foreign Service experience 30 years ago. What I have done between now and the last time I was here relates very much to my Foreign Service experience. When I was overseas, one of the things I was supposed to do was identify young, upcoming future leaders to send on the International Visitor Program. I was on the sending end. Today, I am still involved but on the receiving end. I contract periodically with the State Department to accompany groups of international visitors on their two-to-three week visits to the United States.

I am just back from a two-week trip around the United States with 19 IVs. In two weeks, I will be going on a three-week trip with another group of IVs.

Q: Could you describe your last trip? What was the composition and where were going and what were you seeing?

BROWN: The theme of the program was combating human trafficking. That's an issue that was hardly in anyone's mind ten years ago.

Q: It wasn't. We are talking about mostly prostitution.

BROWN: And forced labor. But it is an issue that has become a very important part of foreign policy. In 2000, the United States passed very important legislation on human trafficking. Hillary Clinton has put it at the top of her priorities. There is now an annual report that the State Department does, the Trafficking in Persons or TIP report, which evaluates the performance of every country around the world including the United States. Countries can be suppliers, transit countries or consumers of human trafficking so I was with a group of people from 19 different countries, from Trinidad to the Seychelles, from Estonia to Tunisia. We spent several days in Washington at the federal level and then we split up into three different groups and I went with a 1/3 of the group to Denver, Colorado. The others went to Minneapolis and Phoenix.

People ask "why Denver?" There are very engaged people there at the nongovernmental level dealing with this issue of human trafficking. But on any assignment, we leave the major cities of the east and west coast to visit some other cities in the interior – Chicago, Des Moines, Memphis, etc. From Denver, we gathered in Miami for a couple of days of programming.

Two weeks, very concentrated, but at the end of the time, I am almost a mini-expert on the subject. The people who came are all involved in the subject back home so they went back with a lot of new knowledge, contacts and so on.

Q: What were you talking about? Obviously, we are not immune from particularly prostitutes but not only that, the Chinese

BROWN: It could be Hispanics in Colorado, Chinese in New York City. Miami is a major transit point. Americans are addressing the subject from many different perspectives, from legislation to NGOs that are involved in working directly with victims. Human trafficking in the formal sense is people moving across borders but there are also people dealing with human trafficking where the victims have not been moved across borders. At the NGO level, you find quite a number of groups and people heavily involved.

My next project will be the U.S. judicial system. It does remind me of when I was overseas sending people on the IV program.

Q: What were you looking at in these places? Were you talking to police or judiciary?

BROWN: In Washington, it was four of the five federal agencies that are most involved; State, Justice, Labor and Health and Human Services. We also had a meeting with the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which is an NGO and we had a talk by a woman from

American University who is an expert in the field.

In Colorado, there is something there called the Laboratory for Combating Human Trafficking. It is an NGO. They have something called the Colorado Project and they are trying to do research on it because Denver is at the intersection of two interstate highways and Denver becomes a transit point for people being trafficked.

We went to a shelter for women who have been trafficked, prostitutes. Were they exactly, in a formal definition, victims of human trafficking? Perhaps not because they hadn't been moved across borders but it is a place where women who have been rescued, as it were, have a chance to start life over again.

We talked to a police officer there about awareness training. The police are prosecutors and they look at prostitutes as criminals and are trying to redefine this so that a prostitute is not simply a criminal but may be a victim. There are programs that provide assistance to victims of prostitution.

In Miami, we met with the other major federal agency, Homeland Security and with ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and their taskforce there. There were perhaps too many meetings with taskforces and office visits and not enough occasions to talk to the victims but we did have a meeting with a Hispanic man, a Mexican American, I believe, who's involved with labor there. He made a very contentious case about what happens to migrant laborers. I say contentious because a lot of visitors didn't accept his point of view. He really presented his point of view quite forcefully.

Q: We are talking about the summer of '79 and you are going to meet with the new Ambassador, Tom Watson. How did that go?

BROWN: So back to Maine and Moscow more than 30 years ago. It was delightful. We were on home leave near Camden, Maine, and I knew the Watson name was associated with the area. I called Mr. Watson and at first, there was a little confusion about who I was but when I called back he said, "You have to come over and have lunch." I told my kids that dad was going to be meeting the new boss and they were going to be left behind.

On the morning we were supposed to go, I called again and it was clear to them from my conversation when I said, "Yes, we do. Two" that they were going to be invited as well and he said, "Get yourself down to Lincolnville Beach and I will pick you up there in my helicopter."

He picked us up and flew us over to North Haven, his end of the island, where they have a large family estate. He and his wife, Olive, were the most hospitable, warm, welcoming people, nothing pretentious about them and yet, we looked around at this vast estate and were reminded that he was a former chairman of IBM and was now going to be the American Ambassador to Moscow. He took me aside. We went walking and he started asking me questions about how we could solve the problems of U.S.-Soviet relations and nuclear weapons and I had to explain that this was a little above my competence.

Then we completed lunch and the kids went swimming in the pool. Somewhere along the line, I learned that not long before, Mr. Watson had had a heart attack and so I was somewhat relieved when he introduced us to his pilot; his pilot flew the helicopter back to Lincolnville Beach. It was an experience we will never forget.

When I went back to the embassy a month later and mentioned in the country team meeting that I had had lunch under these circumstances with Ambassador Watson, I certainly got people's attention. Everyone wanted to know who he was and what he was like.

It also meant that when Ambassador Watson came out in October, I had to make it fairly clear when he called me up to his office that I was not the person to talk to. He needed to talk to the head of the political section or the DCM. That eventually got straightened out but we always had a very personal friendship with the Watsons and it continued. Several summers thereafter, we would go to North Haven, be their guests for a meal or meet him somewhere along the Maine coast.

He wrote a book (*Father, Son & Co: My Life at IBM and Beyond*) and inscribed it to Bobbi and me "with admiration." The book has about 20 pages on his time as ambassador. He referred to it as "his short, unhappy tour as a diplomat." We felt a twinge when we read in the newspaper that he had passed away; we felt as though we had lost a close friend.

Q: You went back after leave to the Soviet Union in '79. What was the situation? Was there anything developing at that time?

BROWN: Let me repeat that I kept diaries during this time. As I go through them, preparation for this interview has been tedious. It is time-consuming. I am sometimes amazed at how I found the time to keep a diary and put in the details that I did.

That was then and this is now but as I see names and recall incidents, I look them up on the internet. I learn more about them now than I knew back then. I am not only reliving these experiences but I am rediscovering them and learning about people I met back then.

I am not even looking at various files and photo albums but only at my diaries. I kept diaries every day, probably 362 out of 365 days of the year. What I conclude is that we, and I deliberately say we, had an amazing experience, an amazing opportunity. This was an extremely interesting place to be in a Foreign Service career. Our professional and personal lives were intertwined and one was as interesting as the other. I will say we took full advantage of it.

Our experiences there were people-oriented. I am amazed at the energy we had. I am amazed at how we could go out night after night and be involved in some activity or other. We were in the prime of our lives. For me, it was age 37 to 40. I had a lot of energy then. We involved our children. Our children were a great age to be in Moscow. They were not so young that we had to have them taken care of and couldn't really understand the experience. If they had been a few years older, they might have been restless teenagers or we would have sent them off to boarding school. They were right in between. It was a good time for them to be involved.

It is fun for me even now to call them up and ask if they remember such and such an experience, like the day my 11-year old daughter and one of her friends, the daughter of a colleague in the political section, decided to get on the bus that goes around the Ring Road in Moscow. The only problem was they couldn't quite figure out where to get off and so they went all the way around the Ring Road -- Christine would have to recall the details -- before they realized where they needed to get off.

On the one hand you think, wow. You let your kid do that in Moscow in the midst of godless communism? On the other hand, I am reassured by the thought that Russians love children and they would have found somebody that would have helped them out. It was an adventure they talked about.

You asked what kind of mood we found when we went back. Summer of 1979 had been the Carter - Brezhnev summit meeting in Vienna. We did not know what lay in store in the next few months so September of 1979, when I went back was, or seemed to be, a pretty good period in U.S. - Soviet relations.

But there are a couple of things, some more detail, that I want to recall about the year 1978-79. I did talk about the fire across the street from the embassy and our belief that that was the building from which the Soviets directed radiation at the embassy.

What I forgot to mention last time was that in May, 1979, the embassy issued a statement saying that the Soviets had stopped directing radiation at the embassy. The New York Times published that in a four paragraph AP dispatch. I am really surprised that that issue did not gain more press attention and hasn't been looked at more.

It was an issue at the time because Johns Hopkins, at the bidding of the State Department, did a study about radiation at the American Embassy. But to this day, I remain convinced that that story has never been fully explored. They were directing radiation at us. My guess is that we, the CIA or whatever entity, was also directing radiation outwards. We were trying to listen to messages. There must something that explains the terrible heat in the embassy building, which was nothing more than a 12- or 14-story apartment building. There was strange heat in that building. It was just warmer than it needed to be.

Ambassador Stoessel, who had been there before I was, died of leukemia. There was speculation even then that he might have been a victim of that radiation. I sure would like to see a deep, thorough study of that issue.

Not long after I came back in 1979 -- it was still the time of Ambassador Toon, Ambassador Watson didn't come out until October -- we had a special event that I will never forget. It took place just down the hill behind our embassy on big plot of land that was to be the site of our new embassy. We had a ground breaking ceremony down there. I recall Ambassador Toon standing on a little podium and it reminded me of the Politburo on top of Lenin's tomb on November 7th. It was a very formal ceremony. Ground was broken for the new American Embassy, the NOB, the new office building, on the new embassy compound, the NEC.

That was 1979. If anyone had asked me on that date, if they had told me on that date, that I would come back to Moscow in 1987, I certainly would have assumed that I could look forward to working out of the new office building. Well, when I came back in 1987, we lived on that compound in a very nice townhouse. A lot of embassy support facilities had been relocated there but the new office building, the NOB, was alleged to have bugs in it and was being deconstructed; it was a work site for Americans trying to find and take out those bugs.

In my three years, 1987 to 1990, we never got into that new office building. We continued to work out of the old office building under abysmal working conditions. I mean abysmal, dangerous to your health. It was dirty, a fire trap, a hot, awful work environment. One of my regrets is that we didn't ever have a chance to work in proper working conditions. I might have stayed a fourth year in Moscow on my second tour if the working conditions had been better.

Let me turn to a different and happier subject. I am reminded that one of our senior FSNs, a fellow named Yuri Zarakhovich, wrote an article in 1979 for Ogonyok Magazine. Ogonyok was one of the more interesting magazines and the subject was the father of John Byerly. John Byerly was in our exhibits program. His father had been in the Second World War and had a very interesting experience with Soviet troops.

I never thought about that issue again until just a couple of years ago when John Byerly became the American Ambassador to Moscow. That subject, his father's World War II experience, was recalled just a couple of years ago in exhibits, newspaper articles and interviews. Those are the kinds of stories that Soviets, now we refer to them as Russians, love. U.S. - Russian cooperation during the Second World War.

Q: I don't know what it was like in those times but I think today Russian citizens don't live as long as most others; heavy smoking, heavy drinking, not much exercise. The population is actually shrinking. Was that, did we ever address it?

BROWN: A man named Murray Feshbach, an expert on Soviet demography at the Census Department, was pointing out way back in the '70s that Soviet population was not growing, was in decline from these very factors that you mentioned, alcoholism, diet, lack of exercise and perhaps just lack of incentive, given their living conditions, to have large families.

It was a problem that the Soviets, though they wouldn't come right out and say it, had to be aware of it as far back as the '70s and maybe before that. They are still dealing with it today.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet press at that point? Was it strictly a tool of the Communist Party? Was there any movement there?

BROWN: The short answer is yes, strictly a tool of the Communist Party. We dealt with Soviet journalists but we dealt with them as very competent, very well trained polemicists. We would occasionally take an American visitor to call on one of them. For example, I recall going with a congressman to call on the editor of Pravda, Viktor Afanasyev. He was a very skilled spokesman for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Alexander Bovin of Izvestiya was another with

whom we would meet. Vikentiy Matveyev was another. I sometimes thought “boy, I wish we had people who are as skilled both in expressing a particular point of view and perhaps doing it in Russian.” Our visitors such as the congressman were frequently outmatched.

There were people such as Vladimir Pozner (I mentioned him before) who had grown up in Brooklyn, who not only spoke unaccented English but could speak “Brooklynese” as well. He would go to the American School or somewhere like that and perhaps admit, “Yeah. We’ve got problems here. We are just like any country in the world. We have smart people and stupid people just like you do in your country.” This was a very disarming approach.

But when it came to the crunch, to the issues in foreign policy, all Soviet “journalists” sang the party line. And for good reason; their jobs, their livelihoods depended on it.

Q: Were you seeing a lack of enthusiasm for communism per se? In other words, they have lectures on communism and on and on. There must be a point where students are tuned off, certainly in Eastern Europe.

BROWN: No question. It is hard to make a distinction between my official life and my non official life in Moscow because everything was official. You were always an American diplomat. I was the press attaché and so I would take Washington visitors to meet journalists or I would have Soviet journalists to our apartment. I recall a number of them coming to watch a video of the Reagan-Carter presidential debate in 1980. They would watch this debate and would discuss it. They were always, as we would say today, on message. There would be no concessions; whether they were defending the invasion of Afghanistan or saying it was the U.S. fault that we had hostages in Iran, they were right on line.

But, as I have said, I also had a lot of unofficial contact with people in two different categories. The first were people in the creative world, the performing arts. I did this simply because I liked having those experiences. We also had an ever-growing number of friends in the world of Jewish refuseniks or dissidents. You’d talk to any of them and either by the look on their face or by what they would actually tell you, the message was that this is all a big lie. Whatever the Russians were claiming about their standard of living or their role in the world, they were basically a third world country with nuclear weapons. I am sure that the official spokespeople recognized that as well. It is just that a lot of them benefited from this system and so they were not going to undermine their own position.

The short answer to your question is people knew that they were being lied to. We often watched the television news at night, the program called “Vremya.” You would hear the reports on food production or the general level of contentment and you knew that very few people could have watched those and thought it was true.

Q: Was there any effort during this time to spice up the news or something? Tractor production is not exactly a gripper.

BROWN: No, it wasn’t but it was there every night along with the speeches. Was there an effort to spice up the news? The front page of every major newspaper would have exactly the same

article with exactly the same words. Newspapers like Literary Gazette might have long, tedious pieces on some aspect of cultural life but I don't think Russians turned to newspapers or TV to spice up their lives, at least not TV news casts. They watched cultural events, sporting events, children's programming, that kind of thing.

They didn't look to the media for news and the media was not trying to make it look itself interesting. Its role was to be the official mouthpiece for the CPSU.

Q: Where did people get their news in those days?

BROWN: We used to say that the rumor mill could get stories across Moscow and around the country in no time; that's where news traveled fastest or most believably just through conversations.

Beyond that, where did people get their news? A certain number were able to listen to foreign broadcasts including the Voice of America. Radio Liberty was jammed but if you got in the right places you could hear it.

One of the things I did a great deal of was travel. When I traveled to places like Tbilisi, Tashkent or Irkutsk, one of the things I was supposed to do was listen to the Voice of America and see if I could monitor it despite the jamming. The answer was sometimes yes, sometimes no. International broadcasts were a source of news.

Beyond that, you had the intelligentsia or the few people who were able to travel abroad and see things differently or who had contact with foreigners. For most other people in the country outside the big cities, I don't think they really cared that much. They just went about their daily lives struggling to make ends meet.

Q: This could be true in Kansas.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Did we see any differentiation or cracks between what you were seeing in the central part of Russia and Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, you know the other parts of what eventually broke off from the Soviet Union?

BROWN: A city we visited frequently, and where you would find the greatest sense of skepticism, where you felt a total change of spirit, was Tbilisi, Georgia. There was just something about that part of the world. The first morning I awakened in Tbilisi, I felt as if I was in a Mediterranean country. Over the course of two tours in the Soviet Union, I went there numerous times, quite often with family members.

I didn't go to Belarus, to Minsk, until my second tour but I don't think you would have found much deviance from party line in those areas.

In Central Asia, there was a whole different look – the faces, a different way of living, the ready

availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and that kind of thing. Again, I don't think they were thinking that much about political issues out there.

But aside from these specifics, there is another more important point. What these three years in Moscow from 1978 to 1981 did for me was to make 1987 to 1990, when I went back on my second tour, so amazing. From the first day back in 1987, I would start the day, probably at a staff meeting, saying or hearing "you can't believe what we just read, what we just saw, what we just experienced." How different it was from ten years earlier. It really did go from a tightly controlled, thought-controlled society to an amazingly open, vibrant new world.

Q: Let's take two issues that must have had quite an impact. One is the hostage issue in Tehran and Soviet reaction and the other of course is the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. How did the hostage crisis

BROWN: The hostage taking was terribly depressing. I didn't make a note in my diary about it until several days after it happened. Soon after, we had a meeting in the embassy to ask ourselves whether we were doing and what we should do. I am not exactly sure what we meant by that but it seemed important to address our concern over this issue. The Soviets were exploiting it fully, blaming the United States even though of course they had interests of their own as far as their diplomatic immunities but they showed no sympathy for us for that situation.

Then there was the day -- and again, remember how we got our news, news wasn't as instantaneous back then as it is now -- when I learned through, I think, an AP report of the failed rescue mission. That just made that whole experience all the more depressing.

Life went on, we didn't stop living. It was on your mind every day. We had no fear of that kind of thing in Moscow. If anything, the Soviets had more worries about the safety of their diplomats sometimes in places like New York and elsewhere. In Moscow, we didn't fear hostage taking or physical attacks but you had to think of those poor souls in Tehran.

Jumping ahead to February of 1980, we and another family took a vacation in Sri Lanka. We got there flying Aeroflot from Moscow nonstop to Colombo. Part way through our flight, the pilot told us we were flying over the Persian Gulf. People even looked out to see if they could see American warships. It occurred to me that we were flying right over that country where this was all going on.

I remember the beginning of negotiations in November of 1980 and the Algerians being involved. When the hostages were released in January, the Algerian Ambassador in Moscow came to an event at Spaso House. We had served in Algeria and there was some grudging thanks to the Algerians for some little role they played in resolving the issue.

Q: Let's go to the invasion of Afghanistan. Here were the Soviets invading essentially a communist country. It is sort of a peculiar thing. Do you recall when it first happened what the hell is happening here?

BROWN: I am sometimes struck as I read my diary to see that I didn't write on that day that the

Soviets invaded Afghanistan, etcetera, etcetera. I guess I took it for granted that this was in the news so I didn't have to write it. I do have a note on December 28, 1979 that the Ambassador briefed the American press on what we called the Soviet led coup in Afghanistan. That's about the only note I made.

Of course, the consequences were immediate and had a profound effect on our lives there; the sanctions imposed by the Carter administration. Ambassador Watson was recalled. We were groping for sanctions and sanctions included closing what we called the Kiev Advance Party, KAP. We were going to open a consulate in Kiev and they would open a consulate in New York. We had an advance party in Kiev.

Well, one of the ways we were going to punish the Soviets was to close the Kiev advance party and I remember some of our very good people being withdrawn from Kiev. That was about the most stupid thing you could do, to close your eyes and ears to an important part of the country, to withdraw your diplomats but that was one of our sanctions.

Another one of our sanctions was to suspend grain sales. This played right into Soviet hands. All those ships would no longer be coming from New Orleans to the port of Odessa. Aside from the negative impact on American farmers, the Soviets managed to manipulate the embargo quite nicely. They assured their people that the supply of bread would not be affected. Tightening belts in a time of crisis was nothing new for Soviets. It simply reinforced the sense of nationalism and loyalty.

The other major sanction was the boycott of the Olympics. I well remember the summer of 1981. We were not allowed to go anywhere near the Olympic Park lest we appear to be in any way involved in the Olympics. I wished in retrospect that we had not done that. I think it would have been a wonderful way to poke our finger in the Soviet's eye by having American athletes there throwing a Frisbee on Red Square. We played into Soviet hands through that boycott which, of course, allowed the Soviets four years later to boycott the U.S.-hosted Olympics in Los Angeles.

I cite those three things off the top of my head -- closing our consulate in Kiev which never really opened, suspending grain sales and boycotting the Olympics -- that happened in the aftermath of the invasion of Afghanistan. There were also a few other "minor" things, cutbacks in cultural exchanges, that affected us most directly.

I mentioned that way back when I was in Princeton, I wrote a paper on U.S. – Soviet cultural exchanges. I explained that when you wanted to show that you were happy with a country that you had tense relations with, you initiated a cultural project. You sent ping pong players to China or the New York Symphony to Moscow. And when you wanted to show you were unhappy, and didn't want to launch nuclear weapons as the first action, you suspended cultural programs and so that's what we did. We suspended many cultural programs.

But it sometimes went to extremes. A young American pianist came to perform in Moscow. He wasn't even there officially. His father had arranged for him to come out. I was told I should not go to his performance at the Conservatory because it would look as though I was somehow endorsing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by going to hear an American pianist at the

Conservatory.

That young pianist was Andrew Litton, now a noted conductor; his father was George Litton. George Litton asked me afterwards if I could get a copy of Andrew Litton's tape of his concert that night. I turned to our senior Foreign Service employee, Yuri Zarakovich, and Yuri by some miracle got the tape from Gosteleradio, state television and radio. I passed it on to George Litton. A few years later, I was in Paris and Andrew Litton was there, either to perform as a pianist or maybe as an orchestra conductor. Anyway, he was in Paris and I got hold of his father because I wanted to go to the concert. I said, "You probably don't remember me. My name is Phil Brown. You were in Moscow . . ."

He responded, "How could I ever forget you? You got me that tape of my son's concert in Moscow."

I didn't want to say it wasn't I who did it, it was Yuri, but anyway I will take the credit and get the tickets. He said, "You do me a favor. I will be grateful. If you do my son a favor. I will never forget you." George Litton lives in Manhattan. To this day, every time I see him or go to one of his son's performances, he remembers that concert in Moscow in 1980.

Q: Did the atmosphere of the embassy change after the Afghan invasion?

BROWN: Yes and no. The bloom was off the rose. No one felt that more than Ambassador Watson. Ambassador Watson goes out to Moscow and he wants to preside over a period of good feelings created by the Vienna summit; within six months, that is all down the drain.

Did the atmosphere change? Indeed. On the other hand, did we still go about our work day to day? Did we still have a full plate of activities? Very much so. We weren't going to have exhibits and speakers and cultural presentations. That had a demoralizing effect for people in the cultural section. I was in the press section. I still had a full platter, particularly in my role as press attaché, but the assistant IOs who dealt with exhibits, magazines and the like had a vastly reduced work load.

Q: You are press attaché and here the press is a complete creature of the political apparatus. What did you do?

BROWN: Let me explain once again that we had an active American press corps and as press attaché, I dealt a lot with the American press corps. They were asking questions on various issues. And under the Helsinki Agreements, working conditions for journalists were an issue we were always dealing with. Anytime an American journalist couldn't get a visa, had his film seized, felt that his working conditions were being compromised, we were into the foreign ministry to raise that issue.

It was tedious. I never really enjoyed doing this but we would go to the foreign ministry press division to defend the rights of the American press corps constantly.

We also had a very interesting and ambitious group of journalists from Western Europe and I

found it very important to work with them. I had no sense that after the invasion of Afghanistan I had any less on my platter than I did before.

I mentioned that Ambassador Toon was very comfortable dealing with the press. He had a weekly, Friday afternoon background briefing for the American press corps. He almost seemed to revel in being contentious and getting a rise out of Washington. Ambassador Toon left in the fall of 1979 prior to the hostage crisis and the invasion of Afghanistan. In connection with Ambassador Toon's departure, we had a whole series of activities, social events that were not merely social events. They were part of the whole fabric of living in Moscow. One such party for Ambassador Toon, held in the snack bar, was in October of 1979, and I offered a toast that was a variation on the toast he said that he had offered to Secretary Kissinger.

Toon said his toast to Kissinger was "you have been a great secretary of state but an SOB to work for." I recalled this and I remember people nervously shuffling thinking I was going to say the same thing about Toon but my variation was "you have been a great Ambassador and a delight to work for." I went to Moscow being told to watch out for Toon. He has press attachés for breakfast. And now that he was leaving, I felt so comfortable that I could make him the potential target of a joke.

Q: He had a reputation as a curmudgeon.

BROWN: A tough guy to work for, a demanding boss but he certainly made my life interesting and more comfortable because he was honest with the press. He was candid with them. He occasionally got himself in trouble doing it but, to me he was a role model in how to deal with the press.

Ambassador Watson undoubtedly heard how comfortable Toon was with the press and it reminded me of when Ambassador Payton was replaced by Ambassador Hoffacker during my tour in Cameroon. The one came from outside the Foreign Service and the next was a career man. I wondered "how can this new guy replace his predecessor?" In fact, he didn't try to replace; he went about doing what he knew how to do best.

By the same token, I don't think Ambassador Watson felt he was trying to replace Toon. He was going to come out and do what he knew how to do best but dealing with the press was not what he knew how to do best. He was always uneasy and his DCM, Mark Garrison, and his political counselor, Bob German, shared that uneasiness and so it was like walking on eggshells when we dealt with the American press. We tried some of the Friday afternoon background briefings but that was trying to do what your predecessor was comfortable doing and Ambassador Watson was not comfortable doing that. I have example after example where it was a very awkward relationship, complicated of course by the fact we quickly went from relatively good times to relatively bad times.

Just one more anecdote about Ambassador Toon that is too good and too memorable for me not to mention. Besides the snack bar farewell, there was another more formal affair at Spaso House. But the best farewell for Ambassador Toon was hosted by a correspondent named Ed Stevens. Ed Stevens won a Pulitzer Prize with the Christian Science Monitor in 1950 but by 1979, he was

a character nobody fully understood. He was probably in his 70s then. He was afflicted by a physical problem where his head hung down. He couldn't stand erect. He and his wife Nina had a lovely, multi-story home in central Moscow that was full of icons. Ed hosted a party for just the American press corps. I was invited along with my wife to say farewell to Ambassador Toon.

The first event of the evening involved Gene Pell, the NBC correspondent. I can't imagine how much company time he had spent with his cameraman creating this video, a spoof on Ambassador Toon. It picked up on and exploited many of Toon's idiosyncrasies, habits or comments. I hope it exists somewhere because it was very funny; we were in hysterics laughing at it.

That was over and you thought nothing could exceed this for laughter and kidding. Toon was loving it and then this man appeared and you would have sworn it was Leonid Brezhnev. Out lumbers this hulking man with his head down on his chest and a Brezhnev mask. It was Ed Stevens, our host for the evening. He went on in a mumbling style you could hardly understand. It was partly the way Ed talked at the time and it was vintage Brezhnev. Toon again just loved it. It was a genuine tribute from the American press corps. There were guys there like David Shipler of The New York Times, who only a few weeks earlier had written a very critical article about the embassy and about the embassy limiting access to the consular section in the wake of the incident there and this kind of thing. These guys didn't lose their critical edge but they really genuinely wanted to pay tribute, say farewell to Mac Toon.

To this day I look back on that with real warmth.

Q: I met Watson once when I was consul general around this time in Naples and the NATO commander in that period was Bill Crowe who became chairman of the joint chiefs. Watson mentioned that he was sent out there because of his business experience and the idea when Carter nominated him this was going to be an opening. Here was a businessman who could go out and sort of get a business perspective. A good idea because of Afghanistan and all but did you find that there was any business perspective coming out of the ambassador's office?

BROWN: Not really. That may have been the case that he was nominated, partly because he was a Democrat and partly because of his business acumen. I would imagine it would have been saying to the Soviets, "Look. This man has achieved the top of his field. We are sending you someone who is really number one in his field." They would take no offense it being a business person. They have great admiration for American business, even though they might claim otherwise.

I can't speak for Ambassador Watson that what he hoped to do was to bring the force of his personality, whereas a career person would have been simply representing the official policy of the U.S. government. Sure, Watson would have represented the official policy of the U.S. government but he would leave a lot of the negotiating and that kind of thing to other people. He was going to use Spaso House and make it an American cultural center. He was going to be able to use his personal wealth to improve U.S. – Soviet relations. He could recall, and I wish I knew exactly the details, that he flew across the Soviet Union right after the Second World War in his own plane. He wrote about those wonderful experiences. He was involved in lend lease so by

dint of his personality, he hoped he could contribute to the improvement of U.S. relations.

Who knows? In Watson's mind, maybe that would also make them more open to arms control and to loosening immigration restrictions but it wouldn't prevent them from, as we know, pursuing their own national interests in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Q: How stood our relations with our Russian employees, the Foreign Service nationals? This was before the Sergeant Lonetree incident.

BROWN: Yes, well before Lonetree. We still had Russian national employees. We had only a couple in the press section, most notably Yuri Zarakhovich. After December, 1979, we had less work for Yuri to do, there was no question. That was a regret of mine.

I might as well take a minute and talk about Yuri, a heavy-set, garrulous Jewish intellectual, a member of the Communist Party but only out of necessity. He had a hearty laugh, loved to exchange jokes or stories in either Russian or English. I believe that he had come to the press section from the exhibit program.

Yuri was a great help on many projects and we got to know each other well. He invited me to his dacha one weekend. I went out there alone, probably a violation of embassy restrictions. You shouldn't travel alone but I went out to his dacha for a weekend, met his wife, his mother, his mother's mother and their daughter. There were four generations

Yuri went along on several of our trips to Tbilisi; he had good connections there. In one particular case, Yuri put us in touch with a leading figure in state radio and television in Georgia. On a particular Saturday, we had a big Georgian meal with Yuri and his friend. I am sure we had not only a lot of food but a little bit of libation along with it. At the end, as we are walking out of the restaurant, we noticed that there was a Georgian wedding going on. It wasn't a house of worship; I think it was the reception. There was a ceremony in connection with it so I asked "can we just stand here in the back?" We did, the four of us, Yuri, the Georgian official and my wife and my daughter.

People caught sight of us, realized I was not Georgian, found out that I was an American diplomat and pretty quickly, I was paraded up in the front of the room with somebody acting as an interpreter. The next thing I knew, I was being offered one of these cow horns full of, I am not sure what it was full of, wine, let's say and I was "invited" to toast the bride and groom by downing that horn of wine nonstop with the appropriate amount of wine trickling down my chin and everything else. I did it and got a round of applause.

Then I said through the interpreter, "I have observed one of your traditions and now I am going to ask you to observe one of our traditions and that is I am going to kiss the bride." So I kissed the bride on both cheeks and that produced a lot of laughter and applause. We walked out and the Georgian jokingly said to me, "You better be careful you don't overplay your hand; kissing the bride before the wedding or before her bridal night might be contrary to local tradition. You might end up finding your tires slashed or your throat cut." It was fun.

I remember my daughter was there because she was in hysterics watching me drink this cow horn of wine.

On another occasion, my wife and I went to the Moscow puppet theater with Yuri. My Russian was good but I could not have begun to appreciate the nuances of what was going on in the puppet theater if Yuri hadn't been sitting behind us whispering and explaining things. He was always willing to become involved in any activity we had.

That same summer we were home, 1979, we met a woman named Helen Papashvily, a Georgian name, and learned about George Papashvily (his life is a whole story in itself, a Georgian American sculptor). We took a catalog of his works back to Moscow, showed it to Yuri and asked if he could translate the introductory remarks. I think he initially looked at it skeptically but he translated it into Russian. He brought it to me a few days later. He loved it. It was this genuine U.S. – Georgian story.

By my second tour, we had dismissed all the Foreign Service national employees. There was a lot of chest beating about “boy, oh boy. This is the best thing we have ever done. We got rid of all these spies. How could we have ever operated an embassy with these disloyal people working inside?”

I am proud to say that I did not buy that argument. I thought some of these people were very good. If we weren't smart enough to know how to use them but keep them in control, then that reflected on us. As I have said many times, if Yuri and others reported back to the KGB that Phil Brown loved classical music, let them fill up the file.

By my second tour, Yuri was working for AP, the Associated Press, and our loss was their gain. After the invasion of Afghanistan, in that year and a half that I was there, we didn't have enough work for those people but by the time I went back in 1987, we had so much work that I kept thinking if I could only get Yuri to help me out with this that or the other thing. By then, he was a very capable staff member at the Associated Press.

Then he was stolen away by Time magazine. The AP bureau chief was married to the Time magazine correspondent and I don't know how that went down within the family but Time stole Yuri away from AP. We last saw Yuri in Moscow in 2006 when we returned as tourists.

In the interim, Yuri had arranged for his daughter Masha to do university study at Emory University in Georgia. It happened to be a period when we were living in the States and Yuri asked whether Masha could call us in case there was a problem or issue. I said certainly. Masha is now an immigration lawyer in Jacksonville, Florida. She has her own child and she just posted the last week or so on Facebook page that her mother has become an American citizen.

A couple of years ago, 2009, we were coming back from overseas and picked up a copy of Time magazine. There was Yuri's obituary, a full column on the magazine's own page acknowledging what he had contributed to Time's reporting on Russia. He had died in his mid-60s of cancer. By this time he had come to live in Jacksonville. He lived long enough to hold his first grandchild. Yuri's daughter told me that they still have the dacha outside Moscow.

So that's the Yuri Zarakhovich story, my part of it. I hope he left memoirs.

I just love that kind of story. As I go through my diary and look up people on the Internet, I say, "gosh. So that's who that person was we were dealing with. Now they are dead." There are others who were children when we were there and they are now in the prime of life and doing interesting things. We can keep track of them; that is rewarding.

Q: In this first tour, did you feel the heavy hand of the KGB?

BROWN: No, I did not. I was conscious that they were probably monitoring my telephone calls and I always carried a number of small, two kopek pieces with me. If you were going to call somebody and didn't want to be monitored, you'd find a phone booth on the street and use that to call. I was not personally aware of the KGB.

I was just the other day reading about a trip I took with the head of the internal political section, a fellow named Bob Ober.

Q: He taught at my prep school, Kent.

BROWN: On one trip, we flew to Odessa; from there, we took the train to Lvov and from Lvov, we flew back to Moscow; it must have been a five or six day adventure.

The most interesting part of it was you'd get out and walk the streets, meet people in a restaurant. I really like Bob Ober and have great respect for him but I can't tell you how many times on that trip Bob would say, "See those people over there on the other side of the street? They are following us. They are watching us."

I would look at those people on the other side of the street and I'd see just a couple of ordinary Russians going about their lives. So I think it is a matter of perspective.

I had my agenda. I would try to listen to the Voice of America and see if it was being jammed or not. We also did things like go to a concert at the conservatory in Odessa. I am sure I put Bob up to that. At the conservatory in Odessa, you could see the names of famous graduates, people like Rostropovich and Oistrakh.

Neither when we were going to the conservatory nor when we went out to visit someone by public transportation was I aware of our being watched or surveyed or whatever. Bob was sure we were.

Bob also had his agenda. There were people on various lists he wanted to talk to. So we went to visit a person who was on the embassy representation list. Any time we had a high level meeting with Soviets, we would pass over a list of individuals on whom we were making a formal representation, probably for the right to emigrate. For that visit, we might well have been monitored.

There was an Indian consulate in Odessa and Bob and I called on the consul, who was delighted to have some English-speaking visitors. We signed the guest book. I must have visited there twice because I remember signing that guest book a second time and there hadn't been many visitors in the interim. But there was always something about going to a port city, just a little bit different from other places.

Q: What was the history of the Jewish population of Odessa?

BROWN: All I know is there was a very large Jewish population there and that they were part of the creative intelligentsia but I don't recall very much of the specifics at the time. Undoubtedly, there would have been a synagogue and there would have been some Jewish cultural organizations. Many of the creative intelligentsia came out of the Odessa Jewish community.

We went on to Lvov which is a pretty little town. It was really a Polish town with an old square.

People inevitably ask the same two questions when I say I served in the Soviet Union. The first is "could you meet people?" My answer is, "I didn't have enough time to begin to meet all the people." This may sound boastful but I am constantly amazed at how much time I did find to meet people after hours on the weekends and everything else.

Yes, we said to our Russian friends, particularly to our Jewish refusenik friends that if at any time they felt contact or friendship with us put them in jeopardy, let us know and we would back off without any questions being asked. The answer was always the same. "Phil, the more contact we have the better."

The second question was "could you travel?" And I traveled extensively.

Q: You say you are meeting people. I know that the Soviets have sort of an unquenchable appetite for information about the United States. Do you really have a car or do you do this, do you do that, all these things. Were you able to engage in substantive conversations about the political situation and that sort of thing?

BROWN: We went to Moscow with a Volvo that we had purchased in 1972. That car was a lemon but somehow we nursed it as far as Moscow and it was obviously still going to cause us great difficulty. I managed to sell it. I never dealt in the black market. The American Embassy never dealt in the black market. The American Embassy always dealt with rubles at the official exchange rate but plenty of African and other third world diplomats dealt on the black market. So I sold, quite legitimately, my Volvo for a cigar box full of rubles that I could convert at the embassy at the official rate. It all worked out. The only condition was that I deliver that car to Helsinki.

I had a friend in the embassy named Craig Spitzer. I can't remember exactly what he did but he was not a language-trained diplomat. He was one of the technicians but he knew how to operate cars and on a beautiful spring day, May 12, 1979, we headed off from Moscow and managed to drive that car to Leningrad. For Craig, it was a novel experience. Otherwise, he was not only never going to get out of Moscow, but probably never get out of the embassy-to-apartment

routine so it was quite an eye-opener for him.

We stayed overnight in the guest apartment in Leningrad. After I had retired for the day, Craig was out there working on the car, changing the spark plugs, changing the oil and everything else. The next day, we drove from Leningrad to Helsinki. I put Craig on the train back to Moscow. I would see him frequently afterwards and he'd always talk about that experience. I checked in to a guest house in Helsinki and got up on Monday morning to deliver the car to the port. It wouldn't start but thanks to Craig, I knew what I had to do with those spark plugs or whatever; I got the car started, delivered it to the port and that was it. That was the last I ever saw of that car. I think it went off to Sierra Leone. It may still be operating in Sierra Leone.

That was the last we would ever see of non-Russian cars. We went out and bought the little version of the Fiat called the Zhiguli, a little yellow Zhig, probably about as unsafe a car as you can imagine. It provided us with anonymity. It had a diplomatic license plate on it but you could let that license plate get awfully muddy in the winter. That provided us with a degree of anonymity when we went to visit Russian friends. At least we weren't driving up in a Volvo or Chevrolet or something.

Your question; what did we talk about? Most of my recollection is that we had close friends and we were not talking very much about politics. We were talking about family and raising children. But they were also full of questions about life in America and often about things that made us reflect. I can remember Yuri Zieman, the father in the family we knew best, coming to our apartment. We had a whole row of books about Russia. We didn't have to engage in conversation. They were pulling out books and looking at pictures of the family of the czar and Russian history, pictures they had never been allowed to see.

I don't recall many conversations, except at the official level, on U.S. – Soviet relations or world politics or that kind of thing. We would talk about the news item of the day or personal concerns. With musicians, it might be on their hopes and aspirations for performing in Carnegie Hall in the case of Vladimir Spivakov, the now world famous violinist, or just the frustration of music making in Moscow.

Q: What was the music world, your impression of the music world then? What was going on?

BROWN: I listened to the Metropolitan Opera performance of "Manon" a couple Saturdays ago and during the intermission, they interviewed a couple of the leading singers. One was Polish, Piotr Beczala, and the other was a Russian, Anna Netrebko. The Polish fellow was quite critical of musical training in Poland but Anna Netrebko said that in Russia, they had the best musical training. I think she was referring to St. Petersburg. That's my way of saying that while I am not a music critic or a musicologist, I know that the musical traditions are deep in Moscow and it is not by chance that they have produced some of the world's leading performing artists.

I mentioned the Oistrakh family. I heard two generations of the Oistrakh family violinists perform in Moscow. I am jumping way ahead now but we were there when Rostropovich came back to the Soviet Union in 1991 as the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra.

Musical training in Moscow was outstanding. They produced great singers, instrumentalists. Perhaps the orchestras were not up to the level of some Western orchestras, although I am dubious about that rating game. As often as not, it may have been a lack of instruments.

I can remember when the Empire Brass Quintet came out in 1987. They played in one of the Baltic States, in Vilnius, Lithuania. A lot of local brass musicians came to the concert and stayed afterward to talk. They just didn't have the instruments that the American performers had.

The short answer – I believe that Russian musical training was and is top notch.

Q: In literature, what's out there? Certainly at one point Russian literature is, it's almost demeaning to say world class but that's of an era.

BROWN: It is undeniable that under Soviet communism, Russian literature was unable to bloom, was suppressed. All you've got to do is go back to the 19th century and see the great writers and contrast it with 20th century Russian literature.

I recall a night we went to a dinner with famous poets André Voznesensky and his wife Zoya Boguslavskaya and Bella Akhmadulina and her husband and a playwright named Misha Roshchin. This was on my first tour in Moscow and I am not sure I fully comprehended then who these people were or the role they played. I was the press attaché, not the cultural attaché.

The name Roshchin didn't mean too much to me then and it didn't mean too much to me this week but I looked him up and saw that he was a well-known playwright. The Soviets were still producing writers of note. There just weren't as many and they didn't have the freedom that they had at one time.

You could also argue, of course, that it is restrictions on freedom that produce great writers so you have a Pasternak or a Solzhenitsyn. We would regularly go out to Peredelkino, the so-called writer's colony. We'd take friends out there to see the grave of Boris Pasternak and be reminded even in the worst of times, or maybe because it's the worst of times, great creative talent emerges.

The Solzhenitsyn immigration was, if nothing else, one of the major points in the disillusionment of Western intellectuals in the Soviet Union and what it stood for, that a great figure like Solzhenitsyn would leave or be expelled.

Q: Did you find within your contacts any nostalgia for Stalin and his ilk or not?

BROWN: Not to any great extent. I have a little item in my files, an 8 x 10 photo calendar that includes a photo of Stalin and all his achievements. You felt a little bit of nostalgia for Stalin if you went to Georgia. I never went there but there was a museum in Stalin's birth town, Gori, that I think exists to this day.

The other place you might find it would be on Victory Day, May 15th. May was full of holidays. May 1st was International Labor Day. May 15th was Victory Day marking the end of the Great

Patriotic War and you could go down to Red Square, take all the pictures you want of the men who would come out in full uniform with all their decorations and among them would be those who felt great allegiance to Stalin for his role in the war.

If you were with a taxi driver or looked into the cab of a truck, you might see a picture of Stalin up there on the visor. If you engaged the taxi driver in conversation, there wouldn't be much more than a mumble. But some people remembered him fondly.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss?

BROWN: I've got a whole lot more.

Q: Let's stick to this tour. What was the role of the church and the openness in this first tour?

BROWN: I remember attending Easter services in 1979 at Yelokhovsky Cathedral in Moscow. We went with Kevin Klose, the correspondent for the Washington Post, and his wife and another visitor. Easter services were of course on Saturday night. What an experience to walk into one of those great cathedrals. They were jammed with people. There was a terrible crush, even in the diplomats' section, but it was worth seeing and experiencing. We stayed for several hours and the cumulative effect of music, liturgy, incense and the faces of both clergy and worshippers was profound. It will remain with me for a long time. That was our first Easter in Moscow and I think we went every Easter to a Russian Orthodox services. They were such memorable experiences.

We have a photograph of a Russian Easter service, perhaps at Yelokhovsky Cathedral, taken by a Russian photographer who was, I think, married to an American. It's a wonderfully-composed picture. He sold it as a way of making money.

I think the general consensus was and is that the patriarch was beholden to the Kremlin but nevertheless, there were plenty of true believers and they came out. That's probably true to this day that the church is beholden to the Kremlin and as we have seen, they are not terribly tolerant of other faiths. There were certain officially allowed faiths, the Jewish, Baptists and a few others, but they were not very welcoming to anybody else.

There were plenty of true believers and not just little old ladies. You'd occasionally see guys in uniform.

We went to a Baptist church to a baptism; I have vivid memories of that. Of course, the Soviets always liked to say that "we have religious freedom in this country. Just go to a Baptist church and you will see a baptism." Well, we did. It was one of those full-immersion baptism services that went on forever and ever. I am quite sure those being baptized and the clergy involved were very sincere and very true in their religion.

Q: Were we seeing problems with Islam at that time? Or were we looking at it?

BROWN: Not that I can recall. I do have a note about going by a mosque in Moscow -- I think maybe there was one mosque -- but we didn't talk much about it. Islam was more associated with

Central Asia. If there was a problem associated with it, I don't think we were thinking about it at the time; it was a demographic issue. Even back then, the Russians were conscious that they didn't have population growth. They would try to put in measures that would reward large families but the problem was that all the large families were out in the Central Asian, Muslim areas.

As far as Islam being a political subject, not that I can recall.

Q: How stood Jews in the Soviet Union at that time?

BROWN: Not openly persecuted unless they applied to emigrate and then like our friends, they would risk losing their jobs and any other privileges. There was a variation on that. Some said the Jews had privileges that other people didn't have because they were at least allowed to apply to emigrate. Non-Jewish Russians couldn't even apply to emigrate.

And, of course, the Soviets could point to any number of what I used to think of as Jackie Robinsons. The American version would be: "What do you mean Americans discriminate against Negroes? Just look at Jackie Robinson." The Soviet version was: "What do you mean we discriminate against Jews? Any number of them occupy senior positions." I never stopped to think whether an editor or a member of such and such committee was Jewish but the Russians were very conscious of that. Nobody was wearing a Star of David. There was never any fear of that but there was anti-Semitism.

As for ourselves, we went quite regularly to church services which were held alternately in Spaso House or at the British Embassy. If you go back to the agreement in the 1930's that established U.S. – Soviet relations, one of the conditions was we could have a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest at all times in the Soviet Union at all times and we did. Protestant denominations went together here in the U.S. and paid for a Protestant minister to be in Moscow and there was always a Catholic priest.

The Catholics had their mass in the snack bar which resulted in all sorts of names such as our lady of the French fry or whatever. We Protestants met in Spaso House, which was a lovely setting or at the British Embassy, which looked out on the Kremlin. You could sit there at a church service on Sunday morning and look out at the bells of the Kremlin. It was a very inspiring setting. They would bring in an Anglican cleric from Helsinki or wherever. There was always good attendance and I even sang occasionally in a little choir we had. It was an important get together.

Q: Did you find much collaboration with the foreign embassies, particularly the French and British and German and all?

BROWN: There was something called the QP, quadripartite; the American, French, British and German ambassadors got together on a weekly basis with rotating hosts and compared notes. On my second tour, when I was counselor, I occasionally attended when Ambassador Matlock would debrief but I often came away thinking I've got so much else to do. I understood that we were all political officer in Moscow but we were not all doing this kind of work. I went

wondering if it was the best use of my time.

Similarly, on my first tour but not on my second, the four press attachés would get together, the British, French, American and German. I would go to those. We'd host a lunch and occasionally the PAO would come too because he was the press counselor. The meetings reminded me that we did very different work. My counterparts in the British, French and German embassies were political officers. They were reading the Soviet press, analyzing it for changes in a word or two; that's what our political internal folks were doing.

Very few of my counterparts were doing what I was doing which was dealing with the press on a day-to-day basis, answering questions. They didn't cater to the press the way we did. They didn't have as many issues. They didn't have as many news making events as we did, as many news makers, as many things that caught the attention of the press. So those press attaché get-togethers were always fairly low on my list of priorities; I didn't find them terribly useful.

More important to me was my contact with their journalists. I knew some of their journalists better than they did. They didn't worry about the working conditions for German, French, British journalists but I was dealing with correspondents for the Financial Times and Le Monde and German newspapers on a regular basis.

New subject: In late September of 1979, all four of us, my wife and two kids and I made our first ever trip to Tbilisi, Georgia. It was a real eye opener. This was a part of the Soviet Union that just acted differently than Moscow. This was not our first trip outside Moscow by any means. We had been to Dushanbe, Leningrad and places like that but Tbilisi, Georgia was a real eye opener.

We had been given through music friends in Moscow the names of a couple Georgian artists and the fact that I can remember the names of Shavleg Shilakadze and Nodar Zhvanya -- I don't have to look at notes to remember those names -- says something about what an impression they made on us. They met us near the Hotel Iveria where we were staying. They didn't seem to have any hang-ups, took us around, took us outside town, fed us meals.

I remember one or the other saying he wanted to take us to visit a town called Mtskheta, probably 20-30 miles outside Tbilisi. I explained that I would like to accept but that I hadn't requested permission from the foreign ministry; you always had to outline exactly where you were going before you took a trip. Either Nodar or Shavleg smiled and said, "Phil, that's Moscow; this is Georgia." Off we went. There was that thumb your nose at central authority attitude that distinguished Georgia from the rest of the country.

The proximate reason for going to Tbilisi at that time was an American cultural presentation called the Preservation Hall Jazz Band out of New Orleans, amazing octogenarian jazz musicians. They did several performances in Tbilisi. We hosted a small reception for them afterwards and then they again performed in Moscow.

It is just occurring to me now; I wasn't the cultural attaché. I wasn't the CAO, I was the press attaché or information officer but I didn't think anything of blending the roles, of going to Tbilisi

to attend the Preservation Hall Jazz Band concert and hosting the reception afterwards.

I remember quite a few years later going to New Orleans and hearing them perform there. You have to line up in the street to get in. I think it is even free. Some of the same people who had been in Moscow in 1979 were still with the band. Not the octogenarians but some of their younger performers.

That's the kind of thing we weren't going to experience after the invasion of Afghanistan in December of '79. This was September of '79.

Q: What was the impression you were getting, both you yourself but also from the other officers of the embassy towards Brezhnev and the leadership of the politburo? Was this a politburo that was even compos mentis?

BROWN: The only member of the politburo who was given much credence was Kosygin. Brezhnev was secretary general of the party. You had the nominal president, Nikolai Podgorny (his official title was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) and Alexei Kosygin who was in effect the prime minister. When American delegations came out, they would call most often on Kosygin and he seemed to be *compos mentis*. He was in better health than Brezhnev. In conversation, he was intelligent. Brezhnev had only a few years left to live and it was quite well known he was ill. He would reportedly joke with visiting delegations that if there were any smokers among them, they should blow smoke in his direction since his doctors had banned him from smoking. Rumors would frequently circulate that he had died.

Q: From what I gather he'd read speeches and sort of fall asleep in the middle.

BROWN: He would read speeches and it was this mumbling style that lent itself to mockery and jokes. Not on an official stage but elsewhere, there would be mockeries of Brezhnev who was hardly articulate.

I got to see him a couple of times because I would accompany the journalists to the Kremlin if a high level delegation was making a call. I mentioned earlier that one of those high level delegations consisted of two members of the Carter cabinet, Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps and Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal. They came on their own plane and were received at the Kremlin by Kosygin and Brezhnev -- separate appointments. A small pool of journalists was allowed to attend the opening and I got to go along with the pool. I have a picture of myself standing against the wall in the meetings with Brezhnev and with Kosygin. I was one of the relatively few people in the embassy besides the ambassador who actually got to see Brezhnev in the flesh.

I went to a hockey game one time. My wife's young cousin was visiting. We went to a hockey game just for the fun of it and there was this little shuffle or stir that caused us to pay attention. We realized Brezhnev was in attendance but otherwise he made very few public appearances.

This is one of the things that amazed us in 1987. Gorbachev not only appeared in public but you couldn't shut him up. He talked and talked and talked. At first it was interesting and then he wore

out his welcome. He was so verbose.

One of the things that Tom Watson did was to attract a lot of friends. There were people who knew him from his previous life. I am sure he said “come see us in Moscow” without realizing so many of them would. I don’t know if it was connection with Ambassador Watson but we had a visit by Harry Reasoner, the CBS newsman who at one time had actually been a USIA employee. We went out for dinner with Harry Reasoner. He was doing something perhaps for “60 Minutes” on the Soviet Union. He told my wife and me one of the reasons he left USIA was he never figured out how he could put his kids through college on the salary of a government employee.

Another visitor was Armand Hammer whose relation to the Soviet Union goes way back and he had a blank check when it came to access. He could come in and see Brezhnev at any time he wanted. Armand Hammer had known Lenin. On this particular occasion, I was supposed to make sure the film crew that accompanied him had *carte blanche* to film him at Spaso House. I was there to make sure they did what they were supposed to do and still obeyed the rules.

In retrospect, it seems as if Ambassador Watson was snakebit. In late October, I went to the Kremlin with all the senior officers from the embassy as he presented his credentials. I have that photo.

In late November, less than a month later, Ambassador Watson had to return to the United States for gall bladder surgery. If you look back on it, he didn’t have good luck. Not only were political things going to turn sour, but his health was a challenge.

Q: Today is the 29th of March, 2012 with Phil Brown. We are finishing off his Soviet tour.

BROWN: Three years in the Soviet Union and we concluded last time roughly the summer of 1980, two years into my Moscow assignment.

What I would like to talk about today would be the last year but rather than doing it chronologically, I would do it by some categories.

As I read through my notes recently, I was reminded once again that on the one hand here we were in the depths of the Cold War. The Soviets had invaded Afghanistan; they had arrested Sakharov and many other dissidents. The United States had responded with sanctions, everything from cutting off grain deliveries to closing our consulate in Kiev, a consulate that closed before it even opened because all we had there was an advance party. We boycotted the 1980 Olympics and closer to home or closer to our activities in Moscow, virtually all the cultural programs dried up. There were no exhibits with Americans out there talking about U.S. life, no speakers, and no performing arts groups.

And on the other hand, as I look through my notes and activities both on a professional and personal level, we were as busy and as active and enjoying the experience as we could be. I say professionally and personally and yet it was really hard to make a distinction because they overlapped so much.

Let me suggest just some of the interesting American people that we met and experiences we had. Part of this was because of the personality of Ambassador Tom Watson. I mentioned last time Armand Hammer. Another name that wouldn't mean too much today but to people of your generation and mine, Lowell Thomas, the man who ended all his radio broadcasts with the phrase "so long until tomorrow."

Q: In the theaters there would be a short, the movie theaters Lowell Thomas often, sort of travelogue and that type thing.

BROWN: He was well into his 80's. He died a couple of years later but he was still well known to that generation of American journalists.

Q: He was very involved with Laurence of Arabia.

BROWN: We had lunch one day at the apartment of Washington Post correspondent Kevin Klose with Peter Jennings, the ABC anchorman and his wife, Kati Marton.

George Kennan popped in. He was there doing research and was invited to a staff meeting. Some other names don't mean quite as much but they are prominent figures in the world of publishing. Hedley Donovan of Time magazine; Time was doing a special issue, cover to cover, all about the Soviet Union. Sander Vanocur, who was a TV correspondent, came to interview Ambassador Watson. Walter Cronkite, I will mention in a different context.

But I want to go into a little more detail about two special visitors and about the experience we had with them. One was Bob Hope. Bob Hope came to Spaso House as the guest of Tom Watson. You can Google some correspondence between the two of them before the visit. Hope came with his wife and a friend whose name meant nothing to me at the time. The word was they would do a show for the American community at Spaso House.

No sooner had they arrived than I got a call saying Bob Hope wants to walk across Red Square. Round up some correspondents and walk him across Red Square so I did. It was an experience. Bob Hope, his traveling companion and a gaggle of correspondents and of course, nobody on Red Square had the slightest idea who Bob Hope was but he pretended as if they did. He made jokes about Lenin's tomb and about people walking around. We had some TV cameras and flashbulbs. There is a picture that appeared in quite a number of newspapers with Bob Hope and a young Russian soldier and me. I was translating for him. I was really quite surprised no authorities came over and said what are you doing or do you have permit? You didn't have that easy flexibility at that time.

We went into GUM, the famous or infamous Russian department store. We wandered around a little bit in there, bought ice cream cones and this continued for the better part of an hour. The American journalists were covering it but they were also enjoying it. It was a once in a lifetime experience.

A day later, I got another call about lunch time saying "Bob Hope and his friend were out last

night and they saw some blue suede shoes in a shoe store and they want to go buy them.” I am sure the thought ran through my mind, why me? But I was smart enough to realize this was Bob Hope. Don’t miss this opportunity. So I got my wife and Bob Hope and his friend. We went out from Spaso House – I think we walked -- to the shoe store.

It was the middle of the day when a lot of Russians would do their shopping so it was crowded, mostly with women. It may have even been a women’s shoe store but we went in and he is cracking jokes the whole time. You don’t walk into a shoe store or any kind of store in the Soviet Union at that time and expect service. Service and Soviet Union do not appear in the same sentence but we managed to get the attention of somebody. Hope tried on the shoes. The process for purchasing was different in the Soviet Union. You didn’t pick out your product and then walk to the cash register. If you knew what you wanted to buy and how much it cost, you went to the cash register, paid, got a little ticket and came back and picked up your product.

When I had a pretty good idea of what he wanted to buy, I left my wife with Bob Hope and I went to the cash register, got in line, paid, got the ticket, came back and we picked up the blue suede shoes. My wife recalls that while I was doing this, he was making wisecracks about women’s legs. I was told he wanted to use the shoes for a gag of some sort in California. He gave me a signed, autographed picture. In addition to his name, it says blue suede shoes. It was one of those experiences we enjoyed sharing with our friends.

There is another memory I have of Bob Hope. He did a show at the British Embassy because he was British born. I must have attended it because I remember it really didn’t go over too well. The jokes were not that well understood but he gave a show at the American Embassy, at Spaso House, that was just hilarious. It was family oriented and for anyone who wanted to come whether they were diplomats or press or whatever. The entire community was invited.

The thing I particularly remember was that Bob Hope set aside a couple of hours that afternoon to go upstairs at Spaso House and prepare. Here was a guy who must have done tens of thousands of such shows over his lifetime but he didn’t take it for granted. He prepared, he adjusted his jokes for the particular context. They were all family jokes too. There was nothing that anyone would have been embarrassed about.

To me it was just a little lesson that no matter where you are in your professional career, don’t take anything for granted. Always go and prepare. Today I don’t know if there is any parallel or not but I am a Washington DC tour guide and I have done many, many, many tours around Washington. I did one just last Sunday night but I try to prepare and try to think in advance what is my audience, where do I want to go, what should I be attentive to. A little bit of that goes back to that Bob Hope experience.

The man traveling with him I didn’t know anything about at the time. His name is Alex Spanos. I Googled him recently. He is a Greek-American, very right of center, a multimillionaire; he has written a book about how he made it in the United States with a nice preface from Rush Limbaugh. He is I believe living in San Diego, California. Somehow Bob Hope invited him to come along on the trip.

The other prominent visitor I want to mention is Senator Charles Percy. I didn't realize but there was a tradition involving the particular heads of three corporations. The head of IBM, Tom Watson, the head of Bell and Howell, Charles Percy, and the head of Motorola, a man named Robert Galvan who died a couple of years ago, would get together at Thanksgiving along with their families and they'd have Thanksgiving dinner, these three titans of American capitalism.

By Thanksgiving, 1981, the Watsons had been in Moscow for about a year and Senator Charles Percy and Robert Galvan and their wives came to Spaso House for Thanksgiving dinner. What made it different was that only a couple of weeks earlier, Ronald Reagan had been elected president and Charles Percy was in line to be chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He advertised this and the Soviets were very attentive. So Charles Percy made calls on Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defense Minister General Ustinov and on Brezhnev. He was not discreet about these calls. He let people know in advance. I camped out at Spaso House with the press corps when he came back from these various appointments.

On Thanksgiving Day, Washington Post correspondent Kevin Klose and his family were our guests for Thanksgiving dinner. Late in the afternoon, Kevin and I had to excuse ourselves and go down to Spaso House where we waited for Senator Percy to return from his call on Brezhnev.

In each case, he talked at great length and I dutifully had to go and type the transcript and send it off to Washington. That, I can assure you, was tedious work on any occasion but especially with someone like Senator Percy.

The upshot of it was that Senator Percy made statements to the effect "don't worry too much about what Reagan said during the campaign; now that he is president he will be much more moderate in his thinking about the Soviet Union." I am paraphrasing but that was the gist of his remarks I remember very clearly. That did not go over well at all in the White House or more precisely in the Reagan camp. I don't know the full details but I know there was a great deal of tension between President-elect Reagan and Senator Percy, a great deal of tension.

Without being indiscreet, I can say one morning I showed up at Spaso House in connection with this visit and Ambassador Watson and Senator Percy were having a real verbal battle. I thought it had to do with political issues. Tom Watson took me aside and said "I am tired of being his errand boy." Apparently Tom Watson was being asked to do things that in his role as ambassador and former head of IBM, he didn't think he should be asked to do. That was, as I say, just another people experience.

Q: Senator Percy later got crosswise and essentially lost an election in Illinois because he got the Israeli lobby mad at him for supporting, I think it was AWACS or an aerial combat system that we were wanted to give the Israelis didn't want us to.

BROWN: I ran into him about ten years ago at Dumbarton Oaks and I can't remember what the occasion was. The then Maryland senator Sarbanes was there. I ended up at a table with Senator Percy. When I started the conversation, I am sure he thought it was one of these "do you remember?" things where you never remember. But as I described his visit with Tom Watson right away I had his attention. Yes, indeed. He remembered it very well and he was wondering if

I could help him through the Freedom of Information Act to get the reporting cables on that visit. I had to tell him I was now retired from the Foreign Service. My luck with the Freedom of Information Act would not be any better than his would be. He definitely was still interested in that visit.

I have another category called interesting Russian people. I was not the cultural attaché; I was the press attaché. But I had a very genuine interest in cultural activities, people in the cultural world.

I am going to mention names of a few writers and playwrights whom I met because I was invited to a luncheon or dinner, perhaps at Spaso House or because I was attending a cultural event. I knew vaguely at the time these were prominent figures. But at the time, I did not know that I would be going back to Moscow in the late '80s and that these people would still be very high in the world of the arts, only ten years later they would be liberated. They would be able to do many things they were not able to do in 1980, '81.

These were poets like Andrei Voznesensky and Bella Akhmadulina. These were names that I was just getting introduced to at the time.

In the musical world I have an even longer list. Among those whom I haven't mentioned before was a man named Lev Markiz. He was a violinist, he is now a conductor in Amsterdam. He introduced us to a young pianist named Vladimir Feltsman. Feltsman is now an American, lives in the United States and even teaches at SUNY something or other. He came out in the late '80s.

We went to a concert by Sviatoslav Richter, the famous pianist. He had a reputation even in the Soviet Union for agreeing to do a performance and then not showing up at the last minute, begging off for health or other reasons. He didn't perform very much.

We did hear concerts by a wonderful husband wife team named Oleg Kagan and Natalia Gutman, a cellist and violinist. I will mention them again ten years later because they came back into my life.

I have mentioned violinist Vladimir Spivakov several times. Not only did we get to hear him play but we were part of his life in other ways. I helped Craig Whitney of The New York Times do an interview with Vladimir Spivakov. They met in our apartment and according to Craig, Spivakov was nervous. He began the interview by handing Craig a paper and saying "here are the questions and here are my answers." Craig explained that this was not exactly the way American correspondents operated and it all worked out satisfactorily.

Just recently, I ran into a fellow named Bruce Nelan, who was the Time magazine correspondent in Moscow thirty years ago, and his wife, Rose. We were reminiscing about those days. Rose asked, "Remember when you delivered the shock absorber to Volodya?" To tell the truth, I had forgotten but the question forced me to recall.

We had gone to a lunch or dinner with Spivakov and he lamented that he couldn't get a spare part for his car. I was able to get spare parts for his car, probably through Helsinki. I didn't have

to beg or anything to get tickets for his concerts. It was a very symbiotic relationship. He could provide me with wonderful thrills on the violin and I could help him with a shock absorber for his car. I had completely forgotten it but Bruce and Rose remembered it.

The fact that they remembered it says something about the community we were then and about how personal lives were interwoven with our professional lives. Bruce Nelan was a Time correspondent; I was the press attaché at the embassy. We were supposed to have this very professional relationship and we did. But our personal lives overlapped a great deal.

With our friend, Yuri Zieman and his then four-year old daughter Vera, I took a walk through Novodevichy cemetery one winter day. Novodevichy cemetery was closed to the general public. The reason it was closed, I think, was there were just too many famous people there that might spark some sort of political activity. But Yuri's father was buried there so we got to go with him. After we visited Yuri's father's grave, we walked around and we saw the graves of some of the famous people there.

I went back about five years ago and managed to walk by the freshly dug graves of Rostropovich and Yeltsin so it is still a burial place for famous Russians.

On this particular day with Yuri, I noticed the headstone of Nikita Khrushchev. The sculptor or artist for the headstone is an American or a Russian-American named Ernst Neizvestny. A gentleman was there scraping ice and cleaning the area. I wondered and so I asked in Russian, "By chance, are you Sergei, the son of Nikita Khrushchev?" And yes, he was. We had a brief exchange in which I let him know that I was an American diplomat and that I appreciated the historical significance of his father. Today he lives, I think, in Princeton New Jersey.

Q: Is he the one married to Eisenhower's granddaughter?

BROWN: No, that is Roald Sagdeev, who was involved their space program. I don't know much about Sergei Khrushchev's situation today except that is quite normal to see and interact with him. But it was pretty unusual in 1980 to meet the son of Nikita Khrushchev. We had a little conversation, nothing substantive but enough to let him know that I was an American diplomat and that I recognized the role of his father.

Q: Did you feel, talking to people who had been there before that despite the fact the Soviet Union had been doing various nasty things, it sounds like things had loosened up an awful lot from the Stalin times.

BROWN: No question that things had loosened up since the Stalin era.

But people were still reluctant or nervous when they found out that you were an American diplomat. They were taken aback. We knew or encountered Russians who had children our children's age and when they found out we were American diplomats, we learned they were not going to be comfortable meeting with us.

But we had neighbors in a big housing block right across from where we lived whom we met

through our dogs. The dogs were a way of having a conversation with people. Their name was Yegorushkin and they had kids. They often invited us over there. We would go over there and have cake and tea and a birthday party and that kind of thing.

On any given day, I would see something on television or file a protest to the foreign ministry or read something in Pravda that confirmed the image that everybody has of the Soviet Union. These were not stereotypes. This was one aspect of life in that state.

But the same day, you could meet somebody on a plane or train or while you were cross country skiing or walking around the neighborhood and have a personal conversation with them. They would be astounded. “You are an American diplomat and you guys are riding on the second class train between these two cities in the Far East?” That was the reaction that an embassy colleague and I heard on a train trip one time.

We did have a lot of that kind of conversation with what I call the ordinary neighbor, the man in the street and despite what anyone says, these were not all KGB set-ups. In fact, I don’t think any of them were. Quite often they were just that, a onetime conversation.

In one case, the guy turned out to be a film producer named Sergei Aleksandrov. I met him on our plane ride to Dushanbe and realized he knew a lot about American film. I invited him to our apartment to see a film – I think it was “Casablanca” – and to my surprise, he accepted. After that, we saw each other from time to time, often at the Union of Cinematographers building. He helped me acquire some really nice Bukhara rugs and in return I gave him a few pairs of jeans.

Q: I think one of the things that gets forgotten is how often we used to have magazines and leave them on trains or even in your car with the windows open. You could distribute things very nicely.

BROWN: I did this often. It was my own little way of sticking my finger in the eye of the Soviets, the way you did when you left a copy of Newsweek or Time magazine somewhere. Anything that would make it a little more difficult for them to exercise total control over their population.

But it wasn’t all fun and games. I was recalling some of the sensitive press issues that popped up during that period. I have forgotten the details but we had a lot of focus on an alleged biological weapons incident in the town of Sverdlovsk. Sverdlovsk was a closed city but some of the correspondents heard rumors of a biological weapons incident there. We spent a lot of time dealing with questions about it that frankly we couldn’t answer.

Q: The Soviets had a very extensive biological weapons program and the problem about these things is they can get out of hand. There had been reports from time to time of areas sort of devastated. Anthrax

BROWN: Yes, anthrax was the issue. Anthrax was the word of the day at the time and it was not out of bounds, not out of plausible thinking, especially when you think of Chernobyl and similar incidents. The Soviets were tightlipped. There wasn’t much we could offer; whether we knew

more than we were letting on, I don't know. There is a good subject for a freedom of information inquiry.

When the Soviets did invade Afghanistan, Ambassador Watson's relationship to the press became more difficult. He was never really comfortable with the press but now he was going to be dealing with a very difficult subject. He went back to Washington. I recall that I was told to tell the press it was on "personal business." That made me uncomfortable because I knew it wasn't personal business and I didn't like being told basically to prevaricate. It certainly wasn't personal business.

Ambassador Watson did not have a comfortable relationship with Brzezinski. He was much closer to Cyrus Vance, who resigned, and to his successor, Edmund Muskie. I specifically recall an article in the newspapers that said according to sources in Washington, Ambassador Watson and his deputy, Mark Garrison were sending back "highly varnished reporting" from Moscow, i.e., they were not really being as tough as they should be in their reporting.

That quote came from Washington and probably from the Brzezinski staff. We were inundated with inquiries in Moscow. What kind of reporting are you doing? Of course, we didn't say what kind of reporting we were doing. It increased the tension and Ambassador Watson's discomfort level in dealing with the press. We may have had some of the background briefings but they were more notable by their absence than by having them.

During that period, we also had the issue of the American hostages in Tehran. Soviet reporting on it was highly tendentious and we were protesting their reporting. Our visitors would raise it with any Soviets they called upon. Congressman Solarz from New York raised it in his call on the editor of Pravda.

Q: Stephen Solarz.

BROWN: Steven Solarz. He called on the editor of Pravda, who was nothing but a mouthpiece for the Politburo. I think it was in that meeting we raised the issue of Soviet press coverage of the whole hostage issue.

There were also world news events that you couldn't help but be aware of and feel affected by. As I said last time, you didn't get them quite as instantaneously as on your iPhone today. We relied more on the AP ticker.

First of all, there was the failed rescue effort which had terribly depressing impact.

The Moscow Olympics, I mentioned last time, during the summer of 1980. We were not only boycotting them as a nation and our athletes boycotting, but those of us who were at the embassy were not allowed to go anywhere near the facilities. I remember standing on Lenin Hills and you could look down at the stadium. You could see the lights, you could hear the roar but we were not allowed to be even caught close to the facilities.

We had the election of President Reagan in 1980. On the exterior of the embassy building, we

had display windows and there was room there for four or so big photo panels that we would change regularly. These might be an innocuous subject like agriculture in the United States or it might be some news event that we could brag about and the Russians would walk by and take a cursory look at them.

Right after the election, in fact the next day, we put up big panels of President-elect Reagan. We also had big panels that we never put up of re-elected President Carter. We got these panels from the Regional Program Office, RPO, in Vienna and we were ready for either contingency. The Russians didn't really quite understand that and they thought it amazing that one day after President Reagan was elected, we could have these panels up there already with pictures of him and his career.

For most of those exhibits, the Russians would walk by and they might glance. Somebody might stand there for a minute or two. If they did the militiaman would probably encourage them to keep on moving. But for these pictures of Reagan, people lined up three and four deep.

Q: Did you find that people were wondering, what the hell is this? This is a movie star coming out of the right wing? This had to be very disturbing to the Soviets.

BROWN: And they had heard a lot about his statements about the Soviet Union during the election campaign. Both at the man in the street level and at the top level, they indeed were wondering who this man was.

That's why they were so interested in talking to Senator Percy. Anybody who could tell them something about this relatively unknown movie actor, governor, anti-communist, they wanted to know.

The man in the street, the people walking along the sidewalk in front of the embassy lined up for several days three and four deep. The militia did not prevent them from doing so.

Did that have much impact on shaping Soviet thinking about Ronald Reagan? I am not sure that it did, no. But I did say last time if you wanted to get a message around Moscow, in fact around the country, you could put it in those windows. We didn't do that but you could have put it in those windows and just by conversation, telephone calls, news would travel.

If we had put up there, for example, Sakharov arrested, that news would have traveled real fast. We also would have received a sharp protest from the Soviets had we done that. We never used them for that purpose.

I mentioned the Pentecostals, some 10 or 12 refugees in the embassy. We gave them refuge there. The press corps would see them there when they came in to use the snack bar but it was understood they could not do interviews. Finally we did relent and one summer day, the press and particularly the TV correspondents were allowed to come in and film them, interview them, give some insight into the life they lived there in the embassy. They lived there for several years.

Other world news besides the election of President Reagan and the release of the hostages

included President Reagan's shooting which I followed until the wee hours of the morning on the Voice of America. A few days later, we received a tape from Frankfurt with the famous visual of Hinckley firing at the president. And I recall the shooting of the Pope and finally the death of Alexei Kosygin, the head of government. We didn't realize at the time this was the first of multiple funerals that would take place on Red Square.

Q: At one point President Reagan was asked about his connection to the Soviets and he said, "Well, they keep dying on me."

BROWN: After Kosygin, there was Brezhnev and then Andropov and then Chernenko. There was a joke about somebody at the funeral for Chernenko who said to another "but you were here for the Brezhnev funeral and the Andropov funeral." And the second guy replied, "Yeah, I bought the subscription." That's the type of humor that the Soviets liked.

One little remembered event. 1981 was the 26th Congress of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. For the rest of the world, it was not a great big news event but by then, Ambassador Watson had left and the chargé was Jack Matlock. Jack Matlock, whom I had first met when he was head of the Soviet desk, was back in Moscow for about six months as chargé before going to Czechoslovakia as ambassador.

He really lit a fire under a lot of sections of the embassy but in his heart Jack was a political officer. The political section was told to cover this party congress like wallpaper.

Q: Which party congress was this?

BROWN: 26th, the XXVI congress. I don't remember that much came about out of it. There weren't any major changes in personnel or whatever but I managed to get a press credential for the press center and there wasn't much coming out of the press center either but at least officials would go down there and brief. I probably shouldn't admit it but I felt a little one-upmanship with the political section. I had access to the press center and I could read record briefings by spokesman Zamyatin and others and come back with various impressions. The political section always had to come to me and ask to borrow my tape. It was friendly rivalry. I had some wonderful friends.

Edward Djerejian was either the political counselor or head of political internal. A lot of Matlock's pressure was on Ed Djerejian to do the reporting on the party congress. Ed heaved a sigh one day and said, "Every time I think I have done my last cable on this, Matlock comes to me with some new assignment regarding the party congress." No one would remember these events, they were pretty dull. But for Matlock, he would extract everything possible.

Q: Was it the tenth party congress or somewhere where Khrushchev made his very famous denunciation of Stalin?

BROWN: Exactly and I think that is one of the reasons people, Kremlin watchers, paid attention to party congresses. Who knows? Maybe this would produce a repeat of the famous Khrushchev denunciation. In this case, it didn't. It was just the same old faces, the same old verbiage, every

newspaper reporting it exactly the same way. But Jack Matlock could see the difference between an adjective used in today's Pravda and the one used ten years ago and extract something from that. He was like his mentor, George Kennan, and he could put a lot of pressure on the political section to cover the party congress.

Another thing I continued to do, that I enjoyed doing right through the end of my first tour and despite all the bad relations, was to travel, sometimes with family, more often with colleagues. I mentioned we took multiple trips to Tbilisi, more than one trip to Kiev; despite the closing of our consulate, we could still go down there and observe. I've described my trip to Odessa and Lvov with Bob Ober. I went repeatedly to Central Asia.

I took a memorable trip with a colleague named Gerry Hamilton. Jerry was head of the commercial section and he and I were good friends. We had gone through language training together; we were played a lot of paddle tennis, either as partners or on opposite sides of the net. He was a genuinely good guy. One day in the summer of 1980, I took my wife and daughters to the airport and they flew to New York City. They went through eight time zones. They went across the ocean. They went from the capital of godless communism to the United States of America.

The next day, Gerry Hamilton and I went to a Moscow airport and we flew eight time zones the other way, east, and we were still in Russia. Eight time zones west and you went across an ocean to an entirely different world. But eight time zones east and you were still in Russia. We flew across Siberia to Khabarovsk. At least at first glance, life didn't seem much different in Khabarovsk, a Russian city. From there, we went by train to the port city of Nakhodka. If you were doing it these days, you could go to the American Consulate in Vladivostok but in 1980, Vladivostok was a closed city. The one place you could go on the Pacific Ocean was Nakhodka.

We took the train to Nakhodka and back to Vladivostok. My recollection is that one direction we were in first class and the other direction we were in very ordinary class and ended up with a couple of Russians who were dumbfounded to find two American diplomats wearing jeans, sharing the compartment with them.

There was an American in Nakhodka who was in business there, a most impressive guy, spoke Russian, probably in his 20s, early 30s. I don't know if there were other Americans there or not. You have to tip your hat to this guy, out there a long way from any of the comforts that we enjoyed. He arranged for us to take a boat ride around the harbor. Just amassing impressions that we could put into a cable when we came back.

On the way back, we stopped in Irkutsk and went out on a hot summer day to Lake Baikal, the Siberian lake that has more water in it than all the Great Lakes put together. People were out taking advantage of the good weather.

There was a story that on the other side of Lake Baikal, the Soviets had some sort of manufacturing plant that threatened to pollute the lake. It is probably still a concern these days. Where we were, it looked as pristine and clear as we had been told it would be.

That was a week-long trip.

With a colleague in the cultural section, Bill Thompson, I flew down to Baku which is not a beautiful city on the Caspian Sea. I recently traveled with a young woman, a visitor from Azerbaijan. She asked me about my memories of Baku? This was before she was born. I said I have two distinct memories. One was that as soon as you got off the airplane and drove into the city, you saw the oil wells and you smelled the oil and you felt it was terribly polluted. We stayed in a place called the Caravan Sarai which if it had had camels and people traveling the Silk Road, you wouldn't have been surprised. It seemed to be one of those watering holes.

Q: Sarai was a basically an inn on the Silk Road.

BROWN: That's what it was and the one in Baku had a certain charm. We were well treated and we took a drive around the city and looked down at the Caspian Sea. You could see the oil wells out there.

From there we went on to Tashkent and to Samarkand, one of my multiple trips to that part of the world.

Q: Were you able to test or look at Islam in the Soviet Union?

BROWN: One of the reasons we were going to Central Asia was that after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there was a new instruction from Brzezinski that if anybody could go out there and do any kind of reporting, make any kind of observation, they wanted it. It didn't matter how ordinary or how mundane it seemed to be.

What we specifically looked for were soldiers or any indication that this was a jumping off spot for their operations in Afghanistan. Maybe go to a cemetery to see if there were recent burials and that kind of thing. But you couldn't go to Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara without being aware of Islam in the Soviet Union -- the beautiful mosques, madrassas, the schools. The Registan in Samarkand is one of the UNESCO protected sites in the world.

It was hard to tell how intensive it was and at that time I didn't associate a madrassa with the kind of education that can produce terrorists, radicals, that kind of thing. In fact, these struck me as a very gentle people, very easy going.

Q: There are madrassas and madrassas. The Soviets didn't let this get out of hand.

BROWN: No, no. At the time, there was no association with either internal terrorism or what has happened in Chechnya or in Dagestan in recent years.

Generally I would say you had the impression that people were pretty free to practice their Islam, perhaps freer than Russians in Moscow would have been to practice their Russian orthodox faith.

Another memorable trip was to what is now called Bishkek. It was Frunze then in Kyrgyzstan.

Q: I spent three weeks there, in Bishkek in the 1990s.

BROWN: I went in the spring with a colleague named Kent Brown. Moscow was still grimy. The snow had not fully melted and we arrived in Frunze, which was the name of a famous Soviet general during the civil war. We were there for the May 1, 1981, holiday. You could see snow in the mountains but it was beautiful. It was spring, gorgeous. I thought “my goodness. What a relief from Moscow.”

Then we saw the May 1st parade and it was as dull and drab as any May 1st parade. Carbon copy. Any republic you went to, these same pictures of the politburo members came through.

We went up into the mountains with a guide and had a chance to realize what quality of life there could be there.

Our next stop would be Ashkhabad, the capital of Turkmenistan. To get from Frunze to Ashkhabad, we flew on what was called an AN-24, maybe on a couple of planes. We flew from Frunze to Tashkent, we stopped in a little desert town called Mary and we ended up in Ashkhabad, an entire day on these three flights.

We went out the next day, a Sunday, to the market, a beautiful market full of fruits and vegetables but also jewelry and camels and all those things you associate with any of the ‘stans.’ People these days talk about the ‘stans’ in a somewhat mocking or disparaging way. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan were wonderful, intriguing places to visit. We have embassies in all of them these days. I didn’t want to go there for a two or three year assignment but if you were living in Moscow when we were, it was a great change of pace.

I am repeating myself but we would get out into the city, observe the availability of produce, or fruits and vegetables, the markets, have conversations with people, some of whom wouldn’t respond, but others would. They were never big political discussions about your country and my country. They were just more about family and life. Those are some of the trips I took. I am indebted to my embassy colleagues who went along with me.

With my wife and daughter, we made multiple trips to places such as Leningrad, to Vladimir and Suzdal, the two historic church towns not far from Moscow.

On Russian Easter, 1981, we decided to visit a place called Yaroslavl. En route, we stopped in Old (Velikiy) Rostov (not to be confused with Rostov on the Don) and Pereslavl-Zalesky. I remember going on Saturday night to Easter services in the Feodorovskaya Church in Yaroslavl with my wife, my daughter and a friend of hers; we were in a large crowd and when we turned around, the kids seemed to have disappeared. We had to go back and indicate that I was a diplomat and that these children were with us; yes, they could come in.

In 2007, my wife and I went back to Russia as tourist and took a cruise from Moscow to St. Petersburg on the multiple waterways that connect the two cities. I had never realized how many different rivers, canals, lakes and whatever connect the two cities.

One of the stops we made was Yaroslavl and I explained to our guide that in 1980, I had attended Russian Easter services here and he was quite impressed. I recalled the name of the church, Feodorovskaya. He said that was one of only two churches that were open and functioning at the time. Easter services wherever you went to them, whether in Moscow or outside, were memorable experiences.

Selling our cars was the occasion for another unusual trip. We owned two Russian fiats, Zhigulis. At the end of your tour, you could sell them and you would sell them to third country diplomats so I sold my two cars, one to a Syrian and one to a Sudanese who came with cigar boxes full of rubles. The embassy accepted these rubles as if they had been acquired as the embassy acquired all of its currency, officially, at the official rate. It is all too complicated to explain except to say that the incentive was to sell your car, get these rubles and have the embassy could convert them into dollars for you at the official rate. I could get back everything I paid for my two cars.

The hitch was that the Soviets had imposed some new regulation which said I couldn't turn over these cars to these people in the Soviet Union. I had to do it outside the country. It was very complicated but I arranged with the Syrian and the Sudanese that they would meet us across the border in Kouvala, Finland -- at the first place the train stopped after it crossed the border. So on this particular Saturday, my wife and I in one car and one of our Foreign Service national employees, Viktor Aksyonov, in the other car headed off in our two Zhigulis. We drove to Leningrad where we had dinner with my colleague, Barbara Allen and took a boat ride on the Neva River. We overnighted there.

The next day, my wife and I drove the cars out of the country to the train station in Finland wondering whether we would find these guys and sure enough, they were there. They, of course, were wondering if we'd show up because I already had the rubles and there was nothing to guarantee we would show up with our cars but we did, right on time.

One had the appropriate license plates to put on the car so he could drive back in the Soviet Union as if he were arriving there for the first time. The other guy did not have the right kind of license plates and he was going to have some trouble, we thought. My wife and I went on by train to Helsinki and treated ourselves to a nice night in a hotel and a spa and a good dinner because we had completed our mission and we flew back to Moscow.

Our FSN saw us when we were back in Moscow and he was laughing. He said "oh, the next day in Leningrad I saw your two cars. They had made it across the border and were on their way back to Moscow with them." It was one of those complicated but rather delicious ways of living and doing business in Moscow. Less than a week later, my wife and daughters left for the States; their three years in Moscow had ended.

Let me recall another couple anecdotes that I think illustrate what life was like in what was an unusual environment, these three years in Moscow.

One day, April 6, 1981, I went off to the center part of Moscow. There was a hotel where you could buy airline tickets and I think that is what I was doing. I drove my own car, my Zhiguli, down there and of course, in those days you had no problem finding a place to park. I bought my

airline tickets and I was on my way back to the embassy. I would go up the street, around the circle where the KGB headquarters were and back down the other side, on the same side as the big children's department store called Detsky Mir.

As I am driving down there, by myself, there is a black Chaika ahead of me. That is a Russian official vehicle. It's not the Zil, the especially long VIP vehicle, but it's for high officials, the one ahead of me. These Chaikas are probably more associated with KGB; they are kind of official vehicles they have up there.

All I can remember is hitting the brakes quickly to keep from hitting this Chaika. I would stop in time. But before I could do anything, I was struck from behind and pushed into the vehicle ahead of me. This is the middle of the day. Everybody is out walking the streets, there is great clatter. I get out and realize it is a four car accident. There is the Chaika ahead of me, then I am here and I am now sandwiched between another big Chaika behind me and a fourth Chaika which had caused this whole chain reaction

We stood there looking at each other and it wasn't too long -- because there are police posts on every corner -- that somebody comes up the street. There is a big crowd of gawkers. The three Chaikas were pulled over to the right hand side of the street in the direction in which we were all headed. My car could still be driven although it was bashed in the front and the back and the trunk had popped open. All the traffic on the street was stopped and I was told to do a U turn and pull up on the other side of the street, roughly where I had started when I came out of the hotel so I pulled my car over there. I think they wanted to isolate me from the official vehicles.

Once they got me over there, that was it. They were done with me. They didn't want to know anything. My trunk had popped open. We talked before about America magazine the monthly magazine that we were allowed to sell in the Soviet Union. We kept selling it after the invasion of Afghanistan but the Soviets would say, "Well, we didn't sell very many copies this month. Relations are bad." They never explained; they simply returned the "unsold copies." You'd have 20,000 returned copies that went unsold so we had plenty of magazines to carry around and I always carried boxes of them in the trunk of my car. I could give them away to a gas station attendant or to anyone with whom I wanted to curry favor.

So my trunk popped open. The license plate, DO-4 told everybody I am a diplomat and a lot of people knew that 04 was the American Embassy. Nobody cared anything about my plight, my car. They started asking me personal questions and wondered if they could have a copy of America magazine. I gave a couple of people a copy of America magazine and asked them if they might watch my car while I went down the street to a phone booth with the kopeks I always carried with me and called the embassy to say I need some help.

I called the GSO and I remember hearing someone say "Well, he speaks Russian," meaning I could take care of it myself. But a good fellow named Jim Van Laningham drove over and provided me some much needed assistance as I was able to drive the car back to the embassy.

We insured the car through Ingostrakh so I did the paperwork and turned the car over to them. I didn't have a replacement vehicle and we were down to one car and that was pretty awkward but

the damaged car came back to me weeks later looking like new; it had a fresh coat of paint, functioning well enough that I was able to sell it but I will never forget feeling pretty exposed and helpless. Not helpless but exposed out there in the middle of Moscow.

Q: Did any of those officials in those cars sort of point at you and try to

BROWN: No, I don't think anyone implied that I was the guilty party. It was pretty clear what had happened. Number four car had hit number three. I was number two and was pushed into number one. I hit the brakes and was not going to hit number one car until I got hit from behind. It was just a four-car accident. No, I didn't have any more official contact other than the insurance claim. The police simply wanted to isolate me from the Chaikas. I don't recall that I filed a report with police or anything like that.

Here's another story about airline tickets:

In 1979 or 1980, someone had discovered that in London, you could purchase Aeroflot tickets that would be written London to Moscow and then Moscow to anywhere in South Asia -- India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka -- with two more coupons coming back for a very reasonable price. I wish I knew now what the price was but if you used hard currency, you could get these tickets in London. It was a way for Aeroflot to get business from South Asians living in the UK, Indians and Pakistanis who wanted to go home and not spend a lot of money.

Someone discovered that we too, living in Moscow, could purchase these tickets. You found somebody, a friend, in London who would purchase the tickets and send them to you. But instead of starting your trip in London, you could begin your trip in Moscow. So the four of us and the five-member David Willis family (David Willis, the correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor, had two daughters roughly the ages of our daughters and a son) went to the airport on a February morning in 1980 and flew for many hours non-stop from Moscow to Colombo, Sri Lanka. We flew over Iran. The hostages were there. I remember the pilot saying something about "if you look out the window you can see American war ships in the Persian Gulf." I think everybody went over to the right side of that plane and looked out the window.

It was a very comfortable flight. I wish I could fly that comfortably transatlantic or whatever these days. Good food and everything, a lot of Russians going down there for vacation, I guess. We had a wonderful two week vacation. Details elsewhere.

When we went to check in to fly back, we had our coupons; these were not electronic tickets, you had little paper coupons. When we said we were flying only to Moscow, the people said, "Oh, you need a visa for Moscow." We showed in our passports that we had visas for Moscow. And we flew back.

We still had coupons one and four. I didn't get to take advantage of it but a few weeks later, my wife and daughters used coupon number four to fly Moscow to London and number one to fly London back to Moscow. So for a very reasonable price, we had two holiday trips out of Moscow, albeit on Aeroflot; one to Sri Lanka, a two-week vacation there and one to London.

The David Willis' were Christian Scientists and they did not take any medicines, no malaria prevention medicines or whatever. We did, we took some precautions. Nevertheless, when we went there, our younger daughter got a little sick and was running a fever. She lamented "when I grow up, I want to be a Christian Science Monitor" so she wouldn't have to take pills and medicine.

David Willis wrote a piece for the Christian Science Monitor about that trip, somehow relating it to life in the Soviet Union. It was a humorous piece contrasting the world he left and the world he found, this so called third world country. He remarked that he could have written deep analyses of a party congress or changes in the politburo and never received a tenth of the reaction he got with that human interest piece on travel and contrasting a super power with a third world country. He got a lot of reactions to that story.

Another thing I remember about the trip to Sri Lanka is that when we got back, an Embassy driver picked us up with astounding news. I am sure he was unhappy himself but he had to share with us news of the great American victory at the Lake Placid Olympics over the Soviet hockey team. He didn't call it great; he just reported that the Americans had won. He couldn't believe it.

Q: It was hockey.

BROWN: And another memorable story.

A year later, it was school vacation time and our older daughter was in school back in the States so my wife and younger daughter and I decided we would go to Berlin. We had friends there who had invited us to stay with them and on the way back, we would stop and see some friends in Warsaw. It would be about a week long trip. On Saturday evening, February 14, 1981, we headed to the train station with our suitcases and our cooler with food and Christine's school books. My wife writes letters so she had her address book and cards and everything else.

Our train as called the East-West Express, leaving at 8:09 pm. We traveled all night and arrived in Warsaw in the middle of the next day. We stepped off the train because we knew we had an hour and a half and needed to stretch our legs a bit. My wife said she was going to go call our friends and let them know, reaffirm we would be back on such and such a day.

Off she goes while my daughter and I wait on the platform. Our train actually pulled out of the station but it soon returned. My wife hadn't been gone for more than a few minutes when I hear a whooshing sound, steam being released. A little red sign turns to green and a man on the platform says, "Get on, we are leaving."

I don't remember what language he spoke but the message was very clear. All I knew was that we had suitcases, coolers of food and all the other things we had taken with us up there in our compartment. I could not get all that stuff off the train. I had no choice. I said to my daughter, "We have to go" and she is in tears and I am in tears inside and we get on the train and off we go, leaving my wife there making a phone call. But she did not have her passport, she didn't have her money. She had virtually nothing except her wits, her common sense.

When we recount this story, this is the point where we begin to tell her version and my version. Soon after we left Warsaw, I began to figure out what had happened, that the train had been split in two with one part going to London and the other to Paris but both going via Berlin. I concluded that Bobbi would figure this out and decide to get on the second train.

So in Poznan, I explained to an official what had happened and left a written message saying "Bobbi, we miss you and love you." I enclosed some money, 200 zlotys. And at the border, I left her passport. I left her passport in the hands of border officials saying I think she is on the next train. Off we go, my daughter and I, to Berlin. We are met by our friend Paul Smith who welcomes us to Berlin. I say Paul, "it's good to be here but I think we have to wait a few minutes because I left Bobbi on the platform in Warsaw."

Remember this is 1981. It is the period of *solidarnost*, martial law and everything else in Poland. Bobbi comes back, realizes that something is amiss. She gets on the train and goes to "our" compartment but I am not there and it is not the compartment she remembered. But the conductor insists that she remain on the train and off she heads. At one point, she was entertained in the restaurant car by some drunken Polish "gentlemen" who wanted to buy her food.

She gets to Poznan and somebody gets on and gives her this envelope that says "we love you, we miss you." When she gets to the border, someone comes on shouting, "Roberta Brown, Roberta Brown." These drunken Poles had already opened the windows calling the same name. The border official comes on and gives her her passport.

It was a long, nervous afternoon. It is a good six hours or so from Warsaw to Berlin on the train. So when the second half of our train reached Berlin and Bobbi was on it, Christine and I breathed a great sigh of relief. Needless to say, the story has been told many times. And Bobbi actually wrote an extended version.

Thinking about those years in Moscow, I have a category I call fabric of life. It was those institutions, those places that were part of your personal life in Moscow. They meant so much. As Americans, we were the embassy community, the 25 or so journalists and their families, a few business people and that was about it.

Among the institutions that kept up our morale and in which we were constantly involved was paddle tennis. I think it was Ambassador Stoessel who put in a paddle tennis court behind Spaso House, the ambassador's residence. You played in an enclosed, caged area, a miniature tennis court. It was usually played doubles.

Ambassador Toon loved the game and I and others would frequently get a call from his secretary saying the ambassador was looking for somebody to play tennis during lunch hour. I accepted many of those invitations.

Then when Ambassador Stoessel went to Warsaw, he installed a paddle tennis court there. Paddle tennis was thus very popular among the staff in both American Embassy Moscow and American Embassy Warsaw, so much so that we had annual competitions. The first two years we were in Moscow, we went en masse by train to Warsaw and played a paddle tennis tournament

there over the course of two days. People at the embassy hosted us and not only to play paddle tennis; we went out to dinner in the evening. It was a wonderful morale builder.

The second year, we should be hosting the people from Warsaw but because of the Olympics boycott, the thinking was “you certainly can’t have the paddle tennis tournament here in Moscow” so for a second year running, we went en masse, probably 40 or 50 people, to Warsaw for another tournament, hosted by our American friends.

So you see that even an institution such as paddle tennis could get caught up in international politics!

The third year, 1981, we played host. I am sad to say we were such gracious hosts that unlike the previous two years, we lost badly. By now Jack Matlock, Chargé Matlock, was there. He wasn’t much of a paddle tennis player but his wife played. We had a great dinner at Spaso House but I was really hung out to dry as the person who had put together all the pairings and whatever and had allowed Moscow the indignity of losing the paddle tennis tournament.

Another phenomenon; broom ball. Broom ball was played among the various embassies. They would take a regular tennis court, put water on it and in the winter, it would become like a hockey rink, except instead of a hockey puck and sticks you used brooms. I never played it. It could be violent. The Finns and some of the other north Europeans took the game very, very seriously. It was fun to watch broomball.

Cross country skiing. You could go many places in the woods around Moscow and cross country ski. I can remember more than one occasion skiing on my very nice skis purchased, probably in Finland, and in the other direction would come a Russian on his homemade wooden skis. He might well be bare-chested, a big burly guy. They loved their cross country skiing. It was another little way to interact with Russians.

Ambassador Watson also felt that to maintain our balance, I forget the details but you should take half a day or part of a day per week and get out of the office, just do something recreational or non-office related. On one particular day, he invited me to go down to a place called Serebryanny Bor to go cross country skiing. He wasn’t too adept on skis but give him credit, he was out there trying. We were on this partially frozen river and all of a sudden we heard crack.

Tom Watson said in so many words, “let me go ahead. I am older than you are. If somebody is going to go through the ice, let it be me.” Well, he went a little bit farther and we heard another crack. We turned around and got off that ice pretty fast. We were not where we should be on cross country skis.

The Anglo American Canadian School enrolled most of the English-speaking kids, not only British, American and Canadian but kids from Greece, India and Nigeria. It was a wonderful institution.

Q: How old were your kids?

BROWN: When we went in 1978, Christine was 10 and Sarah was almost 12, a real good age. They were old enough that they didn't need babysitting but they weren't teenagers. Christine did three years of school there. Sarah did two years, 7th and 8th grades. Because there really wasn't anything beyond 8th grade, we took her back to the United States and put her in a boarding school during our third and last year in Moscow.

Q: Where?

BROWN: Westtown Friends School, a Quaker school outside Philadelphia where her mother had gone to school and where her Uncle Tom was by then headmaster. That was a mixed blessing, she always told us. It was comforting to us to know that Tom was there and could be available but when Tom discovered that his niece had been drinking alcohol one night and had to send her up the road to her grandparents, it was an awkward situation. Sarah missed the last of our three years in Moscow; she was back in the States at Westtown Friends School.

One of the most memorable Moscow experiences was Christmas, 1980, when Sarah came out with her grandparents, my wife's parents; they were there for ten days. We did everything. Her parents experienced everything from the Bolshoi to Leningrad to meeting our refusenik friends and four-year old Vera singing Christmas songs. It was one of the highlights.

The American dacha at Zavidovo, an hour's drive was a large compound with the big dacha and the ambassador's dacha. The big dacha was available for embassy personnel on a rotating basis.

We concluded our three years in Moscow hosting a big reception out there for the press corps. We used one of the embassy's two Italian-born cooks to fix a wonderful meal and the journalists and their families. I think 80 or so came out. It was a great afternoon. It was because of events like this that 30 years later, you can meet one of the people from that era and you don't have to reintroduce yourself. You knew each other, you knew their children. You had had common experiences together.

In addition to the school and the dacha, you had Spaso House, which was used not only by the ambassador for formal activities but also for community activities such as plays. There were always people with thespian talents who could do a show. One year they did a very capable presentation of "Our Town." One of the lead roles was played by the NBC correspondent, Gene Pell.

A few weeks later, when Gene Pell was getting ready to leave, the correspondents organized a roast. They put on a play and called it "Nash Gorod," literally "Our Town" in Russian. It was a parody of Gene Pell who had a wonderful voice, a big deep bass voice, the kind you would want for a TV correspondent. Everyone howled with laughter. Gene went on to head Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty.

Spaso House was also used for everything from the annual Marine Corps Ball to church services. In the 1930s agreement that established formal diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union, it was agreed that the United States would be allowed to have a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest in Moscow. Those positions were filled by the respective

denominations back in the U.S. The Catholics met in the snack bar -- "Our Lady of the French Fry was just one of the monikers -- and the Protestants went back and forth between Spaso House and the British Embassy. We pretty regularly attended the Protestant service.

You would never live in Moscow without remembering, usually in the spring, that the Russians had to clean out the pipes that delivered hot water. So you would go for up to a month in your apartment with no hot water; you'd forget how much you appreciated hot water, especially if you had two young daughters. At Spaso House, at the paddle tennis court, there was a little facility where you could take a warm shower. But it's no exaggeration; for four to six weeks you'd get along without any hot water for dishes, bathing, that kind of thing, except for what you might boil.

Mail day: When I hear the U.S. Postal Service might suspend Saturday deliveries, I think back to the time when mail came once a week with all the diplomatic pouches from Helsinki. You'd get 80, 90 pouches at a time. I don't think there was any other place in the world where American journalists were allowed to use the diplomatic pouch that way. They got their personal mail through the pouch. They couldn't get it directly. We had to sort it and make sure it was only letter mail. It couldn't be personal packages. We received all the journalists' mail. It could be official stuff, things they would use on the job, magazines, that kind of thing. Mail day was always a big event in the courtyard of the embassy.

We had a dog, a wonderful cocker spaniel named Tar that came into our family in 1970 in Algeria and lived with us for two years in Algeria, for five years back in the States and was now in an apartment building in Moscow. That dog introduced us to a lot of visitors. We'd take her out for a walk at night and meet people through the dog.

To get to school, our kids had to cross a busy, multi-lane road, Leninsky Prospekt. It was at least a six-lane highway with maybe a divider in the middle. I guess I should thank my lucky stars we never had any problem. One day, my wife walked over there with the dog, turned around and there was no dog. I got home to learn that Tar, our dog was missing. We were just terribly depressed. What in the world could have happened? We knew the dog had not been struck by a vehicle. So we went to our Russian friends, Yuri and Tanya Zieman, who lived not far away. They knew and loved Tar and Yuri put up little "dog missing" signs on trees.

Late that night, a couple of girls came to their door and said they thought they had seen the dog. We now think what happened was these girls had seen the dog and taken her into their apartment. The next day I went to the pet market to see whether our dog had been kidnapped and was now for sale down there. My wife went somewhere else to look, checked at home, and talked to our daughter. What a relief; the dog had shown up at the front door of the building to be greeted with open arms by none other than our militia man. The militia man was down there to 'protect' us and keep Soviets out of our building but he knew our plight and he was as happy as we were to see our dog show up. We think the dog had spent the night with these two girls and the next day they had let her out and sent her home. All we know was she was tired and muddy. We were so relieved.

I got into Soviet stamps. There was a bookstore (Dom Knigi) not far from the embassy where

you could purchase stamps and they produced some political but quite pretty stamps. One of my retirement projects is to go to that shelf in my house and sort through the stamps. I've got a pretty complete collection for the late '70s and early '80s.

Those are some of the fabric of life things in Moscow.

I will conclude by mentioning the other thing that really changed life.

I have spoken frequently about our good friend Tom Watson. We had gotten to know him on a personal basis up in Maine before he came to Moscow and treated us wonderfully. It was tense because his general discomfort talking to the press was made all the more difficult by the political situation. Even so, when my parents-in-law came, he arranged a special dinner for us and them on the second floor living quarters of Spaso House.

I went up to see him one day in late 1980 and he had a paper on his desk. I realized what he was looking at were the design plans for his new boat. He had many yachts during his life and he was very excited about his new yacht and that was what he was looking at. He wanted to sail it around the world. He said something to me like "there's nothing to do here." That was pretty much the case; we didn't have anything going on with the Soviets that he could put his imprint on.

He left in early 1981 to be replaced by Jack F. Matlock, whom I had gotten to know when he was head of the Soviet desk. Jack came back to Moscow for six months. He put his imprint on things. Boy, did he light a fire under everybody.

He did not live at Spaso House, as I recall, but he used Spaso House for all sorts of representational activities. I asked him at one point if he would be willing to do press briefings and he was right into that. He was very comfortable with the press.

One night, at my suggestion, he hosted a dinner at Spaso House for foreign correspondents -- West European, Japanese and others. It was an amazing social gathering. First of all, it was a Spaso House event. A lot of these correspondents had not been to Spaso House or had been there only a few times. They loved being invited with their spouses. A beautiful meal and at the end, Jack answered questions. He did so, on background, but he did so with such confidence and such knowledge of the subject that we were there until late in the evening. The man, one of the most difficult persons I have ever worked for, a tough guy to work for but such a professional. This was 1981.

Q: Can you characterize his mood towards the Soviet Union. It was a difficult period. Did you have this gerontocracy or whatever you want to call it in the politburo? It wasn't very dynamic.

BROWN: That's a very fair question and I think I can say very fairly that Jack Matlock's attitude towards the Soviet Union, the political Soviet Union, reflected very closely the attitude of the United States government and President Reagan. He was not in any way sympathetic to this evil empire. He abhorred the system and its leadership and the way it manifested itself. He was dead set against what it stood for.

At the same time, long before he became a political officer, he was into Russian literature. He learned Russian at an early age. These people I mentioned earlier, people like Voznesensky and Akhmadulina, he knew who these people were. He knew of their intellectual accomplishments and potential. That was the other part of the world that he cultivated. We had poetry readings at Spaso. He was able to make that distinction.

Jack Matlock was a combination of knowledge and confidence and that's why he was so comfortable dealing with the press.

Walter Cronkite was in Moscow that spring to do some sort of documentary on the Soviet Union. I was chatting with him; my wife was driving Mrs. Cronkite from the embassy over to Spaso House and that kind of thing. You knew that Jack Matlock wanted to accept Cronkite's request to do an interview but he got a turndown from State Department, from Assistant Secretary Stoessel saying no, don't do it.

About a day later, Jack called me up to his office and showed me a memo that said you can do it if you recognize the obvious pitfalls. I can remember to this day Jack Matlock's face. He was pleased. I didn't see all the correspondence but I think he must have gone back and protested a little bit because he had been told it was too risky. He was willing to take that risk and I can remember him sitting on a bench in the circle in front of Spaso House being interviewed by Walter Cronkite.

I wish I could see what was actually used but it was an example of Jack Matlock's determination and his feeling that the press was not to be feared.

Q: Just to get a feel for the time and the operation, what were the obvious pitfalls?

BROWN: The obvious pitfalls. You think of Senator Percy going out there and going far beyond what the Reagan administration wanted to him to say. And Percy wasn't part of the administration. Jack Matlock was part of the administration. For anyone in the State Department, it is easier to say no rather than to say yes. It is the old argument, what do you have to gain from it? Not much. What do you have to lose if you say something that is misinterpreted or just flat out wrong, that opens up Pandora's Box.

I don't know that Jack Matlock ever really got himself in hot water with the press.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet Union? One always thinks of I saw the future and it works?

BROWN: I was never under any illusion. The idea, and I attribute some of this to the military world, that they were going to defeat us in war, not only defeat us in war but defeat us economically, was just ludicrous. All you had to do was to see how inept their economic system was, how it failed to function, how it failed to meet the needs of people to know that this was not true. We used to joke that as the West was moving into computers, the Soviets were leading the world in production of carbon paper. Their economic indicators were all in fields that people

didn't pay any attention to anymore. I knew, we knew they were not going to outstrip us economically.

And of course, there was this idea that we were being monitored all the time, that they were collecting all this information on us and that the KGB had these great thick files. My feeling was the thicker the files the better because if they ever went to a great war against us and tried to find out something, they would be awash in useless information. I sometimes think that about our own services in this country these days. Sure, there are better ways now of filtering through all that information and listening for key words and that kind of stuff. But I don't think the Soviets had anything other than piles of useless information and unmonitored tapes, stuff that wasn't going to help them at all.

Q: Was anybody looking at the Soviet educational system? Here you have this Marxism. It is a huge field of how things worked and according to a certain viewpoint and yet time has proven, it didn't work very well. I would just think that a smart Russian would do anything he or she could to avoid getting too mired down in this academic world. Did you get any feel for that?

BROWN: Yes. You could sense from talking to people that they did not believe a lot of what they heard, not so much in their educational system but in the pseudo educational system which was the media, what they heard and read in the newspaper, watched on TV. They just couldn't hear this or that or see something on TV and then see reality and believe it.

Talking about the basic educational system, I don't know that anybody ever did studies but I felt and I think a lot of other people felt that you still got quality primary, secondary and university education in the Soviet Union in particular fields.

There weren't too many Westerners, Kevin Klose of the Washington Post was an exception, who sent their children to Russian schools but all three of Kevin's children went to Russian schools for several years and they got good educations in the three Rs and in foreign languages.

As we all know, the Soviets, in spite of everything, produced world class intellects in virtually every field, the sciences, mathematics, language, and the arts. I think their educational system was not the weak link. They did do a good job of educating their children.

Q: I have interviewed Beth Jones. She her father was an administrative officer. She later became ambassador to Kazakhstan and then became the assistant secretary for European affairs, a very major job. She was sent when her father was in Moscow to a Soviet school and went through this. Then he was assigned to Germany. She went to a German school. I think it was, I am not sure if it was East or West German but then she said she came out and went to I think it was Swarthmore or something and sort of on the first day of school one of the professors said, "Miss Jones, what do you think?" and nobody had ever asked her what do you think?

BROWN: Yes that's very true. Sometimes that comment is made not only about schools in Communist countries but even some other more liberal countries.

I assume that the other part of her observation was that she got a pretty good education. I think

that Russian education was probably quite sound.

That was our three years in Moscow. It far exceeded our expectations. Initially, I thought it was going to be a two-year assignment. It turned out to be three. I don't think when we left in 1981 that we knew we would be going back to Moscow but we were headed off to what we thought would be a four-year assignment as press attaché in Paris.

JON GUNDERSEN
Press and Publications Officer
Moscow (1979-1981)

Mr. Gundersen was born and raised in New York and educated at George Washington University, the University of Oslo International School, Stanford University and the National War College. Entering the State Department in 1973, he served abroad in Moscow, Stockholm and Frankfurt. At Reykjavik and Tallinn he was Chargé d'affaires, in Oslo, Deputy Chief of Mission, and in Kiev, Consul General. In assignments at the State Department in Washington, Mr. Gundersen dealt with a variety of matters, including arms control, anti-terrorism and Balkan issues. Mr. Gundersen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012.

Q: When did you go to the Soviet Union?

GUNDERSEN: That would have been the summer of 1979.

Q: Okay, today is the 25th of April, 2012, with Jon Gundersen and we'll pick this up in 1979, in the Soviet Union. What were you doing in the Soviet Union then?

GUNDERSEN: I think the last thing we discussed was that I was assigned by the Soviet desk to Embassy Moscow. As part of that forward assignment I was sent to Stanford to study Soviet affairs, arms control.

So I spent '78-'79 at Stanford, got a master's in what was then known as Soviet studies, went to Moscow, where I was first assigned as PPO, or Press and Publications Officer, which was somewhat of a cover.

My main job was traveling around the Soviet Union, buying books and publications in the local language. The travel was funded by the CIA, because they read the literature. I was briefed by a guy named Murray Feshbach, who was very famous Sovietologist, because he was the first to focus on the demographic problems in the Soviet Union, alcoholism and abortions and declining birth rates. He used the literature that we collected in the regions, which were unavailable in Moscow, to discuss the possible political consequences of social and demographic problems.

One regional almanac I collected was something called *Narodnoe Khozyaistva*, which is sort of the "Peoples Almanac." Each nationality had their own and the statistics that came out of those,

hospitalization and birthrates, for example, gave us a picture of the future of the Soviet Union, which was much more grim than the Soviet Union we knew in 1979.

Q: It still is today.

GUNDERSEN: Well, yes, that's when it began to dawn on some of us that the Soviet Union had a real long-term problem on its hands. That it was not the ascendant power I had referred to in our earlier discussion.. And that Marxism was a false god that offered nothing to the proletariat or common man.

Q: Well, could you talk a bit about that job?

GUNDERSEN: A lot of Soviet hands who later did quite well had the PPO job relatively junior officers. As I mentioned the main part of the job was traveling around the Soviet Union to the various republics, to collect literature but also report on nationality issues and do reports from those travels.

So I traveled to the Baltics, the Caucasus, to Central Asia, everywhere from Tallinn to Alma Ata to Tbilisi to Irkutsk. You really got a sense that you not get just reporting out of Moscow.

So I literally bought thousands of books. I had to travel with somebody, because those were the Embassy rules, correctly so, because oftentimes the KGB, who always tailed us would try to compromise you.

They tried to do that by sometimes having an attractive young girl "happen" to sit next to me on the plane (every other seat coincidentally had been taken). When we'd arrive, the girl would say, "Oh, we have a room reserved for you" and they had a special room for us at the hotel that was clearly bugged. Needless to say, I didn't take the bait. Even though I a man I'm not that stupid.

Another time my travel companion was an attractive female American officer, married, and the clerk said, "Oh, we have only one room for you," I think this was in Baku, "just for the two of you," setting us up for a blackmail situation. Obviously we didn't do anything, but we thought it was pretty humorous.

So I didn't just collect books.

Q: I've talked to some people who've done this. Some of the bookstore managers loved you, because as far as they were concerned, their business was settling books, these were not particularly bestsellers.

GUNDERSEN: Exactly. We'd had a list of books and topics we got from Washington (actually the CIA) and we'd buy a number of copies of the book: these were often biographies about leaders like Brezhnev and local leaders, Books on Communist and Marxist doctrine or local almanacs. So, yes, the book store managers were happy to see us buy books no one else wanted to read..

Only certain Western books, like by Hemingway or Jack London or Faulkner, when available, would sell out immediately. Certain of these books were not censored because they were deemed anti-Capitalist. So we didn't buy those, we bought the ones that they had to display, Brezhnev's works, etc..

Q: I was in Yugoslavia for five years. There was a big bookstore there and I was told by one of our local employees, "Go look." There, in the cultural section, was George Orwell's Animal Farm, which was selling quite well.

GUNDERSEN: I did find "Animal Farm" in one book store, I think in Uzbekistan. Probably the local apparatchik was a little dense and figured this had to be a book about animal husband. In Moscow, the ideological minders rightly understood it was a parody on Soviet socialism. Probably Yugoslavia censors were more tolerant or less ideological at the time. So we went in and bought the books, lugged them back. Usually we went to *Dom Knigi*, which was the main bookstore, it means "House of Books," in each of the cities. So that was my first year job.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet Union at that time? You went around beyond the capital. How did it strike you?

GUNDERSEN: Most anyone who went to the Soviet Union was struck by the fact that it was essentially a Third World country with a superpower image. They obviously had a very strong military, but most everything else didn't work. That impression was reinforced by going to and traveling around the provinces.

I think the second thing that struck me was that nationality, ethnicity issue was something that was real and despite what the Soviet Union said about the creation of the New Soviet Man and allegiance first to the state, that was not the fact.

I remember in Baku, in a bar, seeing a fight between an Armenian and an Azeri. You could hear that the dispute was clearly just ethnic, vituperative.

The Embassy didn't really report on nationalities, because from the Moscow perspective, the official line was it's not a real problem. The Embassy was reporting on more pressing issues like Afghanistan, arms control, Jewish emigration, and human rights and dissidents. But even the best-known dissidents, by the way, were very Russo-centric. And so the reporting that came out of Moscow, both by the embassy and by journalists, was about the same issues,, but very little about nationalities. Everyone was talking to the same officials an even dissidents like Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, who were all ethnic Russians. In other words, regarding ethnic issues, they heard the same story: a communist Soviet Union or a greater democratic Russia would not breakup and dissolve into ethnic based units.

Q: You were there from when to when?

GUNDERSEN: '79 to '81.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

GUNDERSEN: First was Malcolm Toon. He was an old Soviet hand, a career guy, and then we had a Chargé, Jack Matlock, who became ambassador later. Matlock was followed by Tom Watson, who was the CEO of IBM.

Toon was solid. Like most diplomats who served in Moscow for an extended period of time, Toon had no illusions about the Soviet Union. Moscow's one of those places, the longer you're there, the more skeptical you become.

In many countries, they accuse Foreign Service Officers of becoming overly protective of their host governments. In other words, they are infected by "clientitis" and of carrying their country's water in Washington. They don't accuse Foreign Service people who go to Moscow of that.

Toon was tough and knowledgeable., Matlock had majored in Russian and knew the country inside out. Watson was put there in the later part of the Carter years. It was a short period characterized by a window of optimism about U.S.-Soviet relations. Both sides wanted to sign a SALT II Treaty and to increase trade. Watson wanted to increase business contacts as well.

But when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan before Christmas '79 we considered what to do and how do we react. Watson didn't want to react too strongly, because he felt that it would hurt American business.

Most of us at a more junior level said, "This is such a transgression of basic international law and that the world, including the Muslim world, expected us to react strongly, and that we needed to do so. So there was tension in the embassy at the time.

Q: As you got there, what were the people who were reporting talking about Brezhnev and company? He was getting pretty old by this time.

GUNDERSEN: Yes, part of our job was to try to decipher what was from happening. It was hard to do, because we didn't know much about the inner workings of the Kremlin. but we were constantly trying to read the tea leaves..

I remember we had a visit of Daniel Boorstin, who was the Librarian of Congress. I was his control officer. I traveled with him and he met with the Minister of Culture, Madame Furtseva, who was female, the only one in the Soviet leadership. During the meeting, we found out in his conversation that she had not been invited to a Politburo meeting, where one of the subjects was Afghanistan. This was a month before the invasion. We speculated on why she had not and thought that perhaps subject matter was too sensitive. Unfortunately, we did not speculate that they were planning an invasion.

And that's the type of information we didn't normally get. So those are the type of things you try to find out.

And, yes, Brezhnev, he lived another three years or so, was not as in command as he had been. We were constantly trying to figure out who was up and who was down. You always looked

within the Politburo, who got more space in *Pravda*, who was on Brezhnev's right on the saluting plenum atop Lenin's Tomb at the May Day or October Revolution parades, these type of things. You have to understand that this was the height of the Cold War and that that was the focus of American foreign policy, so we had a sense that our cables were actually read at the highest level in Washington.

Q: At the time of the invasion of Afghanistan, was there any consensus about why the hell they did it? It may have been a different type of communist government that was overthrown by Soviet troops, but it was a communist government and here the Soviets invaded.

GUNDERSEN: Well, there was much discussion. Interpretations ranged from the most dire, that the Russians were looking to expand their influence and Empire all the way through Iran and Pakistan to get warm water ports, to, "Well, it was just reactive, the communist president in power was not popular, so they wanted to get their communist guy in there." And this episode should not disrupt our bilateral relations.

Even in retrospect, it's hard to know exactly why they did it. I think we now realize that the Kremlin didn't think it would be as costly as it turned out to be, both politically or economically or certainly in terms of the survival of the system. Of course, Brezhnev and the Politburo expected a certain amount of Western condemnation, but that storm would soon pass and they would quickly suppress the rebellion as they had in Budapest and Prague. They had most recently also been able to intervene through Cuban proxies in Africa without real Western counter-actions. Sure, there would be some Western protests, but these would soon disappear.

They thought they could control the populace, the *mujahideen*, etc and they obviously could not. But, at the time, given their experience, they thought they could put in their own puppet and withdraw quickly. Obviously, they had not read Afghan history.

Q: On these trips you made to various places, were you able to get into any meaningful discussions with the people you'd meet?

GUNDERSEN: Not as much as I would have liked, because we always had a KGB tail. The local KGB was told that two Americans would be in their bailiwick and to follow them. Some regional KGB types were more sophisticated than others.

I remember, I think it was in Baku, that they followed us like Keystone Kops, ten feet behind, and when we turned around they would look up and point their cameras up and we would jump on buses and jump off, just to lose our tails just to piss them off.

Most of the people we met had never seen a Westerner and they were a little suspicious. But we did get into conversations, especially if you're in a place where they have a drink or two. That was always interesting reporting.

Q: When we put on all sorts of sanctions on the Soviets after the '79 invasion of Afghanistan. Were there counterdemonstrations in Moscow?

GUNDERSEN: Not really. I can think of one or two, but we always used to joke the word would go out that at 1400 there will be a spontaneous demonstration at the American Embassy.

It was all controlled. I don't think they wanted to have real mass demonstrations. And I never felt any sense of danger, or anything like that.

The Soviets wanted to play down Afghanistan and if they played up the Western reaction to it, it brought attention to Afghanistan. 'After all, they were sending Russian and other kids there to die and they knew it. When they had burials of war dead they never publicized it, they never brought all of the casualties to one hospital or one region. They were very careful not to shed any light on the casualties of war.

Q: I'm told that there was some visiting of graveyards and all that? Did you get involved in that?

GUNDERSEN: Yes, not so much related to Afghanistan, because those casualties did not begin to pile up until '82-'83-'84. I did visit graveyards just out of historical interest, because they give a sense of who had power by where they were buried.

We visited Pasternak's grave, for example, to see who was visiting. It's right outside of Moscow.

We went to a funeral of Visotsky, a mildly anti-regime pop singer. It was not publicized but we heard about it through the dissident grapevine. There were tens of thousands in attendance who spontaneously showed up crying and weeping. And that showed he was listened to. And that's the sort of reporting we'd do that was a little outside the normal reporting.

I should mention I also ran the Russian language program at the Embassy. The Russian teachers were assigned to us by the so-called Soviet Protocol Department (UPDK), who were a branch of the KGB. I got to know a lot of the Russian teachers, even though they reported to the KGB, as fellow human beings.

I remember attending the funeral of the husband of one of the teachers. It was a very Russian event and there was a lot of drinking and crying and laughing.

So I actually got to go to a lot of Russian homes, much more than the rest of the officers. I also knew some dissidents, artists. I showed old American films at my apartment. We received some first rate American films that the Soviets allowed us to show. They couldn't stop us from showing them; often times the Russian teachers attended.

I remember we watched *The Deer Hunter*, which was a very good movie about Vietnam. It was set in a Western Pennsylvania steel mill town populated by ethnic Russians. My Russian guests loved seeing the old babushkas yelling at the young kids about to be sent to Vietnam. So they really found that powerful, because it was just at a time when their own adventure in Afghanistan was unfolding and their sons were being sent there.

I remember we showed *Kramer Versus Kramer*, which the Soviets had no problem with, because it showed American divorce and some of the bad aspects of American society.

But all the Russians who saw it were most interested in the kitchens of the middle class. I would show a movie, then we'd talk about it afterwards.

Q: Were you there during the hostage crisis in Iran?

GUNDERSEN: Yes, not when the Teheran embassy was overrun in 1978, but I was there as the situation unfolded.

Q: How was that playing at the time, or was there much interest in it?

GUNDERSEN: Well, there was interest, but the Soviets were very careful. They actually reported the story fairly straight, because they had an interest in protecting their own diplomats. So they just reported that the UN and others were trying to get the hostages out. It was actually unusual to hear such unbiased reporting.

Q: Did the KGB give you a problem there, in Moscow?

GUNDERSEN: They had a KGB guy assigned to me. He would periodically call me to get together. And the funny thing is the KGB had probably the most sophisticated, best training in English and American culture as this guy had. I joked with him about it, that he had learned his English by reading Raymond Chandler novels or by seeing old movies, *film noir* and Humphrey Bogart.

So he'd always call and say, "Hey, Jon, how ya doin'?" Hey, pal, it's a swell day, ain't it, buddy?" He'd use this sort of slang from that time.

I was a single guy, I was fairly adventurous, I thought of it as a game. We'd try to avoid a tail and when I would hear the phone click, I'd yell at them in Russian, "How the hell can you live your life listening to somebody else?"

Whenever they wanted to show us that they didn't like that they'd pull the plug on our refrigerator or slash our tires, things like that. But nothing more serious.

Q: Did you have to do with other embassies there?

GUNDERSEN: Yes. My second year one of my responsibilities was to handle the upcoming Olympics in Moscow in '80. So initially the job was to be the control officer for Congressional and other delegations.

But when we decided to boycott the Olympics as a punishment for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, my job changed drastically. We now worked with NATO and other countries to try to get other countries to support the boycott. So we met at least every other week to find out what each country was doing and report back to Washington with recommendations.

Q: The Olympics occurred while you were there?

GUNDERSEN: Right.

Q: I'm told that embassy officers were told to keep away from the Olympics.

GUNDERSEN: Yes. That was U.S. policy. But I loved sports, especially the Olympics and as the control officer I would have gotten to go all these events. Obviously, if you're boycotting an American representative can't show up. So, yeah, I was disappointed, but I understood the policy. Although I must admit I had mixed feelings about the boycott.

But I did have a lot of contacts with other embassies. For one thing, you couldn't fraternize with Soviets, so your potential social circle was limited, but there were journalists and others who were there, so you did have a social life. My girl friend at the time, for example, was a young Dutch diplomat. She's now the Dutch ambassador in Washington here.

Q: Did you feel that you wanted to become a real Soviet hand, or not?

GUNDERSEN: I think so, yeah, I found it fascinating. You're happy to leave, just because it's so restrictive, but I always felt I would come back at some point and I always followed Soviet affairs, even when I was not working in the area.

Q: You left there in '81?

GUNDERSEN: '81, yes.

ROBERT B. HOUSTON
Science Counselor
Moscow (1979-1981)

Robert B. Houston was born in Missouri in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a master's from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign Service Auxiliary in 1945. His career included positions in Ghana, Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom (Scotland), Poland, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, and the Soviet Union. Mr. Houston was interviewed on May 14, 1990 by Horace G. Torbert.

HOUSTON: ... I took over as Science Counselor in Moscow in July, 1979. But five months after I arrived, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. President Carter, as one method of retaliating, decided to stop all high level contacts under the exchange programs. The programs were the principle *raison d'etre*, the principle source of activity for the science office in Moscow. We found ourselves with not much to do. The fall-off in exchange activity made it possible for me to engage in more reporting on scientific topics. I also carved out a niche for myself reporting on Soviet-Scandinavian relations, because of my service in Helsinki. I probably stepped on the people in the political section a bit. The Science Section was also given the job of controlling the

embassy travel program. Travel is an important part of a mission in a Communist country, particularly in the Soviet Union where so much territory is off limits. You keep trying to get into places where people have not been into before just to see what is going on there. The travel program is normally run out of the political section. Since they had plenty to do in 1980, and we didn't, we took over the travel program. This made us become more involved in the political aspects of U.S.-Soviet relations.

Q: Did you have plenty of funding for internal travel?

HOUSTON: You never have enough money, but we had sufficient so that we could spend some of it on lower priority targets, or on travel by people who were not heads of sections. We could have spent more, surely, but Soviet secrecy not funding was the big problem. Our getting involved in the travel program was merely shifting the workload within the embassy, keeping track of travel, and planning it. Before things got too bad after Afghanistan, I did make one trip with one of our touring science delegations. This was a delegation of people investigating Soviet practices in restoring strip-mined land. We went to out-of-the-way places like the Siberian coal basins, Kemerovo, Karaganda, which also had a coal mining operation, and Alma Ata, a charming town in the Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan.

Q: These are very expensive tourist trips.

HOUSTON: Traveling with this delegation exposed me to a typical Soviet attempt to drink visitors under the table. I was not drunk under the table, not because I am a good drinker, but because I had sense enough to go to bed early. The head Soviet host claimed that he had an appointment and left before the drinking got serious. So I used the same excuse and left. The next morning we had a difficult time arousing one particular expert from the Bureau of Mines, who had stayed at the party until the bitter end. The Soviet practice is this: they outnumber you, as each person proposes a toast, the Soviets only drink to American toasts, not theirs. Also their liquor is drunk, vodka. I don't know why we don't do a better job briefing our exchange people so that they don't get caught the way one or two of our group did.

Q: learned that during World War II with Soviet purchasing missions.

HOUSTON: One of the first celebrations in Moscow after I arrived came when Ambassador Toon dug the first spade of dirt for the new chancery in Moscow. Since then, our construction of a new chancery has turned out to be a disastrous project. We will have to demolish the new chancery at great expense and start again. Andrei Gromyko gave Toon a farewell luncheon. V.V. Kuznetsov received the credentials of our new ambassador, ex-IBM board chairman Tom Watson, in November 1979. Gromyko gave Watson a farewell luncheon early in 1981. I attended all these functions.

Q: How was Watson as ambassador?

HOUSTON: Watson is a man who has had great interest in the Soviet Union since the mid-30s. He is the man who also thought that if you spend 30 years in the Foreign Service, you probably knew a great deal about diplomacy. So he relied heavily on the advice of his staff, although he

wanted to overcome what he thought was an overdone anti-communism and skepticism of the Soviet Union on the part of the professionals. He basically considered his mission, the reason why he sought the job and took it, was to improve Soviet-U.S. relations sufficiently so that there never would be a nuclear exchange between the two countries. I must say the Soviets very badly timed their invasion of Afghanistan. Instead of profiting from the departure of hard-line Mac Toon and the presence of a guy willing to give them the benefit of the doubt, they went into Afghanistan. There was nothing Watson could do to carry out his own desires at the time. I think Afghanistan was a very great disappointment to Ambassador Watson, his desire to head off the nuclear confrontation. He could do nothing, because of circumstances. Later, I think he was the first foreigner to get permission to fly a private airplane across Siberia. He had been a pilot on a mission which flew from Alaska across Siberia to Moscow to open the Al-Sib route. The route was used to fly aircraft to the Russian front from Great Falls Montana through Alaska and across Siberia. He had been co-pilot of a plane flying back to the United States from this mission to Moscow. The plane just barely made it back to the town of Yakutsk in winter time when engine trouble developed. He was stuck in Yakutsk for ten days in 1942 while they tried to fix the aircraft. I know this story well. One of the things Watson wanted to do as ambassador was to go back to Yakutsk with his wife to show her what that area was like. He and his wife were good enough to ask my wife and me to accompany them on this trip. This was the first time I had been on an ambassadorial trip, getting all the extra attention that goes with that. Watson tried to meet some of the people whom he had known in 1942 in Yakutsk, particularly the General who had been in charge of the Soviet airlift at the time. There was still enough Soviet suspicion that they did not produce that man. Watson did see a museum director whom he had known 38 years before.

Q: Had IBM maintained an office in Moscow as they had in a number of Eastern European countries during the cold war?

HOUSTON: IBM had representation in Moscow when we were there, but I am not sure about its history. There had been an IBM in Bulgaria for years, and one in Hungary. I noticed the IBM office in Moscow got very busy when Watson was there. When Olive Watson's IBM typewriter broke, the IBM people in Moscow wanted to give her a brand new one, the latest. She insisted that they repair hers. They had to fly a guy in from the IBM factory, I guess, to fix the old machine, but they did just that.

Q: You talked about doing scientific reporting, how did you do that, weren't you forbidden to talk to people?

HOUSTON: No, I was not forbidden. The higher level people from the Government agencies back here were not allowed to contact my people over there. The embassy was never enjoined, even at the counselor level, from going out and talking to anybody they could find who were willing to talk to us.

Q: What sort of things were you able to report on?

HOUSTON: I must admit that most of my reporting came from reading the scientific literature we received at the Embassy, as well as from round-table meetings of science counselors once a

month. I picked up at these meetings what other countries were doing in the science field who had not cut back because of Afghanistan. Also there were ongoing U.S. projects. One in particular gave us entrance into a science research institute in Moscow, namely our cooperation with the Magneto Hydro-dynamics Institute. The Soviets in science think nothing of investing \$50 million to build a full scale plant, whereas we are aghast at spending so much on experimental projects. We prefer to test things on computers, then try it on a small scale, and gradually work up before we invest in a large way. The Soviets, on the other hand, lack some of our refined, delicate instruments. So we found a happy marriage of Soviet willingness to build a full scale plant to test the theory of magneto-hydro dynamic electric generation, and our ability to supply components that they could not build. This cooperation gave us unusual access into the particular institute doing this work. Even though high level cooperation was cut off, we could still go to that institute and find out what they were doing.

Another example of reporting I did from Moscow: one summer while in Finland, my wife and I spent a week near the Norwegian and Soviet borders at the Sub-Arctic Research Station of the University of Turku. Our stay was primarily a vacation, but I did look into various scientific activities under way. One thing I did was visit the seismic station there. That station had two seismic detectors, one Soviet and one American in keeping with the Finnish policy of neutrality. Readings from the detectors were regularly sent to Moscow and Washington respectively. Of course, the U.S. detector was much more sensitive than the Soviet one, and the location close to the Soviet border was more important to the U.S. than to the USSR. In any case, the Finn tending the detectors told me that they had been picking up for some time signals indicating some sort of drilling activity across the Soviet border. This all came back to me when I read in Moscow a brief account of a Soviet project to drill the world's deepest hole in the hard granites of the Kola Peninsula. I reported to Washington my suspicion that signals the seismic station in Kevo, Finland had been picking up for years came from the Soviet drilling project on the Kola Peninsula.

Science and politics are very closely related in the Soviet Union. The USSR Academy of Sciences plays a very important role in the USSR political system. The Academy is automatically entitled to several seats in the Soviet parliament. The President of the Academy of Sciences was always a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The supervision of the Academy of Sciences, which covers not just the hard sciences as we know them, but also includes fields like Party ideology and history. The Senior Party Secretary, Suslov in my time, would supervise the Academy of Sciences, so there was a lot of politics in the Academy. Andre Sakharov was a member of the Academy of Sciences. He was very political, so there was a lot of interaction of politics and science in the Soviet Academy. We had to be careful in dealing with the Academy of Sciences not to tread too much on what the people in the political section were doing. The political section maintained contact with Sakharov, for example.

Q: We have our own bureaucracy. You must have had a reasonably collegial atmosphere in the Embassy?

HOUSTON: We had all those things which at the time of the Sergeant Lonetree trial were portrayed as bad. We knew a KGB colonel worked in the Embassy personal services section. We

had New Years dances or Marine Balls at which Marines or the ambassador would have his arms around the head KGB representative at the Embassy. The relations of Russian and Americans at the Embassy were all very collegial. Perhaps inexperienced Marines thought we did not care about security. One time at Spaso House I remember in particular dancing with this KGB colonel, to the American song “Rah, Rah, Rasputin, Lover of the Russian Queen”, a very popular piece among the Russians at the time.

I viewed my assignment to Moscow as pretty much the end of my career. I think that I had gotten into trouble in Finland by failing to ride herd on Ambassador Austad. I felt I was not going to get any more good assignments. So when I came home from Moscow, I went again to the Board of Examiners for a brief period. I retired early in 1982 when the senior officer cap [the cap in salaries for government workers which meant a higher pension calculation, based on the last three years of salary] was raised. I thought I was very smart waiting that out. I eased the shock of my retirement by taking a part time job in the Freedom of Information work in the Department.

NELSON C. LEDSKY
Special Assistant for Moscow Olympics
Washington, DC (1980-1981)

Ambassador Ledsky was born in Cleveland, Ohio and was educated at Case Western Reserve University and Columbia University. After serving in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1957, serving in Georgetown, Guyana; Enugu, Nigeria; Bonn and Berlin, Germany and in the State Department in Washington. In his various assignments he was closely involved in matters concerning the status of Berlin and West Germany as well as on the persistent Greece-Turkey conflict over Cyprus. Among his other assignments, the Ambassador served on the Department's Policy Planning Staff. Ambassador Ledsky was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 2003.

Q: We are now in 1980. You became the special assistant to the secretary for the Olympics. Had you had a predecessor?

LEDSKY: As far as I know, I was the first. I think there may have been some officers who were given some responsibilities for previous Olympics, but I don't believe that any single officer was ever previously designated as the Department's focal point. My role in 1980 was a new one for the Department.

In late 1979 or early 1980, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. looked for actions it could take to express its distaste for Soviet action. I believe that the British and Canadians first suggested that one effective action that could be taken would be for countries to refuse to participate in the Moscow Olympic games, scheduled for the summer of 1980. The Soviets had devoted much time and attention to making these games a shining example of the prowess of its regime. It was the first time that the Soviet Union or its predecessor regimes had ever been awarded the Olympics and it was going to make it the event of the century. It was, I believe, the

conclusion of the British and Canadians that little could be done to reverse the invasion, but they believed that a symbolic act of displeasure was in order and that by not participating in the Olympics we could show that displeasure in a meaningful way.

The British essentially sold this idea to President Carter, who was also looking for public actions to express American disapproval of the Afghanistan invasion. We had only come up with such minor irritants, as a wheat embargo which was bitterly opposed by mid-western farmers. Around the turn of the year 1980, there was an exchange among the British, Canadian and U.S. governments which led to their agreeing to a boycott of the Moscow Olympics. The three governments also pledged to try to get other governments to join the boycott. There were a number of letters exchanged by the three governments at the time. The Department was asked by the White House – Lloyd Cutler, the legal advisor – to coordinate efforts to have other countries join the boycott. The secretary, Cutler and Christopher met and agreed that the Department should take the leadership in coordinating the U.S. government's boycott. This was about January, 1980.

In January, I was called to Christopher's office. I had tentatively been selected to be nominated as our ambassador to Uganda. I had told Dick Moose that I would be interested in an ambassadorial assignment, but not Uganda because of my wife's health condition. Since H knew that I was about to be reassigned, it had selected Walt Cutler, who had been in Iran, to replace me. So I was out on a limb. In any case, Christopher asked me to undertake the Olympic boycott coordinator's role. I said "yes" somewhat reluctantly, since I thought I would be going to an ambassadorial post overseas. Christopher was very understanding; he understood my dilemma and I think appreciated that I agreed to undertake the coordinator's role. We both may have thought that by the end of the summer of 1980, I would find another acceptable assignment and this coordinator role was just a temporary bridge. I think they all thought that Carter would be re-elected and that an ambassadorial position could be found for me.

So I called on Lloyd Cutler, who had assigned Joe Onek of his staff, to this work. I knew nothing about the subject matter. I knew very little about Olympic sport events. I knew nothing about boycotts. Christopher's request came as a bolt out of the clear blue sky. I knew that the Olympics would be held, but that was about the extent of my knowledge of the whole subject.

Eventually, someone reached the decision that my office would be part of the Secretariat. I would be assigned four or five people and my main role would be to co-ordinate with the British and the Canadians to implement the boycott. I don't think anyone in early 1980 knew what had to be done. The job description still had to be written. We quickly discovered that our first task was to convince the U.S. Olympic Coordinating Committee to agree with the government's boycott policy. President Carter did not have the authority to deny American athletes participation in Olympics. We had to convince the Committee that it should support the boycott.

We also had to convince the British and Canadians to bar their athletes from participating in the Olympics. That was also a tough task because the British Olympic Committee was entirely independent, as was its Canadian counterpart, both in a similar way to ours. As we began to work on this facet of the boycott, I soon found out that the opposition was very strong and that our policy was about to fail for lack of support from the athletes. In addition, the Canadian

government fell and was replaced by a new one, which had not agreed to join the boycott. The British government, previously headed by Callaghan, fell in late 1979 and had been replaced by the new administration of Margaret Thatcher. So, the trio of countries that had agreed to the boycott, all of a sudden shrank to one by early 1980. The British essentially took the position that its Olympic Committee was independent and not subject to governmental direction. They said that if we wanted to try to convince their Committee we were welcome to come to Great Britain to give it a try. The Thatcher government really did not want to get involved.

The new Canadian government, led by Pierre Trudeau, was completely opposed to the boycott, primarily for commercial reasons, that is the sale of Canadian wheat to the Soviets. So, at the start of 1980, there were considerable doubts about President Carter's policy. Many thought that we should lift the boycott and participate in the Olympics. By this time, the whole issue was in the public domain because the exchange of letters among the three pro-boycott nations had been released to the media.

I spent most of January and February working with Lloyd Cutler and Onek. At some point, Vice President Mondale became involved, so I spent much of my time with White House staffs. No one else in the Department, including Christopher, seemed very anxious to becoming involved. I was essentially left holding the bag. In early 1980, we drew up a work plan. We sent demarches to many countries – to the Europeans, to Latin American countries, and to African countries. We told these countries that we believed that it was very important that the unlawful Soviet invasion of Afghanistan be publicized and we thought that a boycott of the Olympics would do that. We said we hoped that the games would be canceled, or their importance minimized, if enough countries stayed away. The demarches took different forms.

There were some reactions to the demarches that were disturbing. A number of governments said that they would support us. I am not sure that all demarches were welcomed. For example, the Romanians, Liberians and the Chinese said they would join the boycott. The last even pledged to mount a campaign in the Third World to build support; that was not totally welcomed in Washington. The Chinese kept their promise, but were not really very effective. I maintained a dialogue with their embassy in Washington during the spring and summer.

Lloyd Cutler and I took a few trips to Europe in spring and summer of 1980. Our first focus was on Great Britain, where we wanted the Thatcher government to return to the Callaghan policies in support of the boycott. We talked to a number of British sports federations. We spent some time in Geneva talking to the International Olympics Committee, which was most interested in what we were doing. We suggested that the Committee select an alternative venue to Moscow. We also tried to get the Committee or some of the federations to support and participate in the boycott. We were not successful.

In the course of our trips to Europe, we met with a number of delegations, which were affiliated with the IOC. We met with a Korean delegation, which we did convince to join the boycott. We met with the Germans and received Helmut Schmidt's agreement to talk to the German federation to join the boycott. We met with the Egyptians, who then joined the boycott. We conducted these efforts during the spring and summer and we had some successes. By the time the Olympics opened in Moscow, about sixty countries had joined the boycott.

I remember that one of our first fiascos was the dispatch of Mohammed Ali around the world to speak in favor of the boycott. That was not my idea. We got various bureaus involved in preparing for this presidential envoy. We brought Ali to the Seventh floor to explain to him what his trip was all about. That was a challenge in itself because he really wasn't sure where Afghanistan was or why the U.S. government was so upset. We hoped that he would be effective. The trip was supposed to begin in Nigeria and then move on to a few other African countries and then on to India – four or five places that we had picked which seemed targets of opportunity.

I will not forget what happened in Nigeria. There, Ali, instead of dissuading the Nigerians from participating in the Olympics, was convinced by the Nigerians that Carter's policy was wrong and that the U.S. athletes should go to Moscow. So, it was back to the drawing board. Dick Moose and I got on the phone to talk to Ali's State escort officer. The trip had been well publicized; it would have been very difficult to cancel. So we told the State officer to continue on the trip, but to try to convince Ali before the next stop that the embargo was the right policy. We had to keep going on the trip. On the next stop, Ali met some Chinese diplomats, who turned him around again and convinced him that an embargo was the right course, that the Soviets were the most evil people in the world and that all people of color should stand against the USSR. It was during this period, that not only did the Chinese convince Ali that a boycott was correct, but they also offered to come to Washington to develop a joint plan, which would give the Chinese the leading role in Africa in bringing those countries to join the boycott.

Ali then went to India, where he was again subjected to arguments in favor of participation and was finally won over to that point of view – again. The Indians convinced Ali that the Moscow Olympics was too important an event to be boycotted, and that furthermore, our stand opposing the invasion of Afghanistan was all wrong. By the time Ali returned to the U.S., he was thoroughly confused. He reported back to us on his trip and then went on his way. We did not use him again! However, I should note that Nigeria and India and some other countries decided in the final analysis not to participate.

Lloyd Cutler and I then began to work on the Olympic Committee, which, by the way, we discovered is made up of a couple of dozen independent fiefdoms, each representing a different sport. The Olympic Committee was really a federation.

We began to mount a media campaign, stressing the importance of the boycott as a strong gesture of our disapproval of the Soviet's actions in Afghanistan. We took our case to the country, trying to marshal as much public support as we could. I spent a lot of time with the media and appeared on TV on a couple of occasions. Lloyd Cutler made a lot of public appearances. I spent some time on the Hill, although I don't remember Congress playing a very active role on this issue. There may have been a couple of resolutions passed, but I don't think they were consequential.

I went to Tennessee to talk to the Track and Field Association. I went to other meetings with several sports federations. We ran into very stiff resistance. I don't remember a single federation which at the beginning of the effort supported the boycott. Every one wanted to participate.

Onek and I flew to Chicago during this period to meet with the Track and Field federation leadership. We also met with the Diving federation and the Swimming group. They all opposed the boycott. Their stand was essentially that the U.S. position was a political one – a sign of disapproval of Soviet actions, and that they were in the sports business – which had no relationship to sports. Their athletes had been training for four years; some had spent the previous three years in Colorado Springs devoting 100% of their time to training. They felt it was not fair of the U.S. government to ask for such sacrifices from a group of people who had nothing to do with politics. I vividly remember the head of the U.S. field hockey federation coming to see me in Washington to explain that her young women had worked hard for four years to overcome a losing record in international competitions. They were now ready and this was their one chance to correct the record. Our position was that all of these athletes were American citizens first and had to support their president and country in this public display of disapproval of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Slowly but surely, I think, we made some headway with these federations.

We continued our efforts in the U.S. until April or May, 1980, in preparation for a trip that Vice President Mondale, Lloyd Cutler and I took to Colorado Springs to address the U.S. Olympic Committee and to meet with representatives of all American federations. Mondale asked all of the federations not to send their athletes to Moscow. This lobbying effort lasted four or five days with our meeting with each of the many sports federations. Mondale met with Bill Simon, a well known Republican, who was the head of the Olympic Committee. He did not have a very high regard of Carter or any Democrat, for that matter. In the end, we were successful. The Olympic Committee did vote at the time not to send any teams to Moscow. I must say that I was not very confident that we would win that vote. I was pleasantly surprised when the vote went our way. I think it was sheer patriotism that swung the vote.

We flew back in one of the government's small jets. It was a happy trip home. It was a big triumph. Then we discovered, after our return, that the Committee's vote did not bind the individual federations. It was no doubt a significant vote, but there could well have been some slippage in the participation in the Olympics. And in fact, a few U.S. teams did participate surreptitiously, a fact that has been forgotten. So, we did not have a complete boycott. But the vote of the U.S. Olympic Committee allowed us to go back to countries, which up to that time had rejected the boycott notion.

I think, in the final analysis, from our point of view and that of the Soviets, the Olympics were a disaster. NBC withdrew its sponsorship and the Soviets lost \$75 million right there. There was no coverage in the U.S. of the Olympics. Those games were not a reflection of the world's athletic prowess because, although many countries participated, most of the ones with the top notch athletes (Japan, Pakistan, Korea, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, all Arab countries, most German teams, a few British teams, and Romania) did not.. It was not a world competition and therefore became less than significant in the annals of Olympic sports. I must say that the Germans complained bitterly, blaming Carter for all sorts of mischief.

I think that even if we did not get 100% participation in the boycott (and no one thought that we would) our efforts were successful in the international political arena. There was wide

condemnation of the Soviet invasion. Even in countries which participated, there was considerable support for our stand.

I should mention that we also became promoters of some sports events in the U.S., in part to allow those athletes that had trained for so long and so hard the opportunity to display their competence. My staff and I became promoters of track and field events, which were held in Philadelphia as the "Liberty Games." This was a deal I worked out with the Track and Field federation, which wanted a venue for their athletes. These games were held in the fall of 1980 and were an international event. We financed the travel of about thirty foreign teams to go to Philadelphia. The Track and Field federation did most of the organizing work, but we were the ones who made the arrangements for the foreign participants.

Then we were involved in an international boxing tournament in Kenya. Some 20-30 countries participated in that. That was our sop to the Kenyans for their participation in the boycott. It was also our payment to the U.S. Boxing federation for its cooperation. So there were some substitute events organized in the fall and winter of 1980 for the Moscow non-participants. By the end of the year, we closed down our operations and my stint as the U.S. Olympics Boycott coordinator came to an end. To this day, I am probably still one of the leaders of the "to be avoided" list of the U.S. Olympic Committee and its sport federations.

Of course, on the negative side, our boycott had no impact on Soviet policy in Afghanistan. They did not withdraw or change their Afghan policy at all. But as I said before, our world-wide efforts and our boycott did highlight the Soviet's nefarious actions. We did get a lot of editorial support, which reflected the mood of the American people after they had a chance to consider the issue. I think that helped the Olympic Committee reach its decision, which, as I said earlier, was really an act of patriotism.

This whole episode has been written up in several books, most of them written by people involved in the Olympic movement. They were mostly negative about our policy and efforts. The conclusion drawn by many of these writers was that American athletes were made to suffer because of the ineptness of the U.S. government in expressing its displeasure with Soviet policy. The athletes were made to suffer because the U.S. government could not stop the invasion of Afghanistan through more traditional means. I, of course, argued that a boycott was a perfectly legitimate and powerful expression of disapproval. I don't think we had many other means in 1980 to show our disapproval of Soviet action. It did send an important signal to the Soviets; it did influence world opinion and turned much of it against the Soviets. I think that embargoes are useful foreign policy tools. I know that many disagree, but I think that in the case of these Olympics, it did have a desired effect. It was a symbolic embargo, different from that which we usually impose, but I think it was a good decision by President Carter. There was a tit-for-tat with the Soviets boycotting the Los Angeles games in 1984, but that didn't have nearly the same effect.

I must admit that I came away with some skepticism about the whole international Olympic movement. It is not an entirely above-board operation, with bureaucratic politics within the movement playing a very large role. I am sorry that we were not totally successful; had it been, it would really have sent a powerful message to the Soviets. That is not to say that what we did

accomplish was not noted in Moscow; in fact, the Russians have never forgotten the boycott. I think it did demoralize the Soviet public and brought home to it what the world thought of their government's actions in Afghanistan. The boycott was not totally effective – some nations participated. At the beginning, we had a number of aspirations: first, that the games be moved from the USSR by the International Olympics Committee (IOC) in response to the Soviet violation of international law. I guess that was aiming too high, although the IOC had the power to do so if it had been sensitive enough to the Soviet transgression; it was not. Mr. Samaranch, who ran the IOC, used to be his country's ambassador to Moscow and we believed was in fact on the Soviets' payroll, as has been exposed in recent times.

Once the IOC decided to proceed with the Olympics in Moscow, we fell back on our second, our backup aspiration to get the world's major countries to join the boycott. There, I would estimate we were 60-70% successful. I never expected that the East Germans would join the boycott and they were an international sports powerhouse. As I mentioned earlier, at the beginning, the British and the Canadians did join the boycott; but, with their change of governments, we lost both of them. That hurt. This shifting scene made our calculations of success a moving target during 1980. We really did not know until the very beginning of the Olympics how successful or unsuccessful we would be. It was clear that a 100% success was not possible and with the loss of the British and Canadians our hopes were lowered.

I think it is fair to say that as a government, we really had no idea what we were getting into at the beginning of 1980. We didn't know much if anything about how the sports world is organized. We learned a lot as we went along. We didn't know what our task was or how we could reach our goal. At the beginning, we worked on the assumption that if a U.S. president said that U.S. Olympic teams did not participate, that would be the end of that. It didn't take us too long to understand that in some matters, such as the Olympics, the U.S. government was impotent to enforce its decisions on a private group or groups. We rapidly faced a situation where the U.S. government had to sell its policies to its citizens, or key groups of its citizens. I certainly learned a lot in those few early months, as I think Lloyd Cutler and Warren Christopher and many others also did.

I should add that when we started in early 1980 to work on the boycott of the summer games in Moscow, we were hosting the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York. We, of course, did not want anything to happen to those games. They had to be successful. That limited the scope of what we could do considerably for several months. We could not do anything which would jeopardize the success of the Lake Placid event.

Another sub-text to this history was the financial consequences of a boycott. That was fully understood in the U.S. government. We knew that missing the Olympics would cost federations considerable financial support from sponsors. I think the U.S. Olympic Committee and its various sponsors probably broke even at the Lake Placid games, or perhaps there was a small loss because winter games can apparently be money losers if they are not well attended and not well organized. We believed that our boycott of the Moscow Olympics would lose considerable income to the Soviets, particularly if we could minimize the number of Western attendees. I believe that in the final analysis, the Soviets did lose a lot of money – millions. They had invested huge amounts in preparing for the Olympics – setting up villages for the visiting

athletes, building and refurbishing stadiums, and building media facilities – all of the requirements that are demanded by the IOC (just as the Greeks are doing now for this summer’s games). We knew that if we could keep visitors and athletes away from Moscow in 1980, it would be a major financial blow to the Soviets. I think we were successful in meeting that goal.

Q: Did anyone think that a boycott, with all of its negative consequences, would make an impact on Soviet policy?

LEDSKY: Not in the short run, but I think we did believe that we might be able to change long range policies. In fact, we were able to rally the Muslim world against the Soviets. There were a number of senior State officials who felt that that alone was worth our efforts. The invasion of Afghanistan started this anti-Soviet mood in the Muslim world, but our effort to organize a boycott really highlighted Soviet policies and strengthened that mood, so there was a feeling in the Department that the boycott did have some positive political consequences. It may have encouraged the emergence of the mujahideen, which we later supported with arms and money. I don’t think anyone thought that the Soviets would withdraw from Afghanistan because of our boycott, but there was a hope that the boycott would have political and financial consequences, and I think it did that. I can’t measure the impact, but it was surely there as could be observed from subsequent Soviet bitterness and anger. That was palpable; we really got under their skin.

Through this boycott, we also began to have a better understanding of Soviet vulnerabilities. This was probably the first real dent made in the Soviet empire. I never had any conversations about the boycott with Soviet representatives in Washington, nor did Cutler, as far as I know. However, it was clear that they were not “happy campers.” I think the boycott was moderately successful; it cost us very little in financial terms. We did spend a lot of time on the issue, we did cause considerable irritation among the athletes and sports lovers in the U.S. and around the world. But it was politically successful. We didn’t have a lot of policy choices in 1980 to publicize our views about the invasion, so our choices were very limited; the boycott was the right one. There were assessments made by a number of people after we closed shop.

I should mention before we close this chapter that I got terrific support from my Departmental colleagues. Each regional bureau assigned one officer to my staff, who worked part-time on this boycott effort. I was given one or two other people who were between assignments. They all turned out to be very good. I had a terrific staff. This included Charlie Reese, who is now a DAS in EUR; Brian Sulser, a former defensive end Washington Redskins football player who joined the Foreign Service; and Ron Maloteek, who was thrown out of Saudi Arabia. It was an interesting group. Most of them were out of a job at the time for one reason or another; the personnel office would send them to me to keep them occupied for a period of time. I always had four or five officers assigned to my office and we were busy writing, traveling, or talking. We were extremely busy for the first half of 1980. It was an assignment unlike any other I had ever – or any other Foreign Service officer – had ever had. We had no “road map” to follow; everything was improvised. We had very little supervision, certainly from the Department or even from Lloyd Cutler, who was quite busy with his day-time job. We did need high level involvement from time to time, which we did get, as I have mentioned earlier.

I well remember when, after Vance resigned and was succeeded by Senator Muskie, I had to

brief the new secretary on what I was doing. I had met him previously while working in H, but I doubt that he remembered much of that. I spent about an hour briefing him; I came away feeling that Muskie thought that we were out of our minds and that we were pursuing an idiotic goal. I think I did convince him that we were working very hard on this boycott, but I don't think he ever fully understood what or why we were doing. Later, Muskie had to chair a number of meetings on the boycott in the Department, including a briefing by a four star general on what was going on in Afghanistan. I don't think he was ever convinced that we were on a wise path. We had a couple of events in the White House for American athletes during which President Carter gave some short sermons about the boycott. Those meetings required us to provide some talking points to both the president and the secretary. We put on a number of breakfasts for Congressional members, as well as for other interested parties. There never was any end to the small details that we had take care of; we worked long and hard. As I suggested, not everyone thought that the boycott was a good idea. It certainly took a lot of time and effort, especially since Carter and Cutler were so deeply involved.

There was considerable discussion of the boycott in the American media, particularly the sports media. My picture, as well as Lloyd Cutler's, appeared in Sports Illustrated. So the sports world knew the issue very well, as did much of the American public.

After the Moscow Olympics, I was invited on several occasions by various groups, particularly the sports federations, to participate in discussions about the use of sports boycotts and their effectiveness. This was especially true in early 1984, when it became clear that the Soviets would not participate in the Los Angeles Olympics. There was a lot of interest in Soviet motivations. Sometimes, Lloyd Cutler would call me and ask me to substitute for him at one discussion or another. I was involved in this issue for a long time and participated in discussions even after my return from my Berlin assignment. There are still some sports federations that are still angry and hold me responsible for the 1980 boycott!

E. WAYNE MERRY
Consular/Political Officer
Moscow (1980-1983)

Mr. Merry was born and raised in Oklahoma. He was educated at the Universities of Kansas and Wisconsin and Princeton University. After serving briefly at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium and in Washington, DC at the Department of the Treasury, in 1972 he joined the State Department Foreign Service. In addition to assignments on Capitol Hill, at the United Nations in New York City, and at the Departments of State and Defense in Washington, DC, Mr. Merry served abroad in Berlin, Tunis, and Moscow. A Russian language speaker, he was a specialist in Soviet Union affairs. Mr. Merry was interviewed in 2010 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You were there in Moscow from 1980 to...

MERRY: '83. Embassy Moscow in its State elements was staffed in an interesting way. The State Department always had more political and economic officers wanting to go to Moscow than it had positions, but it always had too few administrative and consular officers bidding for jobs there. Often the way you got an assignment to Moscow was by agreeing to spend one year in either in the Consular Section or in the Admin Section, and then moving to a position in the Political or Economics Section. In many cases, of a standard two-year assignment, as Moscow was a hardship post, only one was in the officer's professional area. I did three years on this tour, one year in the Consular Section and two years in the Political Section. I'm not complaining about this, because the year I spent in the Consular Section was one of the most interesting and rewarding I ever had. It was an absolutely fascinating experience. To begin with, consular work in Moscow in the Cold War was intensely political. To illustrate, we had six American officers in the Consular Section that year: two consuls, of whom I was one, and four vice-consuls. Of those six, only one was an actual consular cone officer. The others were all political and economic officers doing their year in Consular before they went upstairs to the other sections.

It was a fascinating place to work, and not a routine consular section at all. I got my baptism of fire on my very first day in country. I flew in from East Berlin—I'd been back there to visit East German friends—in October of 1980, and was met at the airport by my new boss, Kent Brown, a political officer who had recently taken over the Consular Section. I was his deputy. We went to the embassy, where it was the lunch period. The Consular Section was on the ground floor of the old embassy, whereas all the reporting sections were upstairs. I went into the Consular Section to get acquainted and look at what would be my office. While doing so, the receptionist came back and said, "There's an American woman out front insisting that she see a consular officer immediately." I foolishly agreed to meet with her. What I should have said is, "Look, I haven't even checked in, I just got off the plane. She's going to have to wait half an hour until one of the vice-consuls comes back from lunch." But, no, in my enthusiasm I agreed to meet with her.

The woman comes into my office, closes the door, and starts taking her clothes off and threatens to commit suicide. Honest to God, this was my first professional experience in Moscow on the day I arrived. Her story, in brief, was that she was a former Soviet citizen who had emigrated to the United States years before, become a U.S. citizen, and changed her name so she could come back on a group tour to retrieve manuscripts of her writings she had left behind in safekeeping. The reason she was taking her clothes off was these manuscripts were concealed on her person. She threatened to commit suicide if I did not agree to send the manuscripts out through the diplomatic pouch, so she could have her writings when she got back to the United States. This was in my very first hour of my first day on the job in Moscow. Obviously the first thing I did was try to calm her down somewhat, and the second was to get hold of our real American Citizens Services vice-consul, to contribute his invaluable experience in dealing with U.S. citizens abroad.

What could illustrate better the intensely political nature of consular work in Moscow than to have this on my hands first thing? Our initial concern was to get this woman the hell out of the Soviet Union before they figured out who she really was, because her passport did not show she was born in the Soviet Union. Her passport indicated she was a native-born American. We got her out of the Soviet Union before we had a real problem on our hands, but then we were stuck with the manuscript and what to do with it. Under international law it was not proper for us to

use the diplomatic pouch to send it out. The issue was eventually resolved and she got her papers, though it took a lot of back and forth with the Department. We had her manuscript, which was several inches thick, sitting in the vault in the Consular Section for several months. This incident illustrates that in Moscow nothing was routine in consular work. Absolutely nothing.

Most of our work had to do with Cold War issues—we had a big program of Armenian immigration, of Armenians leaving Soviet Armenia for southern California, for purposes of family reunification, and every one of these cases involved complex human issues. We also did a considerable amount of non-immigrant visa work, particularly for third country people. There were large numbers of Third-World students in Moscow who, as soon as they had completed their university training in the Soviet Union, wanted to go to the U.S.A. and not back to Bangladesh or Sierra Leone or wherever it was that they came from. Not surprisingly, very few of them got a visa from us. We were also involved in reciprocity issues with the Soviets, what I called the “visa wars” of tit for tat visa denials, often to little purpose. From that experience, I acquired a lasting skepticism about sanctions in situations where both sides can play the game.

Given how little tourism and trade there was in those days, we had a substantial number of American citizens who got themselves into problems of one kind or another in the Soviet Union. Issues that would have been straightforward in most other posts were anything but in Moscow. We also had—and this was particularly my responsibility during this year—seven Soviet citizens who were living in temporary refuge in the embassy.

Q: This is at the consulate?

MERRY: Within the embassy but the responsibility of the Consular Section. They were the so-called “Siberian Seven,” seven members of two families of Pentecostals from a city named Chernogorsk in Western Siberia. This was a very highly-publicized case in the United States. The responsibility for this case, and for the actual care and feeding of these seven individuals, rested with me. I spent a lot of time with them and found them both deeply sympathetic and frustrating to deal with. These people had become, in many respects, reflective of the Soviet system which had oppressed them. Pentecostals had been subject to all kinds of Soviet pressures, repression and discrimination, and because of that experience they were intensely suspicious people. Suspicious of everyone, including suspicious of the American Embassy which was giving them temporary refuge, and much of that suspicion came for a time to focus on me. It was my job to tell them the truth that their migration desires could never come to fruition as they wanted but only by compromising with the realities of Soviet emigration procedures.

What made the case especially difficult was that it was not about seven people, it was, in fact, an immigration case of 29 people, because the size of the two families was 29, only seven of whom were at the embassy at Moscow. The other 22, from two different families—and the two families were often not on speaking terms—were back in Chernogorsk. The seven were not interested in simply emigrating from the embassy to the United States. They were not willing to leave either the Soviet Union or the embassy without all of their family members. Many people in the United States did not understand that this was not about seven people, this was about 29 people. Relations between the families were often quite tense, and their relations with the embassy were

also tense. The Soviet authorities would not even talk to us about this case. As far as they were concerned, the solution was for the United States to throw these people out of the embassy and for them to go back to Chernogorsk and apply for exit permission. Well, they had been applying for exit permission for decades, literally decades. They had in fact been to the embassy several times before, over a period of many years, seeking help in getting out of the Soviet Union.

The case, happily, was successfully resolved, but not during the period I was in the Consular Section but a year later, after I'd moved to the Political Section. It finally did involve the families going back to Chernogorsk. This was after the change in U.S. administrations and some fairly high-level negotiations between the early Reagan Administration and Soviet authorities, which met the Soviet requirement that these people could not emigrate directly from the embassy, that they had to go back to Chernogorsk. There were assurances given in Washington, from President Reagan personally, that the United States Government would not embarrass the Soviet Union if it did allow these people to leave.

The seven lived in the embassy, in two rooms on the ground floor of the south wing, for almost five years, but they did eventually achieve their goal. A central problem in the early years was simply the publicity issue, that the Soviet authorities were absolutely adamant they were not going to be forced into letting people emigrate through what they saw as a public relations stunt of taking refuge inside the U.S. Embassy. The final compromise involved a promise from President Reagan matched by a commitment from the Soviets that, if the people did go back to Chernogorsk, then their applications would be approved. Making that all happen took literally years. I contributed about 10 months to that process, but it went on for another year and more before it actually came to fruition. During my time on the case, the gap between Washington and Moscow was too wide to effect a deal. It was ultimately the personal intervention of the new U.S. President that closed the gap, so the Soviets could say, "All we've ever said was that these people had to obey our laws and obey our procedures." That was, in fact, humbug, because these two families had been following the procedures for many years and had never gotten anywhere.

It was quite an educational experience for me in the political culture of the Soviet Union. It was a cultural challenge for me to speak with people who were ill-prepared to believe anything they heard from any official, even an American official. I had not previously encountered such a mentality. During one period I had a series of conversations with them about what I came to call the "helicopter fantasy," when they believed the solution to their case was to get the other 22 family members to Moscow, to come into the embassy, and then the Americans would send a helicopter to land on the embassy roof and they would all fly off to the United States. Of course, they had seen pictures of the evacuation from Saigon and imagined something similar could be done for them. It was quite a job to persuade them that we could not fly a helicopter into the middle of the Soviet Union, land on the roof of the U.S. Embassy and take 29 people off to live happily ever after in the U.S.A.—that took a lot of persuading. I had an Air Force colleague speak to them about it. That was only one aspect of a continuing effort to convince them that we were their friends and champions and not their enemies. That's what I spent my time doing, dealing with things like the helicopter fantasy. In addition, they did not actually want to go to the United States, which they regarded as hopelessly decadent, but to the Biblical Kingdom of Israel. Not the contemporary State of Israel, mind you, but its Old Testament predecessor. Kind of hard to issue visas for that.

It was a terrifically good year. We had a great team, not just the six of us who were Foreign Service, but our other American employees, and I would say even our Soviet local employees. We had a lot of work. We had a number of serious incidents. We had several cases of people using violence to seek entry to the embassy, not always Soviet citizens but sometimes third-country nationals. We had a lot of problems with physical security. The American Embassy was, of course, one of the most well-known political venues in the Soviet capital. The Consular Section was on the ground floor of the north wing right at the front entrance archway, with Soviet guards on the sidewalk but no American security of any kind, so anything that came through the archway tended to come in to us. The Marines were upstairs guarding the so-called "core." Downstairs we had no security other than the Soviet guards, while our policy supposedly welcomed free access to the embassy. That was not always wise, as we had several violent people force their way in. During the final months of my consular assignment when I was acting head of the section, I made some strong representations to the front office that our security problems needed attention. It was only after a Soviet man with a shotgun got into the residential part of the complex that this problem was addressed.

While the question of Soviet dissidents was largely the responsibility of the Political Section, we in Consular had a role to play concerning those seeking to leave the country, coordinating with our colleagues at the Dutch Embassy about Jewish emigration, because the Dutch were the protecting power for Israeli interests and for immigration to Israel. We had a number of cases of Soviet Jews who had an American connection and sought to go to America. Some had claims to U.S. citizenship, so we were involved in that. We had a surprisingly large number of cases of claims to dual citizenship, often from descendents of Americans sent by Henry Ford when he established some plants out in the Urals...

Q: These are the red diaper babies.

MERRY: Yes, and these families often got stuck there under Stalin. There were also people who had been American citizens and had gone back home to their countries of Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia when those republics were independent between the wars and then were caught when the countries were taken over by Stalin. Some of these people were still alive, but mostly it was a question of their children. In many cases, they had legitimate claims to U.S. citizenship. In our view they were binationals, Soviet and American, and we had to represent their interests.

One fine day I had a young man come in to see me, a Soviet citizen who announced that he was the son of Donald Maclean, of Burgess and Maclean the famous British espionage duo, and he was claiming U.S. citizenship.

Q: How come? Maclean, of course, was British.

MERRY: Maclean was British and had been a British diplomat in Washington, but Mrs. Maclean was an American citizen, and there were three children: a daughter who was born in the UK and two sons born in the U.S. The father had been on the so-called "blue list." He had full diplomatic privileges and immunities, so being born on U.S. soil didn't give his son U.S. citizenship, but the fact that his mother was an American citizen did. It was adjudicated that he had a legitimate

claim to U.S. citizenship. Here was the offspring of one of the most famous espionage cases of the 20th century coming into my office, saying, "I'm Donald Marling Maclean, and I was born so-and-so, and I'm claiming U.S. citizenship, and I want you to get me the hell out of here before I get drafted into the Soviet army." These were the kinds of cases we had.

Q: What happened with that?

MERRY: We could give him a U.S. passport. The trouble is, we couldn't give him a Soviet exit permit. That was a separate issue. Eventually the kid did get out, but the fact he had a legitimate claim to U.S. citizenship and a U.S. passport couldn't guarantee him departure from the Soviet Union. None of these cases was purely consular. In many other countries a claim to U.S. citizenship would be a fairly straightforward matter of paperwork. In Moscow, nothing was straightforward and nothing was simple.

What else did we do? We set up a proxy marriage in Montana for the child of Yelena Bonner, the wife of Andrei Sakharov who was in internal exile at the time; the child was from her first marriage. I once represented the daughter of a famous Soviet film star who was murdered under very suspicious circumstances. The daughter was in the U.S. but was not allowed by the Soviets to attend her mother's funeral, so I did. I visited families of people with claims to U.S. citizenship in places like western Belarus, the Baltic states and Armenia, if only to demonstrate they had not been forgotten. I was the point man with the foreign ministry on the Polovchak case of a Ukrainian family which had gone to the States and the parents decided to return to the Soviet Union but their two offspring thought otherwise. That was all over the front pages in both countries. I counseled American students who wanted to marry their Soviet boy or girlfriends, whose interest was often purely in getting to America. Never a dull day in Moscow Consular. There were a number of cases I cannot speak about, even now. I recall it as pure variety, with lots of things I never would have anticipated. Made for a great year.

I also, of course, was getting settled in Moscow and to life in the Soviet Union. I had never even visited the place, but I was completely smitten with the experience from my first day. Of course, for an American diplomat, this was the most important posting in the world, and it was also something of the front trench of the Cold War. I thought it a privilege to serve there, and so did many of my colleagues. Not all, there were people in the embassy who really hated the place and bitched and moaned about it all the time. Given my previous fascination with East Germany, it is probably not too surprising that I took to service in the Soviet Union with real enthusiasm. In addition, I genuinely liked living in Moscow. God knows, it is not a user-friendly place, but I was in my early 30's and single and full of beans, so I was more than ready to enjoy the place. The housing was modest but quite adequate. The working conditions were, by most diplomatic standards, pretty spare and even primitive, but I did not mind. I found the city of Moscow absolutely fascinating from the very start and just loved exploring it and soaking up its history.

One thing I learned very quickly was to wear hats. I had never used hats before, but in Moscow you can die in the winter without a fur hat. In addition, not to have a hat on of some kind except in summer marked you as a foreigner. So, I learned to wear hats and have never stopped. One thing which struck me early on was the very different human dynamic of standing in lines in the Soviet Union from the lines I had known in the GDR. East Germans stood in lots of lines, but

with a note of anticipation and impatience. In contrast, Muscovites endured their lines with a stoic resignation and a wary realism that there might be nothing left for them after the long wait. The experience reminded me of something George Kennan had written, that textual study of the Soviet Union was inadequate until a person had stood in Russian lines. Without having Russian mud on your shoes, you could not really understand the place, he said. He was right. I later often saw the distinction in perceptions of Russian realities between those Americans who had and had not spent serious time standing in Russian lines.

Q: Well, a little time there, we might as well cover this. Were you particularly, or your colleagues, targeted by the KGB?

MERRY: In my own case, that started intensively when I moved from Consular to Political. I think this was the experience of many people, that during the year in which you were working in the Administrative Section or the Consular Section, the attention from the KGB was fairly moderate. Once you went into the Political Section the attention went up very sharply. That certainly was my experience. Unlike many of my colleagues, I did not experience much initial attention from the KGB for purposes of file building because obviously they already had my file from their colleagues in East Germany. They didn't have to start a file on me; they inherited a very adequate file. This does not mean we were not under surveillance, but even the KGB had to establish priorities. In East Berlin, the foreign diplomatic community was tiny. In Moscow, it would have required inordinate manpower to perform intensive surveillance on all of us all the time.

I might note that during this first year in Moscow, the year in the Consular Section, we had two chiefs of mission. One was the outgoing U.S. ambassador from President Carter, Thomas Watson of the IBM family, whom I scarcely got to know because he left a couple of months after the election. He seemed a very amiable and rather popular ambassador. With the election of Ronald Reagan came the question of a new ambassador to Moscow. The new Reagan team decided, since Ambassador Watson had departed with the end of the Carter Administration, to send Jack Matlock, an experienced senior Soviet specialist in the Foreign Service, to be chargé d'Affaires on an interim basis until they settled who would be ambassador. Matlock expected this was going to be a few months; it turned out to be 10 months. He didn't even bring all the seasonal clothing he was going to need. In any case, Jack Matlock—who, of course, later was ambassador to Moscow in his own right—got to spend 10 months as chargé in Moscow. I think he enjoyed it enormously.

During most of this time I was in the Consular Section, and that led to some interesting supervisory issues, because Jack had himself served in the Consular Section in an early assignment. He exercised more direct oversight of the Consular Section than most chiefs of mission would. In most embassies the front office wants the Consular Section to do its work competently and not to worry about it. Matlock was one of the very few chiefs of mission who wanted to scrutinize outgoing consular cable traffic and know the details of consular cases. As our cases were often very political, there was some justification for this, but as the acting head of the section for about the last four months I was there, I would have preferred a front office less directly engaged. In any case, I never had anything but good personal ties with Jack Matlock. He is, of course, something of a legend in his own time as a Soviet specialist within the Foreign

Service. I mention this because this was the only time I ever worked for him. I never worked on the Soviet desk, and I was not at the embassy when he was ambassador. My only period working with Jack was when he was chargé and I was acting head of the Consular Section.

This was the only consular assignment I ever had in the Foreign Service. Many people complain about having to do a consular tour of duty at the beginning of their Foreign Service career. I didn't do one. My first consular assignment was not as a vice-consul but as a consul, first the deputy head and then the acting head of an important section. I enjoyed it thoroughly, and I think it was a very educational experience. I had daily contact with ordinary Soviet citizens and with real problems created by the Soviet system. In Consular, we saw the human grit and grimness of Soviet life a bit more close up than was the case in the rest of the embassy. We dealt with real human tragedy. One case involved two sisters who had been separated for decades, one in America and one in a village in Ukraine. A real human drama worthy of a great writer. Sometimes we could really help people, whether Americans or Soviets, and that is not something you get to do much in a political section. The intense gratitude of local people whom we could help was something I would not experience again. One elderly woman from Estonia told me I was the first official she had encountered in her entire life who had treated her with respect; she wept at the experience of simple courtesy from an official. Every day in that job was more of an education in Soviet reality than a year of reading. I was a better and more effective political officer in the following two years because of my consular year, plus we never had a dull moment.

Then, in 1981, I moved up to the Political Section, which in Moscow was divided into two. They were called External and Internal. Political/External dealt with Soviet foreign policy, both bilateral with the United States and Soviet policy toward the rest of the world. Political/Internal dealt with Soviet domestic affairs. I was in Political/Internal, which was definitely what I wanted and was there for two years during a fascinating transitional phase in the Soviet Union. This included the last year of Leonid Brezhnev's rule, the coming to power of Yuri Andropov after Brezhnev's death, the end of what later came to be called the "era of stagnation," and a period of great ferment under the surface. To most outside observers, there was very little going on politically in the Soviet Union other than one old man following another at the top. That was very misleading. In fact, there was an enormous amount going on and it was the job of the Political/Internal Section in the Moscow embassy to try to get below the surface to find out what was happening and, of course, to report this to Washington and explain what it all meant.

There were six officers in Political/Internal. Other people in the embassy made contributions to domestic affairs reporting, but the work focussed on a half dozen of us. This was a much larger reporting unit than any other Western embassy had; only the Chinese had more. The chief, in the job I had a decade later, was Kent Brown, who had been my boss during the previous year in consular. We got on famously, and I can say I have rarely had so smooth a working relationship with an immediate superior, and I have been pretty lucky in that regard overall. One officer was responsible almost full time for dealing with Jewish refuseniks, a demanding and difficult position, which brought with it very heavy KGB harassment. One officer was our Sovietologist and Kremlinologist, a guy of rare talent and skill in this regard. He was extremely valuable. My own area of interest and responsibility was primarily nationalities. I was in a job which required me—and I might say allowed me—to travel a lot in country. I was the most traveled Foreign

Service officer in the embassy in my two years in Political/Internal. I got to all fifteen of the union republics and to a total of 74 cities of the Soviet Union.

My job was to get out of Moscow and explore those parts of the Soviet Union we were allowed to visit and, of course, report on it. This was similar to my job in the GDR, but much more challenging. Diplomatic travel in the Soviet Union was nothing like as easy or productive as it had been in East Germany. Many parts of the Soviet Union were prohibited to us, closed to travel by foreign diplomats, involving huge amounts of territory and many cities we would very much have liked to visit. We also only traveled in pairs; that was our own requirement for security reasons. Any trip I wanted to make, other than to Leningrad where we had a consulate, I had to find somebody to go with me. That usually meant someone from another section, since it was difficult to take two people away from any one section at the same time. I would travel with somebody from Political/External, or another section, or even someone from another Western embassy. Sometimes I traveled with one of the military attachés, despite their intelligence role which greatly increased surveillance. Many people in the embassy wanted to travel for personal reasons, to see something of the country, but often their jobs militated against it. Other than the military attaches who had special reporting interests, it was unusual for an assignment to require domestic travel, so I was often limited by the need for a travel partner.

The logistics of travel in the Soviet Union were also a problem, because of the scale of the place and the fairly primitive facilities. Winter travel could be especially fraught with uncertainty. There were any number of trips I tried to organize that, for one reason or another, never came off. Occasionally the Soviets would refuse permission, because we had to get foreign ministry authorization every time we left the Moscow area, but often it was something more practical. It required constant effort, but it was worth it. During those two years, I traveled around the Russian Federation, throughout Central Asia and the Baltic states, into the Caucasus, Ukraine and Moldova. These were very eye-opening because you could get a false impression from being only in Moscow or Leningrad.

Q: I'm told that you stepped outside of the outer ring of Moscow and all of a sudden you're in the 16th century.

MERRY: I wouldn't go quite that far, but if you got much beyond the ring highway, yes, you went back in time. There were places within suburban Moscow where I have seen peasant women doing their laundry in winter by taking a big rock and bashing a hole in the ice of the stream or pond. The enormous contrasts of underdevelopment and mis-development that the Soviet Union presented were much more obvious when you got outside of Moscow or Leningrad. I happened to love living in Moscow. This was not, perhaps, typical of most Westerners there and certainly not of most American Embassy staff, but I enjoyed Moscow. Some colleagues in the embassy found my enthusiasm a bit weird, but after all this was one of the great cities of the world, the Cold War notwithstanding. I found Moscow a fascinating, stimulating, interesting place to be, and I got to meet and know many Russians, to be invited to Russian events, and to Russian homes. I got to know people especially in the arts communities, such as painters, jazz musicians, actors and graphic artists and people engaged in a variety of semi-legal and semi-underground cultural activities. I found Moscow a very engaging city, also, in terms of searching out its history. I loved to find and explore the old monasteries that had been

converted to secular purposes. The city was full of older buildings with a role in some aspect of the city's history that had been swallowed up by urban expansion. You really had to hunt for a lot of these places.

In fact, after a year or so, I started writing a series of articles for the embassy newsletter of historical walks around the city of Moscow. I had developed these for my own purposes, but I wanted others to know how easy it was to find places of historical interest in the city. I started the series out of frustration hearing people complain at lunch that there was nothing to do, nothing of interest in Moscow. My first article simply revealed some of the wonderful historical structures within a ten minute walk of our front gate. This series became fairly well known within the diplomatic community, although the articles were far from scholarly. In fact, the last time I was at the Embassy, I found they still have a compilation of them for staff, though they are far out of date. I have always been an enthusiastic urban walker, so it was natural for me to explore any city. It also reflected the fact that I found Moscow anything but the gray, dreary, boring, tedious stereotype.

I am particularly fond of classical music, and Moscow is a first-class music city. I went many times to performances at the Great Hall of the Conservatory, one of the great concert halls of the world, and to other venues. Obviously, this included the Bolshoi. Despite the prevailing negative perception, getting tickets to the Bolshoi in those days was not a problem for diplomats. In this three year tour I went over 70 times, both for opera and ballet. In my two Moscow tours I saw "Boris Godunov" at the Bolshoi eight times. Moscow was also a great theater city, though the acting style in those days was sometimes a bit stilted. Diplomats had special access to just about everything, if we went to the trouble. The embassy ticket lady, a Soviet employee, got to know my interests and tastes quite well, as I was an excellent customer. I am sure this was reported for my KGB file, but they knew it already from my opera and theater-going in Berlin.

Getting to know this complex and challenging city consumed a lot of my weekends, especially after I came to know some Russians and went around with them. Moscow reflects a history of forced urbanization under Stalin, but is really a number of Russian towns loosely patched together. Sometimes on a weekend, I'd get on the Metro—I did not have a car in Moscow, I used only the Metro, only public transportation—and go out to one of the more distant, obscure Metro stations and just explore the neighborhood for half the day, sticking my head into shops and churches and parks and seeing what life was like, getting a feel for the place. On Sunday mornings I would go to a different church, in part to see the interior and in part to observe attendance. There were about 45 working churches in Moscow at that time, and I went to them all over a couple of years. Some represented competing sects within the Orthodox church, like the Old Believers, and I could often strike up a conversation with someone. During Easter week, Holy Week, I was very active in going to church services, meeting people, getting a sense of who was still religiously active and the role of religion in Soviet society, which was much more alive than most people in the West imagined. Most families still had their children baptized, even if surreptitiously, and many young couples had church weddings.

I also spent a fair amount of time in Leningrad because our consulate there was always understaffed and frequently in need of temporary assistance. When they needed somebody to help out for a week or two, I would often volunteer. As I was a bachelor, I was frequently the

only person who did volunteer. As a result I got to know this second great Russian city, both during the winter and in the summer during the famous White Nights. I spent about a month in Leningrad one summer. That was another city I just loved to explore; it is heaven for an urban walker. Leningrad was replete with not just political history but literary history. I searched out the places Dostoevsky had lived, and he moved a lot because he frequently couldn't pay the rent. I found places described in, for example, Crime and Punishment, that are real places. You can visit them. The city is full of places where political incidents took place during the Revolution or during the Siege or in earlier periods. Leningrad, in the winter or in the summer, was an utterly fascinating city to explore and to walk in.

Please do not imagine I did not work during those visits to Leningrad. This was my only experience working in a consulate, which I think are much better value for taxpayer money than huge embassies. I regret that we have closed so many consulates, as they are not only excellent places for younger diplomats to gain experience, but they are the best means of providing support to American citizens abroad who may need assistance with no embassy anywhere near. In the summer in Leningrad there were plenty of cases of Americans, especially students, with problems requiring consular support. In one odd case, an American tourist required treatment in a psychiatric hospital for ten days. As the staff spoke no English, I went every morning to translate, taking great care to respect this citizen's privacy in what I would and would not translate. I imagine I was the only American diplomat who ever spent much time in a Soviet psychiatric facility, which gave me an opportunity to learn something about it from extensive talks with the staff while performing my consular duties.

As I didn't have a car and used public transportation and was walking extensively around Moscow and Leningrad and the other cities I visited, I gave the KGB a lot of work because they had to keep me in sight. The poor buggers, I think, had to use up a lot of shoe leather. The quality of the surveillance would vary dramatically, but the only occasions on which they ever deliberately showed their hands or engaged in harassment was when I was engaged in what they would consider a political act. Unfortunately, they considered many things political. For example, in Vilnius, in Lithuania, my travel partner and I were visiting the family of a Lithuanian nationalist who was in political prison. We'd been there for two or three minutes when, literally, the door was just kicked off the hinges. They didn't even knock, they just kicked the door down to inform us that we had no right to be there. If I was trying to attend a dissident trial in Moscow, or if I was visiting a Soviet dissident, then, yes, the KGB could become, shall we say, overt. On one occasion a colleague and I were physically thrown out of the supreme court building of the Russian Federation. When I say thrown out, I was briefly airborne going out the front door. Of course, we protested that to the Foreign Ministry, because they weren't supposed to physically lay hands on diplomats. They were just supposed to tell us to leave. They weren't supposed to pick us up and heave us out the door, which in this case they did.

For the most part, I would say my experience with the KGB was—I certainly wouldn't call it benign—but it was less adversarial than one might think. Something I noticed, and I was not the only one who noticed, was that the KGB tended to harass people whom they felt were disrespectful of Russia, people forever making derogatory, condescending, even semi-racist remarks about Russia and Russians. Those were the people the KGB really harassed. Whereas people—not just Foreign Service officers, but some of our military attachés—who were

genuinely interested in the country, its history, and who experienced its culture and clearly had a respect for the nation, for the society, tended to get less harassment from the KGB. Not that they didn't keep a close eye on us, not that they weren't tailing us, not that they weren't tapping our telephones and bugging the apartments and so forth, but they tended to treat with respect those people whom they felt reciprocated some respect. I once asked the foreign ministry for special permission to visit a cemetery that was closed to the public – because Khrushchev was buried there – to lay flowers on the grave of Dmitri Shostakovich on the anniversary of his death. This was simply a personal gesture for me, but I think it redounded to my credit with the Soviet authorities. Cemeteries play an important role in Russian culture, and manifestations of respect for cultural figures are taken seriously.

They did occasionally screw up. One Columbus Day, a Monday holiday for us but not a holiday for them, I had slept in till about ten o'clock in the morning, something like that. I was just beginning to putter around in the kitchen when I heard a key in the lock of the front door. I turned to look into the entry hall, but knew instantaneously what I was about to see. The door opens and two guys in winter coats and hats appear, they see me in my bathrobe standing in the kitchen. One of them mutters an appropriate Russian obscenity. The door closes, they lock the door, and off they go. They had assumed the apartment was empty because this was a Monday, a working day, and they hadn't heard anything on the microphones. It was a classic illustration that they were certainly there. They did regular visits to inventory your apartment for anything of interest, to keep track of what you were doing. Some colleagues suffered real damage to their property, but in my case they only stole corkscrews, several times. Corkscrews were a scarce but necessary item.

On occasion we screwed up as well. I was on a trip across Siberia with a colleague who bought us tickets for the boat on the river at Novosibirsk, but who thought it was going fifteen kilometers downstream rather than the fifty it in fact went. This put us beyond our permitted travel zone. We were detained at the final stop by the uniformed police, with ample plain-clothes guys in evidence taking photographs. The police wrote up a protocol of our violation, which we refused to sign, which was noted, and we were put on the boat back to Novosibirsk. An embarrassment, as we were in the wrong. Nothing much happened in consequence, and I found the experience somewhat educational because the uniformed police captain in the small town where the incident took place was very competent and courteous. I hope he went on to better jobs.

There were significant differentials in how we were treated. My colleague who handled Jewish refuseniks was a constant target of the KGB, they just made his life a misery, whereas my contacts with Christian dissidents were evidently less toxic in their eyes. Leningrad was a much tougher KGB town than Moscow, much. I think this was a common experience for diplomats and journalists. I received more personal harassment in a total of about three months in Leningrad than I did in almost three years in Moscow. They conducted a series of near hit and run encounters with our consular staff. I was one of the targets and was very nearly hit by their car, with its license plates covered over. The Leningrad KGB were real sons of bitches. We found out that, to some extent, the harassment in Leningrad was retaliation for harassment of Soviet UN mission staff in New York by the Jewish Defense League. So, that was reciprocal bullying.

Out on the road, it varied. In some places the KGB were quite obstreperous; in other places they just kept an eye on you. In such a large and diverse country, surveillance was a patchwork. In some cases the surveillance was skillful; in some cases it was comically poor. I remember one KGB guy of rather large girth trying to conceal himself behind a fairly narrow birch tree in Odessa as he was tailing me. It was a like a bad Max Sennett comedy routine. But it varied enormously. For the most part, in the provinces there was little overt harassment. This may have reflected how few and far between were visits by Western diplomats. The exception was the Baltic states, where Soviet sensitivities about local contacts with the outside world were very high. During a trip in Turkmenistan I think my partner and I may have harassed our minds more than they did us. Ukraine tended to reflect its reputation for bully tactics, while places like Armenia and Georgia were astonishing in their relative openness. Tajikistan was very sensitive for them because of the ongoing Soviet campaign next door in Afghanistan. In all, I learned not to generalize too much about the Soviet Union outside of the capital.

There was never any question but that the Soviet Union was a police state, and that the role of foreigners, particularly diplomatic foreigners, was, for them, a sensitive one. They viewed all of us as spies. If you look at their concept of espionage, well, from their perspective, yes, we were all spies. From their viewpoint, just buying the morning newspaper at a kiosk constituted an act of espionage. The fact that I was working for the Foreign Service and the State Department and not for an intelligence agency did not, in any way, from their perspective, distinguish me from anybody else in their very broad concept of what would be espionage.

During these years, I very much enjoyed myself both at work and beyond, traveling extensively in the Soviet Union, exploring the two great cities, Moscow and Leningrad, getting to know a fair number of Russians in different contexts, having many fascinating conversations in railway compartments and cafes and concert intermissions and peoples' kitchens and while out collecting mushrooms, or visiting somebody's dacha (seasonal home) on the weekend, having what, for me, was a very fulfilling and educational experience learning about Russia—and of course, writing a lot of reports back to Washington. I would say my main occupation during these years was listening. I had learned in East Germany not to ask questions so much as to listen to what local people wanted to talk about, to let them guide the conversations, in order to understand their perspective and their concerns. This meant answering, or trying to answer, their questions about America. This was probably a common experience of Americans in the Soviet Union, but I must have been challenged with thousands of questions, often quite naïve, about my country. I would describe the perception of America which existed in the Soviet Union as being out of a novel by Theodore Dreiser. Dreiser was, in fact extremely popular among Russians, both as an author and as a viewpoint on America. Now, whatever relevance Dreiser may once have had, by the '80s, his description of our country was hopelessly out of date. Many, many times I tried to correct or at least modify what I would call a Dreiseresque understanding of America among people I knew. These conversations reflected what I consider now to have been the most important role I played during those years, which was to represent America to a number of Russians. This was quite distinct from representing the United States to the Soviet Union. That kind of official representation is, of course, what diplomats do. But, for me, representing my country as a person to people in the Soviet Union was much more rewarding and, also, much more informative for me. I learned a lot about that country and that society by answering their

questions about my own.

At the same time, there were important things going on. The early years of the new Reagan Administration and the aging, decrepit Brezhnev regime in Moscow could be quite adversarial and at times even confrontational. The rhetoric on both sides was completely detached from each other.

Q: Were they laissez-faire? Just no connection, almost?

MERRY: Very little. You have to keep in mind that each side, the early Reagan Administration and the late Brezhnev regime, were each coming from such completely different experiences and worldviews, with contrasting notions about the most basic questions of what a society is, what is political legitimacy, what the future of the world should be, that they were talking past each other to an extraordinary extent. This became actually quite dangerous during the martial law crisis in Poland. Washington tended greatly to overestimate the danger of a direct Soviet intervention in Poland, and Moscow tended greatly to overestimate the extent to which events in Poland were being driven by Washington. In point of fact, the crisis in Poland was a Polish crisis. It was based on Polish workers and Polish intellectuals and Poles in general being Poles. Moscow wanted to see the hand of the United States somehow behind this. Washington wanted to see the beginning of a Soviet military intervention of the kind that had taken place in Czechoslovakia, and before that in Hungary and before that in East Germany. The danger of these mutual misunderstandings leading to a real crisis in East-West relations was, I think, more real than most people would, in retrospect, recognize. When the Polish government declared martial law in mid-December of 1981, we had a 24-hour watch in the Political Section, a genuine crisis watch. The concern was legitimate. This was a real crisis, in my view the most serious crisis between the United States and the Soviet Union since the 1973 Middle East war. It didn't rise quite to that level of danger because there was not an ongoing war, but it was certainly a damned dangerous period.

I became directly involved beyond what my position normally would have called for. At the end of a Friday—actually well into the evening—I was locking up when the political counselor, Sherrod McCall, came to me with a special assignment. He said the front office had just been on the secure line to Washington, where there had been a report in that morning's Washington Post of military reserves being called up in Russia, and people in Washington were becoming frantic over the danger of a Soviet intervention in Poland. The embassy had a lot of contact with informed people, editors, people in Soviet think tanks and so on, and we had a much more balanced view of Soviet intentions, which was that Moscow wanted General Jaruzelski to control the situation in Poland on his own. The Soviets had absolutely no desire to intervene in Poland because they knew it would be a disaster. McCall told me Washington needed a high-level message from the embassy, to calm things down, so he gave me the task. It should have gone to a colleague in the Political/External section, a friend of mine, but he was out of the country at his sister's wedding. Sherrod McCall decided I was the guy to write this message, perhaps because I had recently written a long report about the impact of Polish events on neighboring Lithuania. Starting around eight-thirty or nine o'clock on a Friday, that's what I did all night. I had a decent draft by the time people came to work on Saturday – we pretty much all came in on Saturdays in the Political Section. However, this message required a lot of clearances and tweaking, and

eventually went out on Sunday morning. I worked on this message from Friday evening until Sunday morning, getting breaks for food and some rest while waiting for clearances. Keep in mind that in an era of typewriters, every alteration required retyping pages of text, and I did it all.

This was a high-level message from the ambassador to Washington saying, “It is our judgment that the Soviets want, above all, to avoid military intervention in Poland. They are under no misapprehension that the Poles hate them. They know perfectly well that an intervention in Poland would not be like intervening in Prague, that it would not be only one city, that it would involve cities all over Poland, and this would create a crisis within the socialist bloc that would dwarf what had happened in the crushing of the Prague Spring or even in the invasion of Afghanistan.” As memory serves, that is pretty much what the message said, but at much greater length.

I’m fairly proud of that message because, after the end of the Cold War when Yeltsin started declassifying Soviet high-level documentation—much of which is now available through the Cold War International History Project—we have the declassified minutes of politburo meetings of the Soviet leadership during this time. If anything, our evaluation and what I wrote in this message were more correct than even we understood. The Soviet leadership had made a decision that no matter how bad things developed in Poland, they were not going to intervene, that even if Jaruzelski couldn’t keep things together they weren’t going to intervene. That was certainly farther than the analysis I was willing to put down on paper at the end of 1981. I’m happy to say this was a case when the U.S. Embassy really served the national interest by telling Washington to calm down, because the country we were responsible for understanding, the Soviet Union, was not going to be as bellicose as many people in Washington feared. Although I wrote the message, obviously I distilled information gathered by a number of people and the thinking of a number of colleagues. I had my own point of view and I fought for it and, with some modifications, that’s what went out. I think we all earned our paychecks that weekend.

During the ensuing year, 1982, we experienced the end of the Brezhnev era, with the death, not just of Leonid Brezhnev himself, but of other members of his generation of the Soviet leadership. Among the first to die was Mikhail Suslov, who was the politburo member in charge of ideology and supposedly a true hardliner, though some of the declassified documents after the end of the Cold War put him in a somewhat less hard-line light. It was pretty obvious, during 1982, that we were approaching the end of the Brezhnev era. We had an embassy contingency plan for Brezhnev’s death. We were, all of us, very focused on the question of the succession; what’s going to happen after Brezhnev. Who’s going to take the helm?

Q: That’s a big question.

MERRY: This was obviously a matter of intense interest to Washington. By this time, the Reagan Administration was beginning, at Reagan’s behest, to look for areas of engagement with the Soviet Union. The relationship was still pretty bad; that didn’t change until later in the Reagan Administration, after Gorbachev had taken power. That’s still quite a ways in the future. But in 1982, the Reagan Administration was trying to find what could be done in arms control and with various East-West issues. We were very unhappy with things they were doing in Nicaragua, things they were doing in parts of the Middle East, the continuing Soviet war in

Afghanistan. They were unhappy with some things we were doing: our very substantive support to the mujahideen (Islamic guerrilla fighters) in Afghanistan, our efforts to destabilize their partner regime in Nicaragua, and confrontations in places ranging from Ethiopia to Angola. But there were senior people in the Reagan Administration who understood that a transition was approaching in the Soviet leadership, and that transition was going to be important to the United States.

As I mentioned earlier, it took 10 months for the Reagan Administration to send a new ambassador to Moscow, but they certainly picked the right man for the job. They sent Arthur Hartman, a career Foreign Service officer who had been, for the previous five years, ambassador in Paris and had earlier been assistant secretary for European Affairs. Hartman was a man with no direct Soviet background. He was not a Russian speaker, he was not a Russia hand, he was not a Soviet hand. He had a lot of experience with the Soviets, particularly as assistant secretary for European Affairs under Henry Kissinger. He was something of a surprise choice for Reagan's ambassador to the Soviet Union. He was not a known hardliner. He was not known as somebody who would publicly smite the communists hip and thigh from an ambassadorial position. He was known as a top-flight professional diplomat, but he had just spent five years in Paris and was coming with no formal background in Soviet affairs. He was, however, Reagan's choice. He arrived in the fall of 1981, and brought with him as his deputy Warren Zimmerman, who had worked with him in Paris, who had a background in Yugoslavia and in the Soviet Union. I think the U.S. Embassy in Moscow during my second and third years, under Arthur Hartman's leadership, was, all told, the highest quality mission in my entire professional experience. That's partly because every U.S. government agency sent really good people there. The military did, the CIA did, the Department of Agriculture did, USIA did, and the State Department certainly did.

With Hartman and Zimmerman there was an extraordinary amount of not only good team spirit, but the kind of leadership that is somewhat rare in the Foreign Service. True leadership, and a warmth between the chief of mission and the staff, was something I found extremely gratifying. I could never quite bring myself to address the ambassador by his first name; I could never call him "Art." I do now that we're both retired. When he was the ambassador, I just couldn't bring myself to address him as anything other than "Mr. Ambassador." But many people called him "Art," and he was a remarkably approachable, easy-going guy as a chief of mission. He was also a remarkably tough, even downright steely person in dealing with the Soviets on issues. Behind that somewhat urbane, Frenchified exterior, Art Hartman had real steel. He understood how to deal with the Soviets, that you couldn't let them nickel and dime you, that you had to maintain your position on the small things, not just the big things, and that you had to show them when and where you just wouldn't give way. On a number of occasions he really annoyed Foreign Minister Gromyko, which is something of an achievement.

I came to have not only personal liking for Arthur Hartman—which wasn't at all difficult—but a lot of respect for him as the kind of smart, tough-as-nails but non-ideological ambassador that I thought the United States really needed in the Soviet Union during this period of the Cold War. I thought it was just a first-class embassy, which did a lot of first-class work. We had excellent leadership in the Political Section under, first, Sherrod McCall, who was regarded with great fondness by almost everybody who worked for him; he was known as "Uncle Sherrod." Then

came Curtis Kamman, a man for whom I have the highest regard and personal liking. I think we just had a hell of a good team. I look back on it as being the epitome of the U.S. professional diplomatic service at a key point in our nation's history during the Cold War, in the absolute front line of the Cold War in Moscow.

Q: How did you operate there, as a political officer?

MERRY: Well, as I mentioned, the Political Section being split between Internal and External, we had very different kinds of tasks. Our colleagues in External were in the business of dealing with the foreign ministry. I never did. Other than when I was in the Consular Section, I don't think I ever set foot in the Soviet Foreign Ministry. Those of us on the Internal side were dealing as much as anything with the cracks in Soviet society. We had a number of contacts with Soviet think tanks, such as the U.S.A. and Canada Institute, editors of the Communist Party journal Kommunist, various political writers—some with somewhat nefarious reputations, like Victor Louis, and others of real repute, like Roy Medvedev—who had insight into what was going on. We also dealt with the diplomats from other countries who had insight into what was going on: a few of our British colleagues, French, German. The Chinese were particularly well informed. Some of the foreign journalists based in Moscow were very good and well informed. One of the best at that time was a Dane, which shows you that individual talent has nothing to do with a country's size. Our embassy was a center for much of the discussion of Soviet affairs among a wide range of people because we represented a superpower. People wanted Washington to have their insights and views. We all traded information and rumor, so that we tended to pool our collective experience to try to understand what was going on in this fairly opaque political system.

We obviously followed the Soviet press carefully, a quite tedious undertaking. I first started drinking coffee only then, to help me get through Pravda in the morning; tea was just not enough. The Soviet press was not completely lacking in real information. It was a matter of understanding how they packaged it, and what various words and phrases meant in a particular context, and how to glean information about who was on top and who was not and where the political winds were blowing by reading Pravda in the same way that a Soviet Communist Party official out in the boondocks would read Pravda, to get the little indications of which way the weathervane was turning. My colleague the embassy Kremlinologist was much more skilled at this than I was. They would occasionally reveal bits of information in odd ways. It was my habit to look at the afternoon daily Izvestia late before I left the office. One Friday afternoon, buried in the middle of the sports news was a little paragraph about Andrei Sakharov, who was then in internal exile in the city of Gorky, that he was on a hunger strike and had been taken to a hospital. It was just a couple of sentences. Of course, we had known about his hunger strike, but no more. Immediately I got on the phone to Washington and started knocking out a telegram.

We could sometimes glean interesting comments by trying to meet the author of an interesting article to follow up with him. Sometimes that would be productive and sometimes it wouldn't. You could never tell, when you walked into an office, whether you were going to be wasting your time or were going to be getting real insight. I remember being in Volgograd, the former Stalingrad, shortly after the 40th anniversary of the German surrender in February 1983. I had gone down there with a colleague, to see how they marked the anniversary. That part of the trip

was interesting enough, though it was bitterly cold. In addition our local sponsors decided we should visit the hydroelectric power station on the Volga. I thought to myself, “Oh, God. Another hydroelectric power station.” By that point I had been to a number of Soviet dams and heard the statistics and felt I knew the drill. In this case, however, we never actually saw the dam. They did not show us the turbines or tell us how many cubic yards of concrete were there and how many kilowatt hours it put out. We were shown immediately into the office of the deputy director, and had one of the most fascinating conversations of my three years in the Soviet Union. This man had spent his entire professional life building and operating hydroelectric power dams, which he now believed were a mistake. This man had become an environmentalist, he was a “green” in a senior management position in the Soviet electric power sector. He spent a couple of hours explaining to us in detail why his dam was an environmental mistake, why the Aswan dam in Egypt he had worked on was a mistake, and why all the great Soviet dams were a mistake. It was the dammedest thing. We didn’t even ask to talk about environmental issues, but this man unloaded on us why his life’s work needed to be undone. It was a fascinating insight. The man obviously knew what he was talking about. Again, when you walked into somebody’s office you could not know if you’re going to get screamed at or bored out of your mind or really informed.

In another case, I was in Ufa, the capital of the Bashkir Republic in the Urals. Somehow,—I think by mistake—they gave me an unscheduled meeting with the top man in the republic government. I was astonished, as I had never been received at that level before. I think it was the result of confusion in the bureaucracy when I showed up, as they couldn’t quite figure out what to do with me. I don’t think they’d ever seen an American diplomat before. They showed me into this guy’s office, and he was a screamer. I was there for about three-quarters of an hour while he had a series of brief meetings with other people, and his sole means of communication was screaming at people, on the telephone and in person. Mostly he just ignored me, as I sat there watching him scream at others. Finally, he got to me and said he wouldn’t talk to me, that I had no right to be in his city and his republic, and he wanted me out by nightfall. I pointed out that the foreign ministry in Moscow had given me permission to be there, but it was quite clear this man was a feudal lord in the Bashkir Republic. There were no laws that in any way inhibited him. Moscow was a long way away. He was the laird and could do pretty much anything he wanted to do, and he was a bully in every sense of the word. I actually felt some moderate fear just being in the same room with this man; I was alone in this instance. I was glad when the meeting was terminated. It wasn’t an informative meeting in the same way that my meeting with the dam director had been in Volgograd, but it was certainly an educational and instructive meeting.

I mention those two as contrasting characters, illustrating the range of a couple hundred meetings in various parts of the Soviet Union, many of which were not particularly memorable. But some of them certainly were.

Q: Did you get anything from these—I don’t know what you’d call them—educational lectures?

MERRY: Oh, yes. I would occasionally go to what was called the Znaniye Society, “znaniye” meaning “knowledge.” These were public lectures on all kinds of topics, oriented towards the better educated part of the Soviet public. I went to these lectures if they were on a topic of

special interest to me. It wasn't so much the lecture I wanted to hear, but the Q&A session afterwards; that was how you could get a sense of public concerns. For example, I went to a lecture on "scientific atheism," a topic that will put you to sleep, if nothing else will. During the Q&A period, there was a guy in the audience who was a provocateur, who kept asking questions, like "Is it true the Bible is the most popular book ever published?" This and similar questions. The lecturer got really flustered, because he obviously was not accustomed to dealing with even simple questions from a religious believer. This provocateur was tying the lecturer in knots in front of the audience. Finally, whoever was running the program started showing a movie about how spaceflight proves there is no God, and the debate moved out into the corridor with the provocateur now departed, but another man just furious that this Znaniye lecturer couldn't deal with the questions. The man identified himself as a Communist Party member, but he was outraged, demanding, "This organization is called znaniye! What the hell kind of znaniye is it if you can't answer a few simple questions from a stupid believer?" It was a really interesting evening.

One of the interesting items in my portfolio was the production of the annual "Moscow Miscellany" telegram. This was a compendium of Soviet political humor and anecdotes, obtained from the entire embassy staff but largely the Political Section. This was an old tradition in Moscow, and also in a number of other bloc embassies – I had done a similar annual message from Embassy Berlin. The "Moscow Miscellany" was unique, however, in the readership it received in Washington. By some accounts, it was the most widely distributed and read Foreign Service telegram of the year. President Reagan loved it and would occasionally use items in his speeches. That fact imposed some restraint on me as the editor, because some anecdotes involved identifiable individuals, so I felt the item could not be included lest the President unintentionally compromise one of our local sources. There were the so-called "Radio Yerevan" jokes and the "Rabbi, Rabbi!" jokes. For example, "Rabbi, rabbi, is it possible to build socialism in one country, say in Holland? Of course, my son, of course, but what have you got against Holland?" As Brezhnev became increasingly feeble, there were lots of jokes about him, often quite vicious. Some jokes I recognized as recycled Walter Ulbricht jokes from the GDR, though I suspect that humor about aging dictators has a very long pedigree. Once Andropov took over, the humor took on an edge of anxiety, as people did not know what to expect from the new regime. Brezhnev jokes were much funnier than Andropov jokes.

Q: You were there in the political section—this would be '81- '82 or so?

MERRY: It was '81 to '83.

Q: If you were to characterize what was going on, was there anything, a political movement or anything, or developments going on at that particular time?

MERRY: No. There were some things going on of a national character in the Baltic states, and in parts of Central Asia, particularly around the Fergana Valley and parts of Central Asia that bordered on Afghanistan. There would occasionally be rumblings in the Caucasus. In Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, you'd occasionally hear little bits and pieces. I received my first full-bore Armenian nationalist sermon in Yerevan, in a man's apartment, where he lectured me at length on what Woodrow Wilson had supposedly promised the Armenians and my

personal responsibility to fulfill the creation of a “greater Armenia.” Within Russia itself, there were famous dissidents like Sakharov and others mostly not known in the West, who were seeking an opening up of their society. For the most part, however, these were classic representatives of the Russian intelligentsia, who throughout Russian history have been the lonely voices of truth speaking to power. Their courage was very admirable. I knew a few of them, and they certainly had more guts than I do. However, they were voices on the outside. What mattered were the under-the-surface fault-line changes taking place within the nomenklatura, within the Soviet Communist Party system itself. We would occasionally have conversations that were quite candid, with people within the system who were just utterly disgusted with the Brezhnev leadership.

I remember conversations with people who had traveled to the West, and had seen the contrast between their country and the West. Sometimes, not even the West, but people who had traveled to Poland and East Germany, or people who had been in Finland, and could see the contrast between the way people lived in those countries and the way people lived in their own country. The conflict for them inside was fierce, as these were very patriotic people, people who were very proud of their country, and yet were faced with this contrast of the squalid conditions in which most people in their country lived in comparison with other countries that had been just as badly damaged in the war, like Yugoslavia or Poland, where people now lived much better. Polish workers were organizing Solidarity and moving towards overthrowing the communist system in Poland, and yet Polish workers would eat meat once or twice a day, when their Soviet counterparts would be lucky to have meat that often in a week, and not even as good meat. Many people in the Soviet elite—particularly what was called the Golden Youth, who had traveled abroad and seen the outside world—were just fed up with the stagnation of the Brezhnev era and really, really wanted a change.

The figure on whom many of them focused their hopes and aspirations was Yuri Andropov. Not yet Gorbachev—that’s still in the future. Even though Andropov’s background was the KGB, he was also known as being a highly intelligent, sophisticated man who wanted to change things; who wanted to get the Soviet system off of its duff, and to make Leninism work. There were a lot of people who were really champing at the bit waiting for the change, waiting for the transition.

Q: Was this a period where you would sit and watch Brezhnev get up and wonder if he was going to finish his speech or not?

MERRY: On one occasion, I went to a session of the Supreme Soviet. I was in the diplomatic loge and was in fact the only spectator of any kind at the session. There wasn’t a soul in the balcony. There were half a dozen loges along the side, one of which was for diplomats. I was the only person in any of them, and was there with my little Zeiss pocket binoculars, looking at the leadership, trying to figure out who was going to be the next one to die. We could observe this, to some degree, on television, but television wasn’t going to show any really embarrassing stuff. So I was up in the diplomatic loge studying everybody on the stage, to see who looked the most fragile. It’s the kind of thing American diplomats did in the old Soviet Union.

Eventually, in November of 1982, Brezhnev did die. We received an indication of this from an

unofficial source. It hadn't yet been announced. I got a call at home early in the morning from my immediate boss, Kent Brown, and he did not tell me what they had heard, but he said, "On your way in, go by the Central Committee complex and look into the central courtyard." I understood exactly why he was asking that, because we knew from satellite photographs that whenever the Central Committee of the Communist Party had a plenum, they would clear out all of the cars from the courtyard so the big cars, for the big shots, could get in and out. Clearing out the courtyard was an indication of an unscheduled Central Committee plenum, which would of necessity take place if Brezhnev had died. So I went down there on the Metro, and hiked around the Central Committee complex, looking in through the gates and, sure enough, the courtyard was empty. We had indications from other sources that Brezhnev was dead. So we told Washington, it's pretty clear that he's gone.

That was not long before the official announcement came out, and then started what were some of the most demanding three or four days of my life, Brezhnev's funeral. The Reagan Administration sent Vice President Bush and Secretary of State Shultz to the funeral, obviously to make contact with the new leadership, which had not yet even been announced. Vice President Bush was on a multi-country trip in Africa, which they interrupted. He flew up to Frankfurt, dumped most of his staff and came into Moscow, and Secretary Shultz came in separately. I was assigned to be the embassy liaison officer with the vice president's team, first with his advance team and then, once the vice president arrived, with him. I wasn't his control officer, that was Mark Parris the head of Political/External in the embassy. Mark was in charge of the visit. The vice president's advance team asked for somebody who knew Moscow well to be assigned to them full time. As I had a reputation of being out and around Moscow all the time and had written those walking tours, I was chosen to be with the visitors day and night. This meant getting about two hours of sleep a night for the next four nights, as we went through the preparations for the funeral and then the funeral itself.

Vice President Bush's staff were very professional and very good to work with. They were already exhausted, as they had been on this African trip. They were functioning on Benzedrine and willpower, but they were first-class, easy to work with, very professional, no nonsense. We spent a couple of days organizing what the vice president would do, and then, once the vice president arrived, doing it. That included going to the Hall of Columns in the House of Unions for a wreath-laying directly from the airport, going to the actual funeral itself on Red Square the next day, and then to the official meetings afterwards. I was on Red Square during the funeral, although I wasn't supposed to be. The U.S. presence was limited to the vice president, the secretary of state and one Secret Service man, but at the very last minute three staff were added so I was actually on Red Square for Brezhnev's funeral in violation of protocol, but it wasn't our violation. A Soviet three-star KGB general who was more or less in charge just said to us, "Why don't you guys go on out and watch the show?" So the White House doctor, the Regional Security Officer and myself were taken on to Red Square and placed right in front of the entire general staff of the Soviet Army. I looked back on rows of generals, and they obviously wondered who in hell we were. In some of the photographs, we're quite conspicuous.

After the funeral, I accompanied the vice president to a series of meetings, including the first meeting with Andropov. I wasn't actually in the meeting, of course. The only people in the meeting were the vice president, Secretary Shultz, Ambassador Hartman and the interpreter. I

was the logistics guy for that meeting and meetings with various other people who were in Moscow; for example, the Pakistani president was there.

Q: I can't remember—was it Chernenko or Andropov who followed Brezhnev?

MERRY: It was Andropov. Now, that is an interesting point, because shortly before Brezhnev's death, we had a visit by a team experts from CIA, and there was a dispute with them because the embassy—not myself, but my colleague, our Sovietologist—had been telling Washington that Andropov would be the successor. The common wisdom in Washington was that Chernenko would be the successor. I'm happy to say the embassy was right. My colleague, when the actual announcement came out, was like the cat who has eaten a canary, because he had been right where all of the smart money in Washington had been wrong. I remember watching Andropov as this first meeting with Bush was starting. I was not in the full meeting itself, but there was a presence to him that had been notably lacking in the Soviet leadership in recent years. There was a "there" there. There was an active mind behind those eyes.

This four-day period, from the time Brezhnev died through the time we put the vice president on his plane to go back to his truncated Africa tour, was, as I recall, just complete, round-the-clock work. I got about two hours of sleep a night each of those nights. It was also quite cold; not yet a Russian winter, but cold enough to feel; it was November. We were going non-stop. This was a vice presidential visit with no preparation: no briefing books, no planning, no prior organization. The advance team, including Secret Service, were working with us, and we're working with the Soviets, and it got done. Most of it, to me now, is a blur. The part I remember really well was the actual funeral, because that was the only time I got to stand still and not be doing anything during this four-day period. It was an hour and a half standing out on Red Square during the funeral. If I had been able to sit down I'm sure I would have gone to sleep.

However, I did get a good telegram out of the experience. As I had seen more of the preparations and conduct of the funeral than anyone else at the embassy, I thought it might be good to share what I had witnessed with Washington. The cable was titled, "A Clockwork Red." It almost did not go out, as I had second thoughts about the thing, that it was not sufficiently "serious". Curt Kamman had doubts as well, but decided to send it in. We got more positive feedback on that message than on anything else the Political Section did that year; people in Washington just loved it and passed it around. I took a lesson from that for my own later role as chief of Political/Internal, that illustrative slice-of-life reporting can be more effective in attracting a readership than even high-quality standard reporting. Washington readers like to be titillated.

Q: How soon after this did you leave?

MERRY: This was in November of 1982 and I left in the summer of '83. Obviously the next half-year was a period in which the embassy was evaluating, examining, hearing things. There was a lot going on, particularly in the economics field, as people who had worked in economics institutes, not just in Moscow but particularly out in Novosibirsk, who knew what the problems were, who understood what needed to be done, but who couldn't get any attention up until that time, were now formulating schemes and proposals. There was a lot going on within the Soviet system, most of it out of public view. With Andropov, there was the end of an era, the Brezhnev

era, and the beginning of something else. What that something else was going to actually be, we didn't know.

Of course, the Andropov era was very truncated because he only lived another 15 months. He was followed by Chernenko, who also didn't live very long, 13 months, and who was a throwback to Brezhnev. Chernenko was an appalling choice for a Soviet leader, but the transition ultimately resulted in Gorbachev. It's an interesting question, how things would have developed had Andropov been healthy enough to run things for a few years. He would have been Gorbachev without Gorbachev's more benign instincts, I think. Would the Soviet Union have endured longer with an Andropov who wanted to reinvigorate things, but who still had a firm hand and would be ruthless in maintaining and exercising power, which Gorbachev ultimately was not? Hard to know. Obviously, it's a counterfactual question. With the coming of Yuri Andropov came the retirement of many of the Brezhnev-era people, the beginning of the exposure of some of the pervasive corruption of the Brezhnev era. A few people were arrested, people who had been related to people at the top, who'd been a little too greedy and were now made an example of.

We tended to focus on the top-level political issues, because that was what Washington cared about, but you often learned more about the erosion of the Soviet system from ground-level experience. Now, everyone who lived in the Brezhnev era has a fund of anecdotes to illustrate its inherent fragility, but my all-time favorite is not even an experience of my own. One of the assistant military attaches had vehicle trouble on the road to Leningrad and got a tow from a Soviet truck driver – very much a common practice, by the way, given the crappy cars and crappier roads. Along the way he learned that the driver was not, as appeared, delivering a load of tires to an address in Leningrad but was on an illicit vacation. His superior at the tire factory in Odessa had given him the tires with fake delivery paperwork to get past the police checkpoints along the route. Once they were out of sight of the final checkpoint on the outskirts of Leningrad, the guy stops, drops the back flap of the truck and dumps the brand-new tires into the ditch by the side of the road. Then he got back into the cab, looks at my friend with a big grin and recites one of the classic slogans of the system, “Thus we are building Communism!” Honest to God, I am not making this up. That was how some members of the proletariat regarded “real existing socialism.”

My point is that the Soviet Union in those days was a giant with feet of clay, but Washington pretty much saw only the giant. That was understandable, as nobody knew in which direction the Soviet leadership would turn. In retrospect, it is not at all obvious that things would develop as they did. The Soviet Union could very well have become violent and destructive in its final years. If either Grishin or Romanov had become party boss after Andropov, I hate to think what our world might have looked like. So, those last six months of mine in Moscow were a period of questions without clear answers. A large part of what we were doing was asking questions and speculating. I wrote a long article for a classified in-house State Department opinion publication; I don't remember what it was called, but it was a classified journal with official distribution, for individual views. I wrote a piece for it, which I haven't seen since and do not remember at all. It was not a dissent, but a personal musing on where the Soviet Union might be heading. I mention it because it's illustrative of the kind of speculation which the outside world was starting to generate about what kind of changes we could expect from the Soviet Union.

Until Brezhnev's death, we had not had a congressional delegation in a very long time. As soon as Andropov was in, congressmen started to come to Moscow in droves and, of course, they wanted to meet with Andropov. They did not get the meetings because the Soviet system was not yet that open to the West. Journalists started coming, wanting background interviews, which I remember giving a lot. There was a sense, not just among the diplomats, but among everybody, that the Soviet Union had been hibernating for a number of years, and now the bear was waking up. What would that mean?

Many of us wrote things—I remember writing a long speculative telegram on the subject that I recall did go in. Embassy Moscow had a fine tradition, which it maintained for a long time and still may, of occasionally submitting an individual officer's views not as dissent channel but just as an expression of an individual's views. I can't remember seeing any other embassy do that. I doubt my speculations in that message would look very prescient now, as I tended to perceive the Soviet future in negative terms. After all, the visible evidence all pretty much was negative.

Q: Were you within the ranks of looking at the internal situation, looking at the ethnic mix, and what would this mean?

MERRY: Since nationalities were part of my responsibility, that's one of the things I speculated about but I did not see the serious ferment ahead. It was mostly pretty quiet. The real problems among the nationalities were still a few years into the future. Things really started perking up out in the provinces of the Soviet empire after Gorbachev came in, partly because Gorbachev had a real blind spot on nationalities. He believed the nationality problem had been solved. He never understood nationalism, certainly not within the Soviet Union. Much more of his concern was focused on nationalities within Eastern Europe. Poland, first and foremost, but not too far behind, Hungary. It was pretty clear that Ceaușescu's regime in Romania was creaking towards some kind of end. But everything centered on Poland, because Poland was the one country where the government was not, in any reasonable way, in control of its own population. The communist government in Poland functioned at the sufferance of its people. So particular attention was focused there. Within the Soviet Union, lots of non-Russian peoples were beginning to ask questions, but keep in mind that what seemed possible just a few years later, when Gorbachev was in power, was still within the realm of fantasy and the unthinkable when Andropov was in power.

Q: I'm looking at time and this is probably a good place to stop.

MERRY: OK, let me just cover one other thing: one subject that I pursued during my two years in the Political Section in Moscow that was of particular personal interest and for which I gained something of a reputation was the role of religion and the church in Soviet Russia. This initially raised some eyebrows because nobody had written about religion or the church, other than as a human rights issue, in living memory. Nobody had reported on religion as a social issue, as a question of national identity, of the Orthodox Church in Russia as an institution that had a role to play in society and in national identity, or argued that the church was not just a bunch of old women. Some people thought I must have a personal religious act to grind, which was not the case. From my time in grad school I had recognized the enduring spirituality of Russian culture

and understood it remained vibrant, despite official hostility. This was not just part of my official responsibilities. I pursued this theme because I was interested in it, and I got support from my bosses within the embassy because nobody had written on this in many years. In fact, I had to go way back—back to George Kennan; he had written about religion when he was at the embassy—to find somebody who actually took the church seriously.

Because of my expertise in this field, I was chosen to shepherd Billy Graham on a controversial visit in which he took part in a Soviet-sponsored ecumenical “peace conference.” While he did take part in religious services in both Baptist and Orthodox churches, he was strangely uninterested in the realities of life for Soviet believers. I saw believers beaten and arrested outside the Orthodox cathedral where Graham and other conference participants were attending services, but he expressed no sympathy for them when I told about it afterwards.

The time and attention I devoted to the study and reporting of religion in the Soviet Union were personally gratifying. I met many interesting people who would not otherwise have had any contact with America. Years later, I was vindicated because, once the Soviet Union fell apart, the Russian church demonstrated it was not just a bunch of old women and that it did still have a vital role to play in Russian society. Not necessarily always a positive role, but certainly a role, and at least back in the early 1980s there was somebody at the embassy in Moscow telling Washington that spiritual institutions were still very much alive and ultimately an important part of what Russia is.

Let me wrap up this portion by paying tribute to the superb quality of the team we had in Moscow in the early 80's: the military attaches, the Station personnel, the USIA people, from the Department of Agriculture, the Admin and Consular staff, and of course the Political and Economic Sections. I have been fortunate to work in some pretty fine diplomatic missions, but none ever was quite as good as Embassy Moscow in those days. We had real team work and dedication that made coming to work each morning a stimulating experience. Patriotism certainly played a role, as we were in the front trench of the Cold War. I cannot say that other people enjoyed living in Moscow as much as I did; there is no question I was a bit odd in that respect. However, everyone understood the importance of what we were doing. First-class leadership from Ambassador Hartman and his deputy Warren Zimmermann played a very important role, but I think the embassy was just first-class top to bottom. If you look at how many of the staff went on to become ambassadors, it is very impressive.

Living in Moscow was certainly not deluxe in any way. We had very limited access to fresh foods during much of the year, so it was important to take vitamins to avoid health problems. The city was neither healthy nor user-friendly; I would not want to be handicapped in Moscow, then or now. I was in my early 30's and active, so the limitations of the place did not bother me. I actually enjoyed the winters, although November with its freezing rain and mud was always pretty depressing until we got a lift from our Thanksgiving Day festivities. Housing was pretty basic. My apartment was quite small, with a living room, bedroom, kitchen and bath, with the washer/dryer in the living room in a closet. It was “cozy” shall we say, but I was quite content there. My kitchen had a view onto an old monastery with a bell tower and cathedral dome, so the first things I saw in the morning were a bit of old Russian architecture. I used only the Metro, but it was by far the most sensible way to get around that enormous city. We got hardship pay for

Moscow duty, and I expect we earned it. The place was no hardship for me, but I was widely viewed as eccentric in my enthusiasm for Moscow. Enthusiasm overcomes a lot of perceived hardships in our service, I find.

It was also the assignment I remember as the most fun of any I have had. Given that Moscow was a pretty gray and grim place, and that many people bitched and moaned about it a lot, it was striking what a great party place that embassy was. We had terrific weekends at the embassy dacha, we had some nigh-legendary embassy parties, like one St Patrick's Day bash that will live in the memory of all who were present, and we did things like meet in the Political Section most Friday afternoons for caviar and vodka, our "Friday afternoon snort." We had amateur theatricals, and I was conned into directing a production of "Oklahoma" that was a big hit despite my input. It may surprise some people who would regard Cold War Moscow as not a very cheerful place, but I have never had quite so much genuine fun, both with Americans and with locals, as in those years in the early 80's.

It is also true I did a lot of drinking in Russia. Most of my intake was with Russians, so it was kind of an occupational hazard, but as someone who had not used alcohol at all until my mid-20's, getting into the booze level of Russian society was quite an adjustment. Russian parties – and I was at many – were always alcohol driven. Whatever you may have heard about drinking in Russia, the truth is worse. Red wine with vodka toasts, for example. One New Year's Eve I spent with a young scientist from Georgia – Georgians are legendary boozers even by Russian standards – and I paid with a brutal hangover after five bottles of wine and spirits between two people. In Russia, alcohol is both a social lubricant and a disease. I never approached anything like it again, even in my second Moscow tour, thankfully.

I also did some travel outside of Russia, though not as much as others in the embassy. I liked in-country travel so much that I did not feel a need to get to the West regularly. We each got a free trip to Helsinki once a year, from which I acquired an enduring admiration and liking for Finland. I went to France once to visit friends and, candidly, to eat my way the length of the Loire Valley. I took one long out-of-country trip, to Thailand and Burma at the invitation of a Canadian colleague in Bangkok. That was a terrific change of pace. I traveled through much of Thailand on my own, which I loved, and spent a week in Burma, which was fairly off the beaten path in those days but utterly fascinating.

I very much wanted to stay a fourth year, but Warren Zimmermann felt I should come up for air and then get another Moscow assignment later on. I worried I might never be able to return, which in the Cold War was not an unreasonable concern, and I might never see some of my Russian friends again. I had some final meetings with people I cared about very deeply with the expectation this was a last meeting in our lives, that we would never see each other again. In some cases, I was able to pick up the relationship years later, but in others, I simply could not find them again after the passage of time. I still recall with pain parting from a friend on a metro platform with both of us knowing it was forever. That rupture of human relationships for political reasons was one of the things I hated most about the nature of the Soviet system and why, unlike some people, I feel absolutely no nostalgia for nor regret for the demise of the Soviet Union.

WAYNE LEININGER
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1980)

Consular Officer
Moscow (1980-1984)

Born in New York State, Mr. Leininger was raised in New York and Florida. After graduating from Florida State University he joined the Foreign Service. His foreign assignments, primarily in the Consular field, include Moscow, Tel Aviv, Hong Kong and New Delhi, where he was Regional Supervisory Consul General. After attending the State Department's Senior Seminar Mr. Leininger had several assignments in Washington concerning Personnel Management.

Q: After your academic stint, what was your next assignment?

LEININGER: My *only* request to my career development officer, with whom I dealt at very long distance, was that my next assignment be to a post that had an English-language school. That was so that my son could start first grade in such a school. I was told that there were a number of posts that fit my requirements, including Palermo, Italy. The job of deputy principal officer was coming open. I applied for it and was chosen. I was supposed to go to Italian language training first. After I had been approved for the job, my career development officer sent me the post report. Lo and behold, nothing was said about an English school. So I went back to him and pointed out that my *only* requirement had not been met. So Personnel put that assignment on hold. By sheer happenstance, it was about at this time that an officer - the chief of the Consular Section in Moscow - resigned - in a great deal of self-generated publicity. He denounced the Department for making the Embassy in Moscow utterly marginal, and irrelevant to U.S.-Soviet relations. So that job opened up. It was a job for an FS-1 - or one grade above my level at the time. Also it required a working knowledge - a 3/3 - of Russian.

When I was approved for the job, I had to go to language training first. That meant that the Moscow position had to be left vacant for a year - or, rather, it was filled on a temporary basis by Kent Brown and Wayne Merry - two political officers! I returned from the west coast to Washington and attended language training for a year. You'll recall that I had studied Russian in the past, so that it was more a matter of refreshment and enhancement - or rather, erasing some very ungrammatical Russian that I had learned. My vocabulary was old-fashioned.

Q: So you went to Moscow in the summer of 1981. This was your first important overseas assignment. What was it like when you arrived?

LEININGER: I was in Moscow from 1981 to 1984 - the "deepest and darkest" days of the "Evil Empire." In 1980, we had boycotted the Moscow Olympics and the Soviets were planning to retaliate by boycotting our LA Olympics scheduled for 1984. The Soviets were taking a very hard line in Poland against the "Solidarity" movement; they were continuing their occupation of

Afghanistan; they would soon shoot down the Korean airline that had strayed off-course into Soviet air space; they were increasing impediments to emigration not only for Soviet Jews, but for ethnic Germans, Armenians, Ukrainians as well. That policy also blocked the humanitarian emigration - divided spouses or families, many of which were Americans. Very, very few people were allowed to leave the USSR.

Q: Why did the Soviets impose such restrictions?

LEININGER: To some extent, the people were regarded as the property of the State. "We educated you; we housed you; we provided health care, we gave you jobs. You owe us." More importantly it was another means of control. The refusals of exit permission were in many cases completely arbitrary. The Soviets just wanted to scare any one from even *trying* to leave. They felt that emigration would signal that all was not well in the USSR. They didn't want it. They had been more liberal in earlier periods, particularly during the Nixon presidency. But by the early 1980s, Brezhnev was in power, even though he showed many signs of senility. He and his entourage became increasingly concerned that they were losing control of the country. It was a symptom of the ossification of the entire regime. They were clenching and were tightening the screws of control tighter and tighter, including making the emigration process more and more arbitrary. One could not predict if exit permission would be granted or if there was a defect in one's resume. There were just no known ground-rules. The authorities would just say that it was not "desirable." Neither the applicant nor we would ever know why such a decision had been reached.

Sometimes, we might make an educated guess. We had one applicant who was a spouse of an American. He was a trained computer technician or programmer. In those days, Soviet computers were still in a primitive stage compared to those in the West, but they were still the latest in the USSR. So he was denied permission to emigrate. He then made a living as a photographer, and by repairing home computers of journalists in Moscow.

We had a list of about 150 people who fell into the "divided families" categories. We had taken formal diplomatic notes to the Foreign Ministry periodically to ask for a review of these applications, hoping to get permission for some of these people to emigrate to the U.S. Many of these cases had Congressional interest behind them, reflecting the interest of the relatives in the U.S., who wanted these applicants to join them. A lot of these people were distant relatives - uncles, aunts, grandparents. While I was in Moscow, we began to focus more on "divided spouses" - people who were being denied the primary relationship of a family because of Soviet arbitrariness. That constituted about 35 applicants. Some of them had been divided as much as thirteen years; some were in the three or five year category.

All of these applicants were viewed as part of the political contest, a tug-of-war. We also had the case of the Pentecostal families, who had taken refuge in the Embassy, since June, 1978. By the time I got to Moscow, they had been "guests" for three years. You will recall that in 1978, eight Pentecostals (two families) tried to enter the Embassy by rushing past the Soviet guards. They wanted to discuss the possibilities of emigrating to the West. They had been for a period of 15-20 years persecuted - thrown into prison camps, denied jobs, etc. They were ethnic Russians from Siberia, but they were evangelical Pentecostals. Now, the Soviet authorities tolerated the

Orthodox Church because they had it under control; it had been under the government's thumb since czarist times and was hardly a threat. That Church had a nice organizational structure, with identifiable bishops and known meeting places. The authorities could easily keep track of the Church's doings and who was responsible. The Soviets could live with it.

But what the state could not tolerate were religions like the Pentecostals, who had no organizational structure, no ordained ministry, no set places of worship, except homes, where they could not be easily monitored. Very difficult to control. So the Soviets cracked down on all evangelical groups. Our "guests" hoped that they could emigrate to the West, but the Soviet guards in front of the chancery turned them away. However, the Pentecostals took evasive actions and finally ran past the guards. That is, most of them made it. One was caught by the scruff of the neck and beaten badly on the sidewalk in view of the seven others. He was dragged off to the militiamen's box around the corner, not to be seen again.

The Pentecostals who had breached the Soviet "security" perimeter entered the consular area and huddled in the waiting room. The ambassador was not in the chancery and I don't think the DCM was either. Jack Matlock was the political consular - and acting DCM. He made the decision on the spot not to force the Pentecostals out; he judged that they would undoubtedly have faced retribution from the Soviets, having seen one of their number beaten bloody on the sidewalk in front of the Embassy. He decided that under the circumstances, it was perfectly appropriate for the Embassy to offer temporary refuge to these people. [end tape]

Q: Wayne has just arrived in Moscow, and he is giving the background of the Pentecostals who made their way into the Embassy in the early summer of 1978. So they decided on that day that they wouldn't turn them back. What flowed from that?

LEININGER: We – the Embassy and the U.S. Government – became responsible for their well being.

Q: Of Seven people.

LEININGER: Seven people. There were two families, the Vaschenkos and the Chmykhalovs. There were five Vaschenkos: Pyotr, Augustina, and daughters Lyuba, Lilya, and Lidia; and Maria Chmykhalov and her son 13-14 year-old son Timothy. The Vaschenko girls were probably at that time 17 to 21. What everyone thought was going to be a relatively short process of resolving these people's immigration concerns ended up being a five-year odyssey. On the very first business day – still on that afternoon or the very next morning, I don't know, but on the very first opportunity – a consular officer called the Foreign Ministry and said, "You know we have these people here from Chernogorsk, Siberia. They are the Vaschenkos and the Chmykhalovs, and they wish to emigrate to the west. How should they go about this?"

Q: Could they have gotten visas as refugees or something?

LEININGER: I will describe the general process and then we will go on to the rest. The response of the Foreign Ministry was, "they have to go back to Chernogorsk and apply for exit permission just like anybody else." That formulation, almost word for word, was exactly what we were told

by the Soviet authorities every time we asked for the next five years, *exactly*.

Now, ordinarily to emigrate from the Soviet Union you needed a relative or other kind of sponsor in the West who could file an invitation called a “priglaseniye” that became the basis for your application for exit permission. Absent such a close relative, or absent, when they were allowing it, membership in an ethnic group that might be permitted en masse to leave, such as the Soviet Jews, there was no hope for individuals to emigrate. None, closed case. You just couldn’t pick up and go just because you wanted to; you saw a better life, no, not permitted, “nelzya” – never. You were property of the state. So this advice from the Foreign Ministry, “you should go back to Chernogorsk and apply like everyone else,” was disingenuous, because if they applied like everybody else, the application would get round-filed immediately. There was no basis for emigration if the Soviet citizen didn’t have a required relationship. The Pentecostals, being nobody’s fools, had not survived 15 or 20 years of persecution, prison camps and everything else just to be shined on by some bureaucrat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with some b.s. advice that they knew wouldn’t avail them anything. They offered back, “You know, we don’t believe that.” Well after about three or four days of getting nowhere, someone finally said to the, them, “Well you can’t stay in the waiting room any longer. Embassy officials had put them up in the waiting room; there were no other facilities available to them at that point. They said, “Yes, but we can’t go now.” “Why can’t you go now? We can watch you and make sure you are not beaten.” “We can’t go now because we have already left Soviet Union. We left without permission. We are here in America on American soil. “ “No, you are *not* on American soil.” But our finely-honed legal position on non-assertion of the principle of extra-territoriality to our Embassies was irrelevant to them. In their minds, and arguably in the minds of the Soviet authorities, they had in fact left the Soviet Union without permission. This itself was a criminal offense, and they would be sent back to prison. So that provided, by the second day, a longer lasting reason for them not to leave. Having once committed that sin, they could not leave the Embassy. So an attempt was in fact made to talk them into going home. They declined to go. They declined to go for the next five years.

Q: This case, did it get publicity in the United States?

LEININGER: Within a matter of a couple of weeks. Very shortly thereafter a tactical mistake was made by the Embassy leadership that was to reverberate to our discredit for the next 2-and-a-half to three years. That was, to cut off access to the families to anybody except a designated few within the Embassy hierarchy. No other Embassy staffers or well-wishers, no co-religionists, no visiting journalists, nobody visiting from the West, was allowed to have access to the families. They were in effect kept in a quasi- isolation status.

Q: Did you put them in an apartment or on the grounds, where did they live?

LEININGER: They were in two, side-by-side courier apartments, one to a family. The apartments on the street level of the Embassy, with windows that looked out on the sidewalk, but the apartments themselves were semi-sunk.

Q: By couriers you mean diplomatic...

LEININGER: Diplomatic couriers, who need housing while transiting.

Q: American couriers.

LEININGER: These were turned over to the families. The Vaschenkos, the five of them, stayed in one and the Chmykhalovs stayed in the other. There was a common bathroom down the hall, which was shared. The apartments themselves had small hot plate stoves and refrigerators.

Q: The Embassy supplied them with food I take it?

LEININGER: Initially, there were donations from Embassy staffers. In the course of time it was the Secretary's emergency fund.

Q: The Secretary of State has an emergency fund, discretionary.

LEININGER: The consular emergency fund to handle consular emergencies. Out of that came their food, their clothing, and educational expenses, for books that were purchased for them. But still, in essence, they were denied access to the outside world, and the outside world was denied access to them.

Q: Why was that?

LEININGER: It was apparently intended as a form of psychological pressure, not to make them too comfortable, to get them to make the decision to go back home. Well, instead, in a very short period of time, we became the enemy. The United States government became the enemy of these people.

Q: In their minds.

LEININGER: Not only their minds, but in the minds of supporters in the West. You ended up having large human rights and religious rights organizations in the United States and around the world in support of these poor beleaguered people, who were being harassed and persecuted not only by the Soviet Union, which was expected to be horrible, but by the Americans, who should be acting on their behalf, but instead were acting as their jailers!

Q: Were they getting comments out to the world these people.

LEININGER: It was impossible to keep everybody within the Embassy community away from their wing of the compound. So there were leaks, and there were Embassy staffers who were sympathizers, who disagreed with the Embassy's policy, who were sharing information with the outside. So that was the situation. Three years down the road, Curt Struble, who was to be my deputy, preceded me to Moscow by a few months. Curt got there in April and I got there in June or July. We walked into this thing, and we discovered that we were the bad guys! The consular assistants, who attended to the day-to-day needs of the families, were regarded as their guards. We eventually had to spend a year and a half, easily, attempting to overcome that long history of mistrust, suspicion, and downright hostility. We found that the families would not take at face

value any good advice that we might give them about what course of action to take, where do we go from here. So we rethought our policy. In six months, Curt and I had many discussions on this, Curt often taking the lead. He was the best deputy I ever had. He is now ambassador to Peru; he just got sworn in a couple of weeks ago. Anyway, he said, "Look, let's stand this on its head. Let's just open the door. Anybody wants to come in and talk to these folks, please, be our guests, go ahead, have at it." And then there was a whole spate of interviews, the Christian Science Monitor, and even Parade Magazine, and all the visiting firemen of all the organizations sponsoring them. Danny Smith from England, Jane Drake, from Alabama, Freda Lindsay, of Christ for the Nations, in Dallas – they all came, and within six months the story was old news, and we were back to, "Now what? Now what do we do?" There was no more finger-pointing about us being the bad guys. We are now looking at working with the groups and families that were supporting the Pentecostals, attempting to find a solution to this problem. In fact, every time we had a visit from the Secretary of State or a major administration official, human rights in general and or the Pentecostals in particular were always up there as number one or two on their agendas, every single time.

Other visitors came. The Reverend Billy Graham came. We briefed him in advance; we tried to warn him that if he went in and to have a prayer session with these folks regarding them as meek and mild, hold your hands, bow your heads Christians, they were going to eat his lunch. They were going to put him and his whole organization on the spot. "What are you going to do for us?" "Whom are you going to talk to while you are here?" "What are you going to do when you leave?" "Who are you going to talk to in the outside world?" "How are you going to help us?" He shrugged that off and said, "Don't worry about that. I have talked to people under stress before." He got in there, and within 5 minutes his face was pale. He was sweating. He couldn't speak in a complete sentence. I have never seen anybody so otherwise self-possessed become so thoroughly discombobulated before. But then, he had never met anybody like these people before.

Q: Why did the Embassy decide to handle them that way in the beginning? The ambassador, the DCM, who pushed that decision, did the consular people?

LEININGER: That was well before my time, but my impression is that it was a tactic agreed upon between the Embassy and the geographic desk in the Department – EUR/SOV. I think the decision was made after awhile that, "we can't have this precedent set of allowing people to stay indefinitely; all of Eastern Europe would have tried to follow suit." They probably thought, "We have got to do something, but something short of actually forcing them out, which would be politically and morally impossible." So it was an attempt psychologically to freeze the Pentecostals out, in hopes they would make the decision themselves to leave. Little did anyone know...

Q: So you arrived there in the summer of '81, and they are there. These Pentecostals. And then there was the overriding situation, with the Russians being totally annoying as usual, more annoying than usual.

LEININGER: Well, you know, just the usual things, having your phones tapped, the tables at the restaurants where you dine out miked up, or people having their off-compound apartments

broken into, routinely searched. They'd sometimes do cutesy little things like, we had our albums, old vinyl ones – that is how long ago this was – alphabetically stored. They would just reach in and grab a handful and turn them upside down and backwards here and there, putting them all out of order. Just a little calling card. “We were here, and we fiddled with your stuff, and we can do it any time we want.” That was the pleasant kind of demonstration. The unpleasant kind was sometimes they would come in and take a dump right in the middle of the bedspread on the bed. It'd still be sitting there, steaming.

Q: Because people did not all live within the compound, American housing was not all within...

LEININGER: I counted, as I recall, about 30 apartments in the old Embassy building. The new Embassy was under construction then. Three and a half years in progress, and it was going to take another seven years to finish because of all the buggings. So we were not even close to occupying any of those facilities. Most of us lived off compound in high rises that were segregated for foreigners, usually foreign diplomats, news people, and businesspeople. No ordinary Soviets lived anywhere near us in these compounds. The apartments were monitored, bugged constantly. Militia people were stationed at the parking lots, watching entryways and taking photographs of everybody who came and left. You were on public display 24 hours, all the time. You could never count yourself to be alone. It was a very stressful time. You couldn't argue with your spouse, lest potential marital discord give the KGB the idea that there was a possible intelligence vulnerability there. You were told when you arrived at post, “if you two have something you need to discuss, come in to the Embassy and yell at each other in a secure environment.” And you could only argue there. Now who argues that way? So, if you were pissed off at something, you just bit your tongue because you couldn't blurt out, “yes, and your whole damn family is alcoholic.” You couldn't do any of that stuff. So the moment passed and you internalized it. People just closed down. You very rarely could have a normal, healthy exchange of opinions about anything. You couldn't talk about family illnesses at home, least of all financial problems of your brother or somebody back in the States. “God he is out of work again.” All this stuff constituted potential vulnerabilities that could be exploited, so you just didn't talk about anything of a really sensitive, family- oriented nature.

Q: How big was the consular section?

LEININGER: We had five, counting the consular assistant. Let's see, Curt, me, Bill Hill, Adrian Stefan, yes, only four officers, and then the consular assistant, whose primary job was caring for the Pentecostal families.

Q: Then did you have FSNs, Russians?

LEININGER: We had Russian staff, but of course, they didn't work for us. They worked for the diplomatic service bureau, the UPDK.

Q: Right, which meant that the Russian government actually employed them all.

LEININGER: Right, and their job was to spy on us, how we interacted, what we did and what we said, and that sort of stuff.

Q: Exactly.

LEININGER: So they stayed on one side of a Dutch door and we stayed on the other side of the Dutch door. We didn't raise our voices in proximity of the Dutch door. Any time we had sensitive issues to discuss we went to the other end of our half of the consular wing, and that is where we had our staff meetings and where we did everything else. Even there we had to assume that the windows – which could be seen from adjoining Soviet buildings – were being lased, so you didn't talk about anything classified even in your own office. The FSNs did routine processing of notariats, and actual preparation of something like 700 or 800 NIV's a year, 80% of those in the official visa categories, and maybe 200 B-2 tourist visas issued to people who'd won the Stakhanovite of the year award – workers who had “over fulfilled the plan” during the current year, turning out steel or something. They could only travel, though, with KGB escorts – you know, like in the movie, “Moscow on the Hudson.”

Q: So in other words as late as the early '80s you were issuing 800 nonimmigrant visas a year in a country of 200 million people.

LEININGER: 210, 220 million, something like that. But remember, only about 200 of those NIV's were issued to “real” tourists...

Q: Amazing.

LEININGER: ...Now we had also a Consulate General in Leningrad, and they issued, by God, they had another 200 or 300!

Q: So the NIV work was not...

LEININGER: Virtually non-existent. One thing you never had to worry about was 214-B, the section of law that presumes that visitor visa applicants are intending immigrants and puts the burden of proving otherwise on them, because these people would never have gotten exit permission in the first place if the KGB believed there was the slightest chance they wouldn't come back.

Q: They had their families...

LEININGER: They had their families hostage. Our own regulations tell us never to take family members hostage by denying them visas, as a mechanism to ensure the return of the principal visa applicant. We in Moscow were even tempted to do that. That is what the KGB did for us. They only issued exit permission to one or two family members, and kept everybody else at home. So that was the extent of our nonimmigrant workload. On the immigrant side, we had a handful of real immigrants, probably a couple of hundred a year, who in fact did get exit permission and were able to be reunited with family members. In my first year or so, the initial time while I was there, we had quite a few Armenians coming forward through the refugee program. My first year there was something on the order of 3600 as I recall, but it dropped down to about 900 by the time I left.

Q: How did they get to get out? I mean the Russians were willing to let them go?

LEININGER: They were willing to let them go. Armenians were a pain, I guess they were perceived to be a pain. For our purposes, and the way the refugee laws were written, anybody fleeing a communist dominated country was a refugee with a credible fear of persecution, even though I can say without fear of contradiction that fewer of two percent of any of our Armenians were ever personally persecuted in any way whatsoever.

Q: They were really economic refugees but not...

LEININGER: They were by no means suffering “a credible fear of persecution on account of race, religion, ethnic origin,” or any of that stuff. But we *could* get them out; it was *good* to get them out, so we did get them out. In Moscow, we did all the preprocessing, as if they were going straight to the U.S. In fact they stopped off in Rome, and INS issued the final refugee admittance documents. But we did the medical exams. We looked for criminal ineligibilities, and lined up sponsorships with the voluntary agencies, and all of that stuff. There was at that time no INS presence within the old Soviet Union to process refugees for. There is now, somewhat amazingly.

Q: How did you find the issue of American citizen services? Did many Americans go there in those days at tourists or journalists, and did they get into trouble.

LEININGER: Few people went for tourism purposes, or exchange purposes because those were the scientific or cultural exchanges that were being closed down right and left because of the soured relationship. People who came in for organized tours through Intourist were actually very easy for us to take care of. We didn't have to do much of anything, because the Intourist took very good care of them. The Soviets did not want any of these people to get lost! Anybody who got sick was taken care of by the best hospitals then available in the Soviet Union, and then gotten promptly out of the country. There are benefits to doing consular work in a totalitarian state. People don't get lost, and if they do somehow get lost, they can be found very quickly.

Q: Most tourists came in with Intourist.

LEININGER: Yes, there was virtually no private tourism at all except if you got an invitation, it had to be an invitation, invited to go into the old Soviet Union, on the basis of an official tour through Intourist, to see a close relative.

Q: Were you able to travel around in the country?

LEININGER: To a limited extent. There was, as I recall, something on the order of 60% of the country permanently closed to foreigners. Permanently. That means that even if a plane crashed, you couldn't go there. The other 40% was nominally open, but every time you wanted to go someplace, you had to file a diplomatic note at least a week in advance, giving your itinerary. They would never tell you “yes.” If you just didn't hear from them, then you could go. You carried with you a copy of the note you had sent, informing the MFA that you were going. But

fully half to two thirds of the time they would tell you “no” for “reasons of a temporary nature,” never specifying what these reasons might be, and sometimes telling you only an hour before you were to board the train. Now, in some cases we would know what the reasons might be. They had just suffered a devastating flood, and half the wheat crop was wiped out, and they didn’t want our Agricultural attaché to go out there and see the devastation first hand, because they wanted to conceal what dire straits they were in, before concluding the next grain deal with us. We might have suspected, but didn’t know, that there had been, say, a bacteriological contamination of a facility somewhere in the area. Or some kind of nuclear accident, or chemical spill. There was always lots of speculation as to why an area that previously had been open was now closed. Even within those travel parameters you had to have a reason, at least as consular people we had to have a reason, to visit. Many times divided families were used as that rationale, to get to the Baltic republics, for instance. Then, on behalf of our colleagues in the political section, we’d tack on visits with religious or political dissidents. Of course, when you got out there, you were followed.

Q: Did you drive or take the train?

LEININGER: Usually trains, or if distances were huge and you felt like living dangerously, we’d use Aeroflot, the Soviet state airline. You could never travel in the old Soviet Union alone, under our own travel rules. You always had to have a compartment mate for protection. A couple of times in a tour you would get to make a non-pro courier run through Leningrad, onward to Helsinki, to pick up classified correspondence. That was one of the forms of R&R, a non-professional courier run that you signed up for. I think we did a total of four runs to Helsinki in the space of three years. Roughly once every nine months. It was a free trip out. A couple of times I heard stories of people being gassed in their train compartment on the way back to Moscow, carrying stuff back into the old Soviet Union. Colorless, odorless gas would be introduced underneath the door of the compartment. The compartment would be opened up. You had the pouch right there in the compartment with you. You put it between the two bunks, where, hopefully, it would be safe. It never happened to me fortunately.

So we did get to travel a bit. We visited the Baltics. We also went to Soviet central Asia. We went up to Tashkent, Samarkand and a little town called Andizhan. But, again, people always followed you when you took these trips inside the country. Almost always, anyway, but especially when we were going to areas of political sensitivity, like the Baltics. Nobody followed you to Samarkand or Tashkent, but we did have people “spontaneously” invite us over to their restaurant tables to share some vodka or something, “Thanks, but no thanks.” People – usually women, if you were guys traveling together – would ring up your phone in your hotel in the middle of the night and invite you to party. Again, “thanks, but no thanks.”

But anyway, we got to Andizhan. Now Andizhan, we didn’t know *why* we were going there except that the travel officer, a guy named John Beyrle, now a senior officer but at the time a second tour junior officer, had been made the travel officer. It was his job to try and organize our annual travel plans so we got as many people out to as many areas of the old Soviet Union as possible, without duplicating trips and wasting our limited travel money. He also ensured that every traveler who went out into the country filed a trip report describing the localities visited – how much meat was in the shops, how many fresh vegetables were in the farmers market, and so

forth. Now, we *wanted* to go to Samarkand and Tashkent; those places we had heard of as desirable destinations. Samarkand more than Tashkent. Tashkent in modern times is a dump. After the earthquake in the late '70s it was rebuilt in the Soviet Stalinist modern style, a lot of square apartments and office buildings. But Samarkand is gorgeous. If you ever get a chance you should go to Samarkand. But as sort of penalty or premium on that destination, with dogged Mr. Beyrle as travel officer, you had to go to Andizhan. You said, "Why? Where is Andizhan?" "Oh, it is in the Fergana valley." "What do they do there?" "Oh they grow rice." "Why are we going to go?" "Well, there is a report here from the late '60s, when somebody went" "What did they see?" "Nothing much." "Well, why do we have to go again?" "Well, maybe something is going on now!" So we went to Andizhan. Andizhan turned out to be indeed an agricultural community, of about 50,000 people. It was very large. Even small villages in the old Soviet Union were very large collectivized farms, conglomerates, lots of people. But the atmosphere was so much different than it had been in the Baltics and in Leningrad and in Moscow, where you had this ever-present perception that people were watching. And it was true – they *were* watching, so that people walked the streets hunched over looking down at the sidewalk, never making any eye contact. There was never any spontaneity among themselves, or, least of all, with you as a foreigner. In Andizhan people walked around with their heads up, looked at each other in the eye, even smiled at you, even knowing that you were a Westerner.

Q: Was it a Russian area?

LEININGER: Yes, well, actually it is in Uzbekistan.

Q: So it is part of Uzbekistan now.

LEININGER: Yes. And all kinds of ethnicities intermingled there for thousands of years. One interesting story: at the time of the Korean War the Soviets forcibly relocated a lot of ethnic Koreans, Korean/Russians, from the northeast part of country, and brought them to the Andizhan area. They came, and the locals looked at them curiously and said, "You guys look funny, what can you do?" The immigrants said, "Well, we can grow rice." Since the primary staple of life there is pilaf or "ploff," as they called it, a rice pilaf casserole type of thing, the people in the Andizhan valley were overjoyed. The ethnic Koreans brought with them a special variety of hard kernel, yellow-gold rice, and it is perfect for "ploff." Andizhan is now about the only place in the Soviet Union where that particular rice is grown, because the immigrants brought it from Korean border regions.

Q: That is interesting. So you were able to go there and that had a much more...

LEININGER: Wide open atmosphere. We went to the market there. We were walking along the market stalls, and everyone was just as open as could be, and greeting us and talking to us. "Where are you from?" "Well, we are American. I don't think you really want to talk to us." "Well, why?" "Well, we work for the Embassy, and you probably don't want to talk to us." "Why?" they would ask, genuinely puzzled. I mean, in Moscow, you often openly identified yourself that way, because you didn't want innocent people to get in trouble. You were being followed in Moscow, if the followers saw you speaking to anybody along the street, they would grab them, they would visit them at their homes later that day. "Why were you talking to

Amerikanski Diplomat?” You didn’t want to get people in trouble you know, so we all became circumspect.

It wasn’t like that at all in Andizhan. We met a guy out there around the market. He was sort of like the character Norm, on “Cheers” – everybody knew his name! Everybody was calling out to him. “Andrei, how are you doing Andrei?” Andrei was dressed in Levis, real Levis with the orange tag on them, and hand tooled western boots. By western I don’t mean western hemisphere, I mean *Texas* western. He had on a leather jacket that would have made anybody in the KGB green with envy, and a silk shirt. Where did this guy get the money? Well, it turned out Andrei earned the money, and was so popular among the citizenry, because he was the chief Zhiguli mechanic in town. The Zhiguli was the Soviet version of the Fiat. You know how reliable Fiats were, even when made by the Italians. Just imagine the same Fiats, that wonderful engineering design, being manufactured by drunken Soviets. The rule in the Soviet Union was never to buy a car that was manufactured on Monday or Friday, because the workers were either getting an early start on a drinking weekend, or working off the resulting hangover. Because those lovely cars were so apt to break down, Andrei was the most important man in town. He had the Zhiguli spare parts, and he scheduled the repair appointments. As a result, he earned more money, he told us, than his schoolmates who had gone through engineering and medical schools.

Q: Well, they couldn’t make the cars work.

LEININGER: They couldn’t make the cars work. Everybody paid Andrei off in order to get the parts and in order to get the servicing. He had been to Turkey, Greece, to Italy, and to Egypt, foreign travel opportunities that were virtually unknown for ordinary Soviets. Of course, he had to leave his wife and kids behind, but that didn’t bother him. He was a Soviet Central Asian male, and he’d have done that on his own, anyway!

Q: Let me ask you in that connection. In light of what happened to the Soviet Union by 1990 and what has happened to it since.

LEININGER: Okay, we are going to get there.

Q: Yes. What did you think when you were there?

LEININGER: Our experiences in Andizhan gave rise – and we shared these impressions when we got back to Moscow – that those who held them were maybe attempting to tighten the reins of control, but the reins didn’t seem to be attached to anything out there in the hinterland. Our guy, Andrei, took his afternoon off from work, and he called up all his buds on the phone, his engineering buddies and university professors, “Hey I got some Americans here in town. Let’s go up to this little retreat up on the mountainside and have a real blowout feast.” So we retired up there for the rest of the afternoon, drinking and eating, and eating and drinking all afternoon. I was blown away. I’d never seen hospitality like that, so open, in the old Soviet Union. Now, I’d had it extended by certain desperate people, religious dissidents or refuseniks, who were at wits end, and they would share meager things with us, but they had no where else to turn, and nothing left to lose by being seen associating with us. But this was the first really open and completely hospitable social occasion we’d experienced, and, still leery, I said, “Look. Something like this

just could never happen in Moscow. You guys would be taken in for questioning. You would be hauled away.” Our host just looked at me, and he said, “We are a long way from Moscow. It is not like that here.” The fact that he not only had that perception, but also that he shared it so readily with me, an American diplomat, is what led to my doubts about the ability of the central government to control the ethnic populations in the outer lying republics, by simply demanding that they just fall in line. The people, the populace, already felt themselves to be out of Moscow’s control. They had local party bosses, sure. But they are *ours*; they were not “the center.” “The center” was something else. “The center” wasn’t holding, even at that point. We took that trip in the spring of ‘84.

Q: But also if they couldn’t build a decent car in the Soviet Union, what does one make of these reports that the U.S. intelligence people were constantly about how strong the Soviet army was and all the nukes and bombs.

LEININGER: It was a totally two track economy. I mean they had separate factories to build nuts and bolts for missiles than those that built nuts and bolts for the Zhiguli factory. They had different standards of quality control, different hiring and firing practices. I mean most of these people pretended to work, and the state pretended to pay them. That was the old joke. But for state sponsored enterprises, the military, scientific and arms industry, they did have a second track economy. But the problem is that they ran out of money. The rest of the economy couldn’t support it. This couldn’t go on. So even those favored industries or sectors couldn’t sustain themselves over time.

Q: But I mean do you attribute, did the Soviet Union collapse, I mean people say Reagan did it, I mean but you always see it as a certain element of saying the rooster crowed and then the sun came up. I mean Reagan did certain things and the Soviet union collapsed, but is there a link between his or is it much more kind of a seventy year sclerotic thing that finally did them in and was going to do them in anyway?

LEININGER: I came away with that view. The place was rotten to the core. And it probably helped push them over the edge that Mr. Reagan had made it clear that he was prepared to keep U.S. military spending at a high level, one that those in the know in the old USSR – like Andropov! – knew the Soviet infrastructure could not sustain.

Q: Yes, but why wasn’t, was the intelligence people reflecting that? Was that coming through?

LEININGER: Our intelligence people were trained to look only at certain elements in command and control structures, or in throw weights of missiles or in the number of people in military divisions. How many tanks they had. They were not looking at the infrastructure underneath it.

Q: Did you feel that way at the time, you say gee this place is something.

LEININGER: Yes.

Q: I mean is this the great enemy? I mean how are they I am not just speaking of weapons and stuff but the whole.

LEININGER: Everybody there regarded it as simply a third world country that happened to possess nuclear weapons. In every other respect it was not a world power. We all knew that.

Q: But you couldn't find that reported much in the United States in the public media in those days...

LEININGER: No, I don't think you could. But there were some people that had those feelings. I recall a USIS project, as I recall it was a USIS project that tried to garner those impressions from the "non-professionals." They took us all into our individual secure compartments and said, "Just talk about your experiences. What do you think of the place?" Some of us came out with some of this stuff. Now, I am a consular officer. What the hell do I know about the future of the Soviet Union. So my comments probably went to some nice convenient filing cabinet somewhere, and nobody really took it seriously.

Q: So who was the ambassador when you were there? Was it Hartman?

LEININGER: Hartman. Actually when I started Matlock was DCM and charge. He had come back for a second or third tour of duty, and was charge. He left and Hartman came in from Paris with the dearly departed Warren Zimmerman, one of my best DCM's. A wonderful man.

Q: So how did your interaction go with those people?

LEININGER: Fabulous. Really it was absolutely fabulous.

Q: Very supportive?

LEININGER: Extremely.

Q: And they agreed with your idea to open it up to the Pentecostals and so forth.

LEININGER: Yep. They were for all of our human rights activities across the board, not just those having to do with divided families, but also those on political and religious dissident issues in general. I mean, Hartman opened up his house. We had parties and receptions there, to which those on the "outs" were made guests. Hartman cooked up a program with Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of American, to share first-run American movies with us. They started it with official showings, for Soviet audiences. I mean functionaries at the various ministries. Those guys were under orders in most cases not to meet with Americans under any pretext whatsoever, but it was a "social occasion," so that movies were an exception. They could come to Hartman's house and watch things like "Sophie's Choice." Which the Soviets loved. It is the quintessential Russian movie, with suffering, and all this conflict, and madness, and trauma. Best of all, who are the bad guys? The Germans! So they loved that movie. They never got "ET." They couldn't understand why "ET" was even made, full of frivolity, a fluff of a movie. Anyway, they would come and turn out and we would have these social occasions, drinking Hartman's booze and eating his cook's mini-pizzas. Well, Hartman started bringing in a couple of dissidents on the margins, but then the Soviet official attendees dropped out, on orders,

and we lost that opportunity to get them liquored up and get them talking about things. So Hartman then established dissident night, once a week dissident night, and everybody came for various kinds of presentations, Jessye Norman singing, or a Hollywood movie, luncheons, all kinds of neat things.

Q: Now did they include you in that and the consular friends?

LEININGER: Oh yes, absolutely. We had ours, the political section had theirs. The folks in the press section had their contacts. All people on the outs, and we got together and had a jolly old time. Of course, a lot of them didn't trust one another; there was always an undercurrent of paranoia, of suspicion that so-and-so was an informer for the KGB!

Q: Did you interact much with the station people there, the CIA people?

LEININGER: Yes.

Q: So you were able to get your views to them, and they trusted your travels and experiences and so forth.

LEININGER: They were very circumspect in what *they* told *us*, but they were interested in what we had to say about what our contacts in the dissident community were willing to say aloud. Remember, in those days, everybody was trying to weave a grand tapestry with little bits of lint about what was going on in the leadership, and who is on top, and who is on the bottom, and who is in line for this, and that kind of thing. The constant speculation all over the place about who was on the rise and who was coming in and who was going out; it was a grand guessing game. The best at that actually were our own internal political guys. They were better than the station chiefs. Lynn Pascoe and Mark Parris were fantastic. You know Wayne Merry was still there, and Kent Brown was still there for most of the time, and Steve Coffey, whom we called "The Wizard," because he seemed sometimes to be able to predict the future on the basis of no information whatsoever.

Q: What happened finally to the Pentecostals? You opened it up and let the air out of the balloon.

LEININGER: ...and freshness started to come into things. And outside events contributed to the breaking of the logjam. First of all, there was an ill-advised but quasi- successful series of hunger strikes undertaken by a number of the divided families. It began, I think, with some German divided families. Hunger strikes, serious hunger strikes were then going on, usually in Moscow, for a variety of reasons. And foreign journalists were able to visit, usually to report that nothing was happening. The Soviets then made a tactical mistake. Instead of taking the short-term, albeit severe, public relations hit of a hunger striker or two dying, they let a couple of them out. As soon as that happened, our divided family community started to take it to heart, and we had a few hunger strikes started among our group. One of *those* people got out. Now, she got out only because she was the daughter of a general in the Red Army. He made his superiors understand that unless his daughter was let go, he was going to defect. He had leverage. They let her go. Well that in turn inspired our tenants – the Pentecostals – to try a hunger strike. Now the least of

them – I say this in terms of physiognomy – was Lydia, who must have been about 5 foot 1 and 98 pounds soaking wet, at the outset of the hunger strike. Her hunger strike wasn't as rigorous as the one by one of the divided family guys, named Yuri Balovlenkov, who started out at 165 pounds and went down to 113, and had turned yellow. He was jaundiced from the tip of his toes to his eyeballs. But because she was so slight in the first place, we soon had concerns for her health. She was joined – more or less – by her mother, Augustina. Augustina was a large woman, to begin with, and we had reason to believe that she was cheating on her strike, so we were much less worried about her.

Q: What year was this going on?

LEININGER: This was '83 and '84. I remember that was the most depressing thing I ever had to do – go around and visit these hunger strikers and report back at the end of business every day, sending a cable to Washington, so that their spouses in the U.S. could have it the next morning, so they could find out how Tatyana was doing, how Yuri was doing, how Sergei was doing. Were they responsive, were they active? Curt and I took turns making those visits. Yuri ended up suffering brain damage. His short-term memory function was gone. You have probably read about people like this. There is a movie out now, *Fifty First Dates*, that somewhat makes light of the phenomenon. Well, this happened to Yuri as a result of his hunger strike. He consumed nothing but mineral water, period, nothing else. Well Lydia took fruit juices, and Lydia supplemented that with crackers every once and awhile, but nevertheless, over the course of about 2 months, she lost something over 17 pounds. She was down to 81. We had an Embassy physician on the compound. Dr. John Baker. A saint of a man, who cared very deeply about his responsibilities to the families, but past a certain point he couldn't monitor Lydia's physiological wellbeing any longer. He didn't have the blood testing equipment. There is a certain toxin build up in the blood that occurs in prolonged hunger strikes that will cause you to sustain permanent damage. For example, Yuri's wife came to Moscow to care for him. She was a registered nurse. She flew Yuri's blood samples to Helsinki to have them analyzed. One of the labs came back and said, "This man is dead. Why are you having us analyze the blood of a corpse?" Yuri had reached that point where the level of toxins in the blood usually kills people. He was "merely" brain damaged. Well, John Baker, our doctor, couldn't past a certain point certify that Lydia could be saved or that she wouldn't go on to some kind of shock or coma as a result of her strike. He had limited facilities there on the compound in the clinic. He and Warren and Curt and I sat down and talked it through, then went to Hartman and said, "Look, past a certain point, we are going to have to remove Lydia from the compound and put her in a Soviet hospital if she persists in this." So we told the family that if she kept on, this would be what we were going to have to do. We were not going to see her die or become permanently disabled while in our care. We could not. President Reagan even wrote a letter to Augustina and Lydia, pleading with them to stop. Augustina agreed. Lydia said, "We are going to continue. We know it works." Well, it worked here and there as rare exceptions, when the Soviets made stupid mistakes, or in the one case where the General had them by the short hairs. We knew it wasn't going to work with the Pentecostals, but they persisted. At a certain point we said, "Okay. Lydia has got to go to the hospital." We made arrangements for her to be transported by ambulance and admitted to Botkin Hospital in Moscow, which was usually reserved for high-ranking party members and foreigners.

The family was convinced that what the Soviets were going to do was to take her there, force

feed her, and take her away to prison. Well, when she was admitted, Lydia was welcomed by name by the nurses, given the best possible care, and initially given saline solution, glucose and saline solution. That is the way you bring them back. You can't give them solid foods initially. As you might be able to tell, I came to know more about hunger strikes than I ever wanted to know. When I was in India, years later, some Tibetan monks undertook a hunger strike on behalf of the Tibetan refugees there. I wrote 2 and a half pages for our human rights officer. "This is what you want to look for. These are the psychological effects; these are the physiological effects. This is what goes first; then this, then past a certain point, it's too late." Oh my God. I don't want to go there.

Q: It was not knowledge that you want to recall.

LEININGER: It is not. Right. Anyway...so she went to the hospital. Was given the best possible care. We had someone visit every day. After two days, she willingly took food by mouth. Got herself back to, I don't know, 92 or 93 pounds, and was certified as able to travel by the doctors. The authorities said, "Now you are going to go back to Chernogorsk, to your family there." She said, "You are not going to send me to prison?" "No you are going to go back to your family in Chernogorsk."

That was the critical first step, because now Lydia was back in Chernogorsk, in a position to make application to the Office of Visas and Registration (OVIR) for her exit permission – just as we had been advised five years earlier. Now, by this time, there had been significant high-level interest in the case expressed by the Reagan administration to the Soviets. Schultz and, I think, Eagleburger, talk about this in their memoirs. Reagan more or less made it clear to the Soviets, "Look. This is a continuing bleeding sore between us. Let these people out and I'll guarantee, we will not crow about it; we will not repeat our previous denunciations of your previous treatment of these people, we will not hold you up to international condemnation for their five years worth of struggle. Just let them go and we will have done with it." Now what exactly else, if anything, the Soviets had got in return for this I have no way of knowing. But in any event, in our continuing interchanges with the Foreign Ministry were told how Lydia go to the OVIR in Chernogorsk and apply to emigrate. Presuming to know their laws better than they did, we said, "But...but...there is no basis. She doesn't have an invitation." More sternly, "*Have her go to the OVIR and make application.*" Now, we were in touch with her by phone. She was phoning in once a week to the family. We said, "Lydia, we have it on fairly reliable authority that you can go to the OVIR and apply." The OVIR was a local branch of the Ministry of the Interior, one that oversees, again, the issuance of exit visas. Well, Lydia did so. Filed her application, and was granted exit permission within a period of about two or three weeks, which was world record time. Now, ostensibly, she was to go to Israel, because this is where religious dissidents were allowed to go. It didn't matter that she was Pentecostal and not Jewish. So we had to work this little charade. She was documented with a Swiss transit visa in Moscow before she left. She would "go to Israel." We worked it out with the Israeli Embassy in Moscow. They gave her an Israeli immigrant visa, even though she is not Jewish. Our other-Embassy colleagues played along with us. I mean, this is the benefit of a cohesive consular corps in places where it is you against the host government. I have been in other places where the consular corps is absolutely nothing but elbow-bending social tea parties, a bunch of self-promoters and hangers on, especially at the honorary consuls. But man, in Moscow, we were all together in the same boat,

getting over, around and through Soviet bureaucracy. So when we needed to call on these people, “Please give us a piece of paper to cover this,” boom, boom, boom, it all worked.

So we got Lydia to Israel, where she was not actually met by a Jewish organization but by some of her supporters from the West, who put her up in a hotel. Once she was there, she promptly turned around and filed “priglasheniye,” or invitation, for the remainder of her family, and for all the Chmykhalovs, the other family, even though they were not blood relatives. But again, the Soviets, by this time, didn’t care. They willingly turned a blind eye to a requirement of their own rules. Lydia sponsored everybody else for immigration.

The final hurdle we had to overcome was that the families in the Embassy had to take that final leap of faith, and return to Chernogorsk. They had to believe. Now, they had watched Lydia’s treatment in the hospital. They had watched how Lydia got her exit permission. They had watched how the Soviets let her go to the West. So they were willing to buy into the proposition that the Sovs wouldn’t have gone that far, only to turn around and screw them at the eleventh hour. That would have undermined whatever good will the Soviets would have been attempting to cultivate previously by letting Lydia sail through the process. It would have made them out to be absolute conniving beasts. In many respects they were, but not in this instance! Curt and I partially drove vans with the families to the airport domestic terminal, because the families mistrusted our FSN drivers. And we waited in the waiting areas until we saw them on the plane going out to Chernogorsk. As soon as the families got there, they phoned. They got there fine. They settled down. Within, I guess, two months, all the exit permissions came through, and they all emigrated. Not just the ones who had been resident in the Embassy, but all their extended families, too. It was something like 12 more Vaschenkos and 17 more Chmykhalovs. I mean huge families...

Q: ...talking with Wayne Leininger, and we are just at the point where all the Pentecostals are making their way out of the Soviet Union. So the extended families...

LEININGER: Extended families all got out. They ended up transiting Europe. They didn’t all go on to Israel. As I said that was something of a sham in the first place. Even the Soviets knew it was a sham, but so what? The address on the invitation was the right address. What they did after they left the Soviet Union was out of anybody’s control. The Chmykhalovs all settled around Dallas, Texas, and the Vaschenkos all went on to the Pacific northwest. If you were to ask me how they’re doing, I know that the most vocal and articulate member of the Vaschenko family, Lyuba, went to law school, which was absolutely appropriate for her. Timothy Chmykhalov wrote a book, which was widely promoted in evangelistic Christian circles. On the web you can probably still find the book somewhere. I have done recent Google searches on them, but I can’t find anybody. Maybe the girls got married, and aren’t going by the name Vaschenko anymore. I know Pyotr, the father, died of cancer. Oddly enough it had been Augustina, his wife, all the time in the Embassy who was complaining, “Oh, I’m dying of cancer.” She had colitis. Just was overweight, didn’t exercise, didn’t eat right, and just had a lot of gastric problems. The last I knew she was still alive and doing fine. Anyway there was a lot of good will in the human rights community all around the world, and I am glad the people got out and are apparently leading happy existences here.

While they had been with us, their presence was, in a way, useful, helpful, because conditions in the old Soviet Union were hard, and conditions were getting desperate, and people were getting desperate. In addition to the Pentecostals in the Embassy, we had others who wanted to be helped to emigrate, and were taking desperate measures to do so, by crashing through the Embassy gates, literally crashing through with automobiles, climbing over the walls, or in one instance, taking refuge on the construction site of the new Embassy, which didn't have that much security around it at the time. In all these instances our imperative was get them out before close of business. "Do not allow them to stay overnight and have the same pretext of fear of retribution enter into the situation." Now, "get them out" didn't mean we physically twisted arms and threw them out. We were never going to do that. We had to make them see the futility of attempting to gain exit to the west by camping out in the Embassy. While the Pentecostals were with us, we always had those couple of occupied apartments over across the compound to point to. "See those people over there? They have been here for 4 years, and they have not gone anywhere. We are full up; we don't have any more room, and moreover, you don't want to put yourself in that position. You would be cut off from everybody." "Yes, okay, I understand." That usually worked, with the sane and rational people.

Q: If they left, the Soviets simply let them walk down the street.

LEININGER: Yes, and they turned the corner, and the KGB probably then took them away. We usually walked out with them, to forestall any incipient violence, and sometimes went so far as the nearest subway entrance. I would say, usually, in half of these instances, the fact that there were Russians in the American Embassy, who had been there for several hours closeted with consular officers, became known outside. Most of the journalists had lunch at the Embassy snack bar, so there was almost always somebody hanging around from the Post, Newsweek, or the New York Times. We had great relations with the press by the way. Again, the press and we were in the same boat, trying to gather these bits of lint to weave those tapestries. John Burns from the New York Times, Ned Temko from Christian Science Monitor, Andy Nagorski, from Newsweek. We used to play touch football on the weekends. It was Andy who dubbed that the "Liars versus the Spiers" bowl, and mentioned it in the magazine. We used to play poker. We had weekly poker games. This mad German, Peter somebody from Sturm or Der Spiegel, used to have everybody over; tons of beer and tons of snacks and we would play poker until 3:00 in the morning. That is neither here nor there, but anyway it illustrates that this was not an adversarial relationship with the press. We cultivated them and they cultivated us.

Q: So anyway, people would leave.

LEININGER: They would leave, and we would escort them to a subway station. We would tell them this: "We will get you to the nearest subway station. We can't guarantee your safety beyond that. We will go with you as far as the subway station, and after that you will probably have to explain yourself to the authorities. If you want to say you were discussing a potentially complex immigration case, that would not be far from the truth, and it is legal for you to do that." We heard they were in fact taking them into custody for questioning. As far as I know, though, nobody was actually taken away and put in prison or sent away to a camp. Except for one guy we know was a wanted felon, for having committed assault on his foreman in this factory with a monkey wrench. He came to us not because he was a political dissident or a religious dissident.

He was simply pissed off at the way workers were being treated. He had asked for some time off for something, to go to, I don't know, a relative's funeral, something fairly reasonable. His foreman wouldn't let him go. They got into a verbal back and forth, and then he beat the hell out of this guy. He told Bill Hill and me this in a very boastful way, cackling about how much blood he'd made flow. Bill and I just kept looking at each other out of the corner of our eyes, edging toward the door, in case he went off. This guy who we are talking about came in with a handgun into the Embassy. He was disarmed by the Marines before he was let in. He actually showed his weapon to them. "Please sir, give me the gun. You don't need the gun in here. We will give it to you when you go back out." They didn't give it back to him, obviously. He was also physically imposing, hulk of a man, easily 6'3" 260 pounds with fingers as big around as my wrist. I mean, you could picture this guy going amok on an assembly line beating people with a wrench.

Q: They took him away.

LEININGER: They took him away. We had no basis to intervene or to provide refuge. Bill and I talked him for about two or three hours; we were scared, the guy was a time bomb. He could have lifted up the table and beat us with it. He left.

Q: Did you ever have somebody who would not leave?

LEININGER: We never had anybody who would not leave at the end of the day. We had one young couple who came back twice, first by running in and then by ramming their way in with their car.

Q: Broke in?

LEININGER: Broke in, smashed through the gates with their little Soviet Fiat. We had to tell the, "Things haven't changed. We can't help you any more now than we could the last time." I think the second time they got arrested for malicious destruction of property and causing personal injury to a militiaman – I think he broke a leg – but again we were in no position to protest. That said, there were also, regularly, provocateurs who came in and pulled the same kind of stunt. Claiming to ask for political asylum or some sort of refuge, and their stories would be so obviously cooked up. You know you start an NIV interview, and somebody is claiming to be a white-collar worker in a bank, and he has got grease under his fingernails? We did the same kind of assessment of these "asylum seekers." These people were telling stories of woe, and yet they had nice manicures, and haircuts, and decent shoes by Soviet standards. They spoke very good, educated Russian. They were obviously not the oppressed factory worker I was just talking about. They weren't out of work, they weren't hungry and homeless, they weren't truly desperate. They were KGB. They were coming in to test our policies and procedures for handling walk-ins. So those were just, "Sorry, can't help you," and we blew them off. They would actually leave much sooner and much more easily than the genuine kind. The genuine people were really desperate. Then finally there was the Azerbaijani duo of "freedom fighters," they called themselves, who climbed over the construction site fence at 3:00 in the morning in February one year. By this time Curt had already left. He had stayed for only stay two years; he hadn't extended. Marsha Barnes had come in behind him. Her Russian wasn't up to doing these kinds of things. So I was the only one who could speak to these people. I crawled out of bed at

3:00 in the morning and talked to these guys for an hour and a half. I couldn't stand it any longer. I was *freezing* to death. I said, "Look this isn't even diplomatic property." We hadn't asserted full diplomatic privileges over the site. "So we can't protect you if they want to come and get you. There is nothing I can do or the Embassy can do about the political situation in Azerbaijan. Now you got this guy down there, Aliev. I understand he is a fairly strong character. He might come to some prominence." Of course he is the guy who years later took over and became a despot in his own right. Now his son has taken has inherited the job. "Aliev, he is a fool. He won't do anything." He was not a fool. He eventually did take over. In any event, I convinced them that the Embassy was not in a position to be able to assist them in asserting Azerbaijani rights to independence from the Soviet Union, and if they wanted to do anything, they should go back to Azerbaijan and work from within. "Oh, yes, that is good idea." "Then you had better get out before the sun comes up, because then the guards will see you and want to know what you are doing here. You will have to show your papers and bad things could happen." So they agreed to leave, and they climbed back over the fence where they had come in, and they avoided the Soviet militia guards, and left.

Q: All right. So that is the flavor of life. One thing I wanted to get in is how did your family handle, you had a wife and one child, and how did they function in this environment?

LEININGER: Oddly enough, for the kids, it was almost perfect. They lived in the Embassy housing compound or in those huge apartment complexes assigned to Westerners. They played together. The stairwells were filled with American families and their kids. The same kids that got on the school bus together and went to the American school, which was a fantastic school.

Q: It was, yes.

LEININGER: For every teacher we recruited, we had to fight off a hundred applicants each year. That was one of the few ways you could get into the country legally and stay for any length of time, was to be a teacher in the American school. People were incredibly well motivated and well qualified. Once they got that job they taught like their whole future depended on it, because they didn't want to lose it. Class sizes were small, and the kids in effect lived in a little cocoon. They suffered next to none of the hardships of daily life in the USSR. Our son, because of my job, was something of an exception in that regard. Through our relationships with the divided Soviet spouses and their American husbands and wives, he saw a lot of the negative side of Soviet life. He saw a lot of tears.

Q: How did your wife feel?

LEININGER: Spouses in general had a hard time because the officers were as a rule all workaholics. I mean, there was nothing much else to do. Go in to the Embassy on weekends? Sure! The most interesting thing to do was come in and browse the cable traffic. Remember, this was well before the day of satellite TV; there was no CNN and definitely no ESPN.

Q: They didn't have the spousal employment program.

LEININGER: Very minimal spousal employment. Outside employment opportunities were

obviously very limited; nothing was available on the regular economy, and jobs within the mission were few and far between. Nan did, however, become a CLO after a time. She time-shared the job with two other Embassy wives, one after the other.

Q: CLO being the community liaison officer.

LEININGER: Right. But there generally is just one of those I per mission, at least in those days – the CLO was a recent innovation then, and hadn't proved it's worth – and so that one job was it, as far as mission employment for spouses was concerned. Well, we had about 135 direct hire Americans as I recall, in those days, and that meant you had 133 unemployed spouses. There was not much to do in old Moscow. You couldn't freely wander around very easily. Even if you could wander around, there wasn't much to do. Gorky Park. You go to Gorky Park once, and you have been there. You can't do much else. Soviet television was the only television you got. There were no cable stations. There was no Internet. Embassy employees, whether they were specialists or officers, on weekends often went to the Embassy to do more work, because it was the most interesting place in town. You could hang around the snack bar and schmooze with the journalists. It is where the action was. It was all on a volunteer basis. It was stay home and get bored or go to the Embassy. This whole situation stretched and strained marriages a lot. Now, we did have help at home, and Nan did want to try to get out of that apartment. For awhile, she worked for a journalist there, Ed Stevens, an ex-pat American, who had been living in the USSR since the '30s, and who had been co-opted by the Sovs a long time ago. He was what used to be called a "comsymp" – a Communist sympathizer. For Nan to get the job she had to be vetted by the Regional Security Officer. "If you take this job, you tell us anything funny that goes on, and who visits him and that sort of stuff." Stevens wrote a lot of stories speculating about the Party leadership struggles, so it was interesting for Nan to have an inside look on that.

Anyway, we'd known in advance that she would want to do *something*, so we brought along a nanny. Now, originally, this was my late-in-life-acquired step sister, the daughter of my mother's third husband, who had just turned 22 or something, had just gotten out of junior college, was at loose ends, and didn't have a life plan. So going to Moscow with us seemed to be a wonderful thing to do, see the world and all that. Well, she got off on the wrong foot when she transited Paris on the way in. She stayed at the hotel we had stayed at some years previously – when my sister had "done Europe" after graduating high school – but the place had since taken a downturn. The night manager came up and started fondling her feet one night! So she split that place in a blind panic at 2:00 a.m. after vainly trying to get the police to understand what had happened. She went off to the airport Sofitel, where she spent the rest of the night before she got to Moscow. During the time she was in Moscow, though, about the only thing she could do was hang out at the Marine house, because she had no Russian. Remember the Marines, Moscow, early '80s?

Q: I was going to come to that. Wasn't there a scandal?

LEININGER: There was a scandal; the main events all are reputed to have happened after we left. Different people, but the assignment policies...

Q: Except that Hartman was still there.

LEININGER: Hartman was still there.

Q: He took a fall because of it.

LEININGER: And it wasn't his fault. The Marines in Moscow were in the main screw-ups. They were there, as screw-ups, as a result of a policy followed by the battalion commander in Frankfurt. A Marine got assigned to Embassy duty in Moscow because he had gotten into trouble elsewhere in western Europe.

Q: Why would they do that?

LEININGER: Because it was punishment.

Q: But I mean didn't they see the implications. Isn't that strange.

LEININGER: They were idiots. Now there were the rare exceptions. Some of those guys *volunteered* to go to Moscow, in the best tradition of that organization, *because* it was hard duty. Those are the guys who later went on to college, and several went on to take the Foreign Service exam.

Q: And who decided who became a Marine Security Guard (MSG) in Moscow?

LEININGER: The battalion commander out of Frankfurt.

Q: It wasn't the State Department?

LEININGER: State, and Hartman, didn't have any say-so about who we got.

Q: So they were sent there as punishment.

LEININGER: Right. Even while I was there, I had to go to the Finnish consul and try and defend a Marine for raping one of the Finnish nannies. The admin counselor had to go to the Foreign Ministry and argue that they ought not hold two of our guys who, on May Day, had been ripping down the red flags from the street poles around Moscow, after they had gotten drunk. I had to go again for Marines who had gotten in a bar fight at one of the western restaurants in town. This one had a bowling alley attached to it. I mean, one incident after another. I know for a fact that Hartman protested the assignments formally to the marine commandant and got nowhere.

Q: Really, wow.

LEININGER: So, the next generation of screw-ups came along, and they reputedly sold out, supposedly to allow tours by KGB pawns, of some of the Embassy's secure areas. That has never been proved conclusively, to my knowledge. We do know that there was an excess, shall we say, of fraternization, and that the gunnery sergeant – the gunny! – did get involved with a Soviet agent in a romantic liaison. The whole thing just stank. It was just awful. The people should

never have been assigned there in the first place under those conditions of stress, where you have got to be really punctilious in your conduct, and attentive to security details.

Q: Did that change after the scandal?

LEININGER: Oh, yes. They upped the standard of training for people to even get into the MSG program back at Quantico. The whole policy has changed.

Q: Today is March 1, 2004. We are still talking about his experiences in Russia. Is there anything, any other issues or particular themes that you would like to talk about from that period.

LEININGER: I would like to go back and revisit, go into more depth about the divided spouse issue. I think I mentioned Curt Struble and I, when we got there, had something like 135 or 140 people on what we called the Rep list, representation list, which important American dignitaries carried with them to the Foreign Ministry every time we had a high-level visit, and said please let these people go. Well, partly in response to the squeaky wheel syndrome – namely, the spouses of these people in the United States – Curt and I said, “Wait a minute. Husbands and wives are different, and we ought to have a sub-set of the Rep List, just a separate small list of the really important cases, those of the husbands and wives, because this is the fundamental relationship in someone’s lifetime. Having these folks not allowed to live together is an order of magnitude greater than simply not allowing someone’s grandparents to emigrate.” So we got the front office aboard, and we got the Department to buy into it. That whittled down our “important” caseload to something like 35, of whom in a given year we might get five to seven out.

Q: How did you get it whittled down? If you started with 140, did you get...

LEININGER: All the rest were uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, grandparents, brothers or sisters.

Q: They were people of interest, but not spouses.

LEININGER: The spouses became really the focus of our push. We had great little capital to use in those days. We had used up the sticks, and cut off the carrots, so there was very little we could do in the way of bargaining for these people. But at least we spent an awful lot of time in... caring for them, is the only phrase to use. They had almost without exception lost their jobs. They had been thrown out of school. A couple of them, because they had neither job nor school in Moscow, a couple of them had been thrown out of the city. You needed a residence permit to stay in Moscow. A woman named Yelena Kaplan was exiled to an industrial town called Kalinin, a town of about 120,000 people, none of whom seemed to have gotten past high school. She was put to work in a cloth factory, grading fabric. This was a young lady whose father was a research physicist in one of the closed cities in Moscow, who herself had gone to Moscow State University, where she met her future American husband. She was on her way for her doctorate in mathematics. So they kicked her out of Moscow and sent her to work in a yarn factory in Kalinin. As part of her punishment for trying to leave, she got to count how many cross-threads

there were in each square centimeter of fabric. This is a lady who thinks, and, for her, this stultifying existence was the lowest level of hell. But almost everybody had a story like that. I think I mentioned Sergei Petrov, a guy who had engineering and computer training, who was reduced to taking photos and tinkering with home PCs of the journalists in town to earn money. Another touching case was that of Matvey Finkel, who, despite his name, was not a Jewish emigrant. He was married to a girl named Susan Graham. She was a nanny at the time, for a journalist. Now, Matvey was perhaps not the sharpest tool in the shed, but he had the biggest warmest heart you ever saw. He would come over and play with our son, with little tinker toys and matchbox cars on the floor all around him. All he could get was daily work. No one would even give him a job. For the longest time he couldn't figure out why, and neither could we, why was this guy who was a blue-collar type, refused exit permission? I mean, Sergei had computer training. Elena's father was an important research physicist in a closed town. We said, "Matvey what have you done in your life?" Matvey said, "Well I went to school. I studied in high school." "Yes, what did you study, everything? Nothing special?" "No. Then I went to the army." "Well everybody goes to the army, Matvey. I mean, as you know, conscription is the law. What exactly did you do in the army?" "I dug holes." "Matvey, everybody digs holes in the army. You dig one hole, and you fill it up, and you dig another hole." "I dug big holes." "Where did you dig big holes?" "All around Moscow." It turns out he had been one of the laborers digging the silos for missile emplacements, the one that was allowed under the old Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty! That had been 10 years before, but because they ostensibly figured he would reveal all to us as to where these missiles were (as if we didn't have other means of discovering them) he was refused. He had been refused exit permission, by the time we got there, for four years already, and it was going to be another five years before he actually got out. Well after we left Moscow, he eventually got out. But that wasn't that unusual. I think I mentioned before that in some cases they would refuse permission for no discernable reason whatsoever, just as a means of showing people it is a crapshoot, unpredictable. You cannot count on any known, public policy in making your own life plans. "We own you, and we will do as we want, not as you want." There were stories – I'm not sure we ever had any such cases ourselves – told by some of the other Western consuls in town, about charwomen in the ministry of defense being refused because they cleaned the toilets where the general shat. I suppose if they discovered bloody stools or something they could reveal the state secret that somebody was suffering from intestinal cancer or something. But the Sovs were in fact refusing permission to menials, who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. It wasn't just to intellectuals or political or religious dissidents.

Q: So despite the small number of these cases, they took a lot of time.

LEININGER: An immense amount of time.

Q: ...holding them, correspondence with the States I suppose.

LEININGER: We worked with the spouses trying, on the one hand, to get the Soviet spouse out, but also, failing that, lobbying for visas to get the American spouse permission to visit. In some cases the Soviets would refuse that, too, just to be nasty. When the American spouses came to Moscow, they often stayed with us in our apartment. We often had people over for important holidays, and had Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners with them. The Soviet spouses became some of our best friends. Matvey, Yelena, Sergei, Anya, Yuri.

Q: But several of them.

LEININGER: Curt Struble and I would take turns on the weekends showing movies. This was well before the advent of VHS cassettes for that purpose. We were indebted to the AAFES folks, the Army Air Force Exchange System, for circulating 16 MM films all through the defense attaché offices in the east bloc. The DATT office would get these in oh I guess in tranches of six, every two weeks. There would be sign up sheets. People would pounce on them to sign up for these movies. There would be a 16mm projector in almost every stairwell of all the properties we owned or leased, and section chiefs had dedicated machines of their own. The community projector was schlepped up and down the stairs and traded off to people who were able to sign out the movies. You would show the movies on the big blank white walls. All the apartments had big blank white walls; we weren't allowed to paint them. I became an expert in switching out reels on a 16 mm projector in about two minutes and five seconds. Rewind, get it down, get the next rethreaded, ready to go! If it was a particular popular movie, you would "hot reel" it. It'd be showing in one apartment, and as soon as reel one was done, you would run it down two flights of stairs and give it to the downstairs neighbor. When you had really good movies, decent movies, ones that had been released to theaters in the United States, you were encouraged to use them, section chiefs especially, to use them for representation purposes. But we mostly got grade triple Z movies. Ones that, these days, would go straight to video. They were never released for distribution in the U.S. "The Monster From Outer Space That Ate Cleveland," that kind of thing. Movies you just couldn't believe, but that was all there was to do. Again, this was well before satellite television of any kind. It was well before commercial videotapes were widely available. Certainly, we didn't have a tape lending library in Moscow. So those movies were our entertainment. We had a TV in the house, but it only got Soviet programs, and most of those were just complete rot. You watched it when you wanted to get your blood pressure up, if you could understand it. So we would show these movies and have folks over for dinners. You couldn't help but get emotionally involved with the situation the divided families were in. My son grew up there; I guess ages seven to ten. He would just sit and listen to the conversations about people who were being screwed over by their own government, and he couldn't believe it. He still to this day has a firm loathing of authoritarian government because of what he saw happening there.

Q: So this brings you up to about what, 1984?

LEININGER: 1984. We are now about getting ready to leave. Before I leave this topic, I want to relate a few more anecdotes about the KGB, because some of these are part of the lore of the times.

Q: Absolutely.

LEININGER: I mentioned the other day about how the KGB would come into your apartment sometimes, very annoyingly, and mess with your personal papers, leave "calling cards," scramble alphabetized record albums so the alphabet was screwed up. Sometimes, as well, these people would get a little light fingered. If your wife had left jewelry out of any kind, it would just go missing. That, of course, would be given to the searcher's girlfriend. Well, there were several

ways of addressing this. You could go to the Foreign Ministry and lodge a formal complaint. You'd get, "We don't know anything about that. We can't possibly help." But the easiest thing to do, that developed over time, was simply to complain loudly to the chandelier, or just talk about it on the phone, complaining aloud about your loss, because the "listeners" in the KGB were from a different branch than the smash and grab people. The listeners didn't like the fact that the smash and grab people had this extra benefit on the side. So within two or three days of your talking loudly to the chandelier or talking over the phone about your loss, the missing brooch or ring would reappear magically in open plain view.

On the other hand, these guys were not to be trifled with. As I was just arriving in Moscow, another Embassy employee was packing up and going on after three years or so in-country. Early on in a tour, this petty harassment tends to just strike you as quirky, a little amusing. "This is unique; this is strange," you think, but after awhile it just gets to be annoying and really oppressive. So it was with this guy who was coming to the end of his tour of duty, so he had his brother, who was a locksmith in the United States, send him over the latest state-of-the-art, pickproof lock. Now of course all the standard locks on the off-compound apartments, the KGB didn't have to pick. They had their own keys to every Soviet apartment complex. So there was no need to jimmy the locks. But this guy, on a Saturday afternoon, took off that standard issue lock, and installed his brother's recommended pickproof lock. He and his wife went out to dinner, and the Bolshoi that evening. He was smiling to himself the entire evening, secure in his possessions for the very first time – he thought. They came home from the Bolshoi and got in the little lift, the caged elevator, when they got to his floor, there in the hallway, off its hinges, was the door to his apartment. The message was clear, "Don't F*** with us. You can't get away with anything." So you know, ultimately, there was generalized guidance for all of us: just behave, and conduct yourself, as if your life was an open book. Don't trust that anything you do will remain confidential. Believe that everything you say is going to be overheard, and don't keep anything important in writing laying around. You can rip it up, or flush it down the toilet, or burn it, or whatever you need to do. Don't say anything out loud you don't want anybody else to hear. I mention this because it is going to come back to another story I will tell in a little bit.

Okay, we are coming to the end of our tour of duty in the summer of 1984, and it is time to say our goodbyes. Now you have to understand that every time you left the old Soviet Union and crossed that border, whether you were on a plane, train or automobile, there was a tremendous uplifting feeling that filled your soul. It was like the weight of the world had just dropped away, and you were like Jonathan Livingston Seagull, being able to fly across the open skies, totally at liberty. It was a tremendous sense of relief and ease. If you were going to go back in again and face up the dreads again, it was okay to indulge in that fleeting feeling. But I had heard from other folks, and it became true with us too, that as you near the end of your tour, you develop increasingly severe survivor's guilt. And when you are leaving for the last time, you realize that you are leaving behind, in our case, some dear people that we had seen very close to death, or otherwise damaged by hunger strikes, or otherwise spiritually and psychologically depressed, and they were going to have to stay. We got very few of the divided spouses out of the Soviet Union during our time. There were just two of the members of the really core divided family group, the one that was really organized, and the one on whose behalf we made the most representations, who made it out. One of them was this general's daughter, Tatyana Lozanskaya, and the other was Boris Molchanov. He was the one the Soviets made the mistake about when

they let out a “normal” person on hunger strike. From their standpoint, they should never have done that, but they did. That gave rise to the subsequent rounds of hunger strikes.

Well anyway, we are getting ready to leave, and Sergei Petrov visited our apartment, I guess the week or so before I am going to go. He said, “We have to talk.” “We can’t talk here, Sergei, let’s go for a walk.” Well, you couldn’t even talk within a quarter-mile radius of your apartment building, because they had parabolic microphones out all around, and you would be overheard. So we took about a mile and a half walk long the Naberezhnaya Road, going to Moscow State University. In the middle of a six-lane road, we walked in the center, tree-lined strip. He said, “I have been refused permission again, and it will be six months before I am permitted to apply again. Meanwhile I have been getting draft notices.” “Yes, we know you have been getting draft notices. It is one of those reasons you probably fear for your life.” He said, “Well I am not going to go. If I go into the Army they will never let me out of Soviet Union.” “Well, Sergei, what are you going to do?” “If I have to, I am going to go across the border.” “How are you going to go across the border?” “I am going to climb over the mountains into Turkey.” “Sergei, you got off your hunger strike about months ago. You are still down about 40 pounds from your fighting weight. I don’t think it would be very wise of you to climb mountains and try to get out of here.” “I have no choice. I am going to go over mountains if I get another draft notice.”

Now, I am *already* suffering anticipatory survivor’s guilt. I am getting emotional. “Sergei I can’t counsel you to do that. You will kill yourself. It is your life. I just feel bad that I have been able to do so little about getting you and Matvey and Lena and all these other people out.” He stopped me, looked me straight in the eye, and said, “Wayne don’t worry about it. You kept us alive.” So I felt a little better at that.

I told you that story in order to tell you this one. Okay, we are flying out of the Soviet Union, this feeling of uplift has set in but then survivor’s guilt follows on its heels. We decided there was no way we were going to be able to go straight to home leave in Florida and start the usual rounds with friends and neighbors and relatives, going on about, “Oh, how was it in the Soviet Union?” All of us in the Service have had these discussions with the folks back home, usually about places of a rather nicer nature than the Soviet Union. When you start to try to tell people what it is like, in a minute and a half, two minutes, their eyes glaze over and they are looking in the far distance. “Dear, what are we having for dinner tonight?” We were still feeling the USSR too deeply to engage in that kind of inanity that quickly, so we decided that when we got back to the States, we would drive across country in an RV to decompress.

So we rented one just outside of JFK Airport, and we drove all across the northern tier of the country. We took a little side trip up to Toronto to visit old friends there, and came back, came back through Michigan. I ran a marathon in Duluth, Minnesota, Grandma’s Marathon – Grandma’s is a saloon! And we drove all across North Dakota, Montana, Idaho and Washington. We headed south; we were going to end up in San Francisco. En route we stopped at a national forest in Oregon. We are at this point 23 days into a 27-day cross-country trip. We had stayed at nothing but Kampground of America RV parks and farmers’ pastures in the most quiet and idyllic and American settings you could possibly imagine. We are now in the middle of this primeval state or national forest, and there is just one other camper, about a quarter of a mile away, in sight. It struck me suddenly that I never told Nan about my last conversation with

Sergei, that if worst came to worst, he was going to climb over the mountains to Turkey and might die. I said, "Nan, have a seat. You remember when I went out for a walk with Sergei, the week before I left.?" "Yes." "He told me that he is really getting desperate now, he is really getting concerned. If he gets another draft notice, it is really going to be then end for him. If that happens he is going to..." and here I grabbed a napkin and wrote, "Going over the mountains into Turkey." And I handed it to her, and she read it, and with out another word she turned on the burner on the gas stove and burned it. It took us about fifteen seconds before we looked at one another, realizing what we had just done. The habits were hard to break.

Q: That is quite a little story.

LEININGER: Anyway I wanted to tell that story because it pulls a lot of things together. People who served in Moscow in those days of the cold war developed that kind of mentality.

Q: So you are coming to the end of your assignment. What are you looking to do next then. This is 1984.

LEININGER: 1984, in the summer. Of course there was bidding on onward assignments the previous fall. Oh, that is one thing I should have mentioned. To the tranche of language students who went off to Moscow a year or two before we did, everyone in the Department painted life there in a very rosy way. "Oh, it is not as bad as you have heard. You are going to love it. It is a very close-knit community," and so forth. Within about six months those people were in the pits of depression, because it was a helluva lot worse than they had been told it was going to be. So there were a lot of curtailments and a lot of people would not even consider the possibility of extending for a third year. Well, with our group took quite the opposite tack. They painted it in very dark terms. "It is very grim, but you are doing your country's business. If you really buckle down you might survive. You know, depend on each other, that sort of thing." They got us all expecting the worst, and as a result, out of our group, probably about 40 to 50% of us decided to extend. Now, you have to take into consideration the fact that you had to make that extension decision within about eight weeks of your arrival. Because of the language training requirement, they had to know whether to put the job on the bid list in the October-November time frame, for a vacancy that would ordinarily occur two summers later. If you were to extend, the job would not be advertised. But they had to know. So we just get there at the end of July, and by the end of August or early September we had to decide whether to extend. We hadn't gone through a winter, we hadn't experienced any of the ugliness of the place. We said yes, and we stuck it out for the third year, but that third year was tough. I said earlier that over time a lot of those little KGB games ceased to be amusing; when people leave your dinner parties and get arrested and dragged around the corner and get debriefed on every single thing that went on in the apartment that night, it ceased to be funny.

But all that said, I had seen a lot of people come and go from Moscow, including the previous political counselor, Sherrod McCall, who was a darling man. Uncle Sherrod, Curt and I called him. He was Acting DCM during much of the period in which we had gate crashers and hunger strikes, and so would sign out our most sensitive reports. He would correct our cables in the most sensitive and gentle way, with deep sighs of clear regret, and act as if we had somehow, inexplicably, disappointed him. We, his favorite children, hadn't gotten it quite right. We were

talking about some pretty sensitive stuff in those cables, who is dying and who is not, and who was to blame for what action that had or had not taken place, and we had to get our nuances right. But he was very good. We loved him; he taught us, especially, to consider our audience and its needs and imperatives.

But he chose unwisely for his onward assignment. He went to Stockholm. Now you'd think "What is wrong with Stockholm? It is a very civilized place. It is western. It is modern. Things work!" The problem was, he was bored to tears. Once you have been in a place like Moscow – I said this before, the most interesting things going on were within the mission; people would go there on the weekends for fun – you don't want to go to a place where you wonder why you get out of bed to go to the office in the morning, where you are not making any difference because there's no difference to be made. So with that lesson in mind, we looked around at what consular vacancies were coming up. We knew we wanted a better quality of life. We knew we wanted the place to be friendly and warm. But we also knew we wanted some substance, a little professional challenge. There was Tel Aviv! It was perfect. So we bid on Tel Aviv; that was within our sights.

HENRY L. CLARKE
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1981-1982)

Economic Counselor
Moscow (1982-1985)

Ambassador Clarke was born in Georgia in 1941. He attended Dartmouth College and enlisted in the US Army. He later entered Harvard University and then entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Germany, Nigeria, Romania, the USSR, and Israel. He was later appointed Ambassador to Uzbekistan. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: In '81 you went where?

CLARKE: I went into Russian language training. My assignment was basically broken in EUR/RPE so that I could become economic counselor in Moscow. They released me, recognizing that was a career move for me. It was a senior officer position, and I was an FSO-1. It was an exciting assignment for which my experience in other aspects of East West trade prepared me.

Q: You took Russian from '81 to ...

CLARKE: ...'82.

Q: How did that go? How old were you at the time?

CLARKE: I was 40 and it was a very rough experience for me. Obviously. I was in a fairly large

class. There was a new linguist in charge and two schools of thought on teaching Russian. The lady that was the favorite, even though she was new, was close to the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) tradition of simply repeating patterns and then varying the pattern until you subconsciously developed a sense of how to speak correctly. I believe that is the right way for most people to learn Russian because the grammar is too complex to analyze. However, there were a number of teachers who were accustomed to dealing with Russian on an analytical basis as well and being 40 years old, I was rather eager to figure out why I was saying these crazy things that I was saying. I longed for an analytical framework and hated the endless repetition at which I was not nearly so good as the younger people were. So that was a hard year. At the end I was very disappointed that I didn't really feel I had a professional command of the language. Grades apart, I just didn't feel comfortable. Not to the degree I had felt in German and Romanian in earlier periods.

So when I got to Moscow, the first thing I did was make sure I got into the language program again. I basically had a routine in the mornings that included listening to the radio on the way to work and trying to decipher a significant fraction of at least one newspaper every morning before starting anything else. I worked on Russian throughout the three year tour, though obviously not as intensively as in FSI. In the end I did reach a professional level in Russian.

Q: You went to Moscow from '82 to '85, correct?

CLARKE: Right. Right.

Q: Before you went to Moscow, how did we see our relations with the Soviets and where the Soviet Union was going?

CLARKE: We were in a particularly nasty phase of the Cold War. There had been a warming trend in the mid '70s, but everything had fallen apart by the end of the Carter administration as far as the détente was concerned. We were back in the business of imposing new sanctions as a result of Afghanistan, or for other reasons. The Reagan administration was sending strong signals that basically, communism needed to be defeated. So it was not the ideal time for me, going to Moscow.

Q: Had you been in the Soviet Union at all before?

CLARKE: On TDY. That was an awkward aspect of the transfer, because over the years the Office of Soviet Affairs, working with the embassy in Moscow, had tried to build up a cadre so they could recruit the section chiefs from officers who had already served a tour there.

Since this was a period soon after we had taken the commercial function away from the economic cone, there was some sense in Washington, to which I subscribe, that economic section chiefs should be experienced economic officers. I was interested. There's no question that I came to do this job. But when I got there, I discovered to my amazement that no one in my section had ever done economic reporting before.

Only two of the officers were actually as new as I was, but the other officer was coming in from

the consular section and was an untenured junior officer as well. So I had to train the whole team when I got there.

Q: This all struck me as being a real problem with our reporting on the Soviet Union. We got quite good at the political reporting. The economic reporting was different and the crucial thing that brought down the Soviet empire was how the economy didn't work. How were we looking at the Soviet economy in '82?

CLARKE: We had a host of people in the intelligence community, analyzing not only anything that came from the embassy, but anything that came from anywhere about the Soviet economy. It was widely recognized that the Soviet economy was not productive in most areas and that it basically was not growing. There was a prevailing joke: Khrushchev had predicted back in the '60s that by 1980 the Soviet Union would overtake the United States. But what was actually happening was that Japan was overtaking the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had long since been left behind by the United States, even though the United States growth rates were minimal in those days. So there was no assumption that this was an economic powerhouse. The reason that people did not predict major change was that it seemed to the Soviet leadership that this was an acceptable state of affairs. They were just forgetting about Khrushchev's silly prediction and as long as they were prepared to live with an economy that was basically stagnant, why should it change? They were in charge.

Secondly, there was a feeling that just as it couldn't grow, it was not terribly vulnerable to collapse. This was an economy administered from the top down. Everybody had their orders as to what they were supposed to do and what they were supposed to deliver. The orders were always bigger than they could achieve, so they were constantly missing the targets of the five-year plan or the one-year plan and that was one of the games we played. Which month would we discover, after the beginning of the New Year, that it was already impossible for them to meet the plan for the year. One year we predicted as of January that they couldn't make it, which was I think because the weather was excessively cold. They had insufficient natural gas pressure in their pipes, and they had to shut down whole factories in January. We said, "Okay, they've already lost their margin for making the plan this year."

So anyway, there was no feeling that they could do very well. There was a feeling that because this was a bureaucratic or even military style economy, in any hard time they could make sure that the minimum got delivered. They knew where to cut because they had priorities. One of the places they were not cutting, and one of the ways they were being bled dry on the consumer side was that they were putting all their priority into their military. That process continued unabated during my tour there. It was hard for us to report on their military industrial production because we had no access to that and it was all secret and nobody would talk to us about that. But I trust our analysts, who had better ways of counting these things, that military production was in fact maintained. You could see the results of the military priority everywhere you went. For example, only the military had the right to reject a product. Out in the civilian economy there were a lot of olive-drab colored trucks working. Those were trucks the military had rejected off the assembly line and were therefore shunted off onto the civilian economy where even if they could barely make it off the factory grounds, they were still better than nothing and were taken. So there was a sense that as long as the leadership chose to continue this system, they could keep patching it up,

and it would be able to produce guns if not butter.

Q: How did you find Soviet statistics and information?

CLARKE: That was an interesting part of the job in that Washington was dying to get their hands on the official statistics the day they were published. It was a requirement for my section to see that the official statistics got back there very quickly after they were published. But they had to be taken with some reserve. The fact was we were not able to go out and collect basic statistics on the Soviet Union very easily. We could go to markets and find out what prices were like and what would be available to consumers, but there was no way we could collect industrial or agricultural statistics very well. It's true that USDA estimates of the Soviet grain crop were always closer to the mark than the Soviet official estimates, but they were done differently and they had the advantage of satellite photography. One of the interesting features of my tour there was to find out that, although they joked about it, Soviet officials did in fact put some credibility into what the USDA reported on their crops.

Q: They didn't trust their own statistics, eh?

CLARKE: Right, especially in the case of wheat. I actually accompanied an American wheat expert on a tour of certain wheat lands in the Soviet Union. We'd been denied access to areas where the crop was doing badly, so we got to visit only where the crop was doing fairly well. We were received by a group of people who were also very knowledgeable about wheat. I guess I knew the general principle before I got there, but nevertheless, it was demonstrated to me. They make their estimates before the harvest, based on what's in the field. They have every incentive and no disincentives to exaggerate that. So, for example, I stood in a field with the American and some Canadians, who were competitors for sales - and Soviet officials, and they couldn't agree what was actually growing there. So that's for starters. There was a difference in field information.

Secondly, Soviet losses in harvesting were enormous. They would not let us near their harvesters because they knew that we would be able to see that the harvesters and combines were not very productive, and they lost a lot of grain right there as they were harvesting. During storage and transport and along down the line, losses were also unacceptable by U.S. standards. So even the difference in what we'd think would satisfy their needs and their original estimates was outrageous. Just vast. Wheat is only one example. It happens to be a critical crop for them, but the same things would happen in other crops as well.

During my career in Moscow, Uzbekistan distinguished itself by pulling off what I think is one of the world's most classic frauds. They were reporting six million tons of cotton production per year when they were actually only producing four. Considering the fact that cotton is an industrial crop that you can't eat on the side, where was the other 50 percent of the bale? Where did it all go? The answer was, there was fraud at every stage in the collection process and at every farm. There was exaggeration which all compounded together amounted to a 50 percent error in the statistics. It was discovered, however, and led to something of a crisis between Moscow and Uzbekistan in the 1980s. But there simply was no incentive to tell the truth. You could only be hurt by it. You could only lose your bonus or worse yet, be punished or fired. So

what could they do?

Q: How did we view this, with chuckles, seeing that here was our giant enemy unable to do things and maybe we could make some money off it? Or what?

CLARKE: We cared about those cotton estimates, not because we expected to sell a lot of cotton to the Soviet Union but because we are a major cotton exporter ourselves. If they have sufficient, or if they have to import it, that would have a significant impact on world markets. The same is true for wheat and corn and all of those major commodities. So we had an economic interest. But everybody would sit around and ask, "When is this all going to change?" Clearly they are not world competitors economically, and this is not going to get them anywhere. But in a top-down system, that is for the people at the top to decide for themselves. So it was a constant question.

There was something called the Brezhnev Reforms which are now viewed as a joke. We in Moscow at the time also viewed them as a joke. Dusko Doder, who was the Washington Post correspondent in Moscow at that time, did not view them as a joke. He was constantly writing front page articles in the Washington Post about how reform had come to the Soviet Union. That was 1982 to 1985. Each time he'd write them a little different way because a new set of decrees came out, and he would report that reform had come. We knew when a new decree was published that the next day at 6:30 in the morning, our policy makers in Washington would be reading Dusko Doder's absolutely fundamentally incorrect analysis, probably before they left home. Therefore we had a matter of hours to get together a contrary view and ship it off to Washington in the cable traffic, which of course, the senior leaders in Washington would never see, but which at least analysts could use to brief with, if they got questions.

Q: Doder, I know in Yugoslavia, was certainly a little East European hand. What was bringing this about?

CLARKE: Lack of self-esteem in my opinion.

Q: To be ahead of everybody else?

CLARKE: Yes. He had Yugoslav buddies in Moscow who he stayed in close touch with. The Yugoslavs were inclined to boast that they were showing the Soviet Union the way to the future. In the context of today, that is even funnier than it was then. But that was actually their line. They had a somewhat less bureaucratic economic system than the Soviets and therefore were capable of helping the Soviets reform their system. Or so they thought. The more serious people in Moscow, in the think-tanks, considered the Hungarian model a great deal more interesting than the Yugoslav model. And the western model obviously was more appealing to some there than the Hungarian model. That analysis was not what Doder was reporting. He was claiming that these decrees were a sign of something really new. He was insisting that the Washington Post publish them on the front page, which they did.

But I was pleased to discover that after a time, the International Herald Tribune started carrying its economic reporting from the Los Angeles Times reporters and not from Doder. As far as I'm concerned, he's a totally unreliable economic reporter.

Q: This brings up an interesting thing. If you have a reporter working for either the Washington Post, or the New York Times, who's doing this, these accounts are read more by policy makers than the analysts'. This is what they read with their coffee in the morning before they go to the office. It penetrates more deeply into the political system than all the professional reporting combined.

CLARKE: Right. However, I think someone must have immunized our bosses at some stage. We still felt under the gun to be in competition with him, which we thought was unreasonable because we had analyzed the situation the same way over and over again. Nevertheless there was no sign, at least from State or the White House or our colleagues in the intelligence community that they perceived real reform was going on. In fact, it was contrary to the Reagan Administration view that the Soviet Union was hopeless.

Q: Look at the agricultural situation. We have an agricultural attaché (this is an aside), who seems always to be an extremely competent person. They are a delight to have in an embassy. Where did they see the failure? Was it the system? Was it the geography? Or was it something innate in the Russian work ethic? Or what was it that caused such a disaster in agriculture?

CLARKE: We considered it the system. It is true that most of the Soviet Union was at higher levels of latitude and was more northern than the United States but not more northern than Canada, and we could see what the Canadians could produce in the same climate. It was systemic because if the work ethic was bad, in our typically American analysis, if the work ethic is bad, it's probably because the system doesn't provide the right incentives. Certainly it's true if you work on a farm in which there are 5,000 farmers, it's pretty hard to believe that if you get up in the morning and go do your job or you call in sick, it will make any difference in whether you get your bonus at the end of the year. Even if you get your bonus, it's not going to change your life. So there was just no way to make the collective farm system productive. Then again, they did have technological problems. But if they had a harvester that could really harvest, they would have saved themselves a significant fraction of their wheat crop. They could have bought harvesters from us, but that would have been too embarrassing.

Q: Were you there during the issue of the gas pipeline?

CLARKE: I believe I'm the major victim of the gas pipeline.

Q: Could you explain what the problem was?

CLARKE: Yes. A few weeks before I was due to arrive in Moscow, the United States decided to impose sanctions against those western countries which were supplying equipment or services for the gas pipeline from the northern part of the Soviet Union to Western Europe that was then under construction. In my view, this was probably one of the stupidest foreign policy decisions ever made in the economic field, certainly in terms of accomplishing anything. I believe it contributed to Secretary Hague's decision to resign within a few days after that decision was taken. If it hadn't been for George Schultz coming in and turning it around, it could have been a disaster for NATO. We imposed those sanctions on our allies. The most vociferous response

came from the British who pointed out how this was interfering in their affairs and that it was extraterritorial sanctions and refused to cooperate as did all the others who were supplying equipment for the pipeline. And there were American companies indirectly related to these European companies. The decision was taken without knowing what the hell we were doing.

Q: This was a political decision.

CLARKE: A political decision. It was something that Richard Pearle, perhaps Richard Pipes, and other people had brought with them to the White House or the Reagan Administration as something they wanted to do. They were dissatisfied that in the Carter administration, we had let the Europeans go ahead with the idea of the pipeline. I don't know if we'd ever actually formally endorsed it, but it had been studied in NATO. The "hardliners" were determined to find some way to stop this pipeline. To my mind, I don't believe a single days work on the pipeline was ever interfered with. This was the most ineffective decision imaginable.

The effect on me was, nobody in Moscow would talk to me except our allies, and you can imagine what they had to say. I couldn't get appointments with anybody. The general reaction was we were conducting economic warfare against the Soviet Union. The pipeline was a high priority project, one in which they were engaged with countless international firms. Therefore I was a representative of the economic enemy.

This was not good for my work on my Russian either, except that maybe I had more time to study on my own. I certainly didn't have enough opportunity to use it in meetings. I did have some meetings but too often I tended to be shunted off onto KGB types rather than real economic interlocutors.

Q: During your time, was it seen that this was going to be a viable source of power for Western Europe? Did it make sense?

CLARKE: The Reagan administration's argument was that Western Europe would become dependent on this power source. So obviously even we acknowledged that this was useful to Western Europe because if you were going to become dependent on it, it must be helpful.

When I had served in Munich many, many years before, the government of Bavaria favored buying gas from the East because Bavaria was disadvantaged vis-à-vis Northern Germany which got gas from the North Sea and from Holland which I think was an exporter into Northern Germany. So the idea went back 10 or 15 years before, when the first pipelines were done. The difference was only that this pipeline was so big in diameter, it could pump in so much gas, that the argument of dependency, which was silly with the early pipelines, was real. But the policy was stupid anyway. The pipeline was being built. No reasonable foreign policy analysis would have concluded that our sanctions would actually take effect.

I remember talking with a guy from Business Week in New York on my way to Moscow. It was a hard conversation for me because I knew what the Reagan administration's policy was and I was sure it was going to fail, but I was also concerned about being quoted since that's one way to make it fail. I would not say so, but I even hoped it would fail and quickly, before it was a

complete disaster. That ruined our alliance, which we needed for much more serious matters. The Business Week guy was really surprised that the sanction wasn't somehow already precooked and it was a really a disaster. Within a few months, a fig leaf had been invented in NATO to restudy the question and the sanctions were dropped.

We went on to other sanctions of course. We were still imposing Afghanistan sanctions. We had the shoot down of the Korean airliner. We imposed sanctions on Aeroflot because of that which to the best of my knowledge only handicapped official American travelers. But in any case, we did that and shot ourselves in the foot again. But we made a point. We made a public point that we were unhappy with the USSR.

Q: You mentioned the airliner being shot down over the Kamchatka Peninsula. All these things must have really made you very popular there.

CLARKE: Yes. That was a grim thing. I think our sharp reaction was basically all right. They shot down a plane that had belonged to one of our allies. It had a lot of Americans on board. They did so, apparently, by mistake, but they weren't willing to admit it was a mistake. So I think we were right to take them to task. Seymour Hirsch has written a book on this, trying to make it look like the United States was being so evil, not to be more reasonable about the shoot down. I guess he was looking for a controversial position. There is no excuse for shooting down a Boeing 747 commercial airliner, full of people.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet petroleum industry?

CLARKE: That was one of their big success stories. Talk about dependence, they were totally dependent on their oil exports. They were hoping to get more from gas, but really their role in international trade depended upon oil most of all. They had vast quantities. Even when I first came to Moscow, they were in denial that this would ever peak. I'm not sure that all of our CIA predictions, which were public, were totally on target, but the general drift of them was right. A peak was going to come. There were things they could do to mitigate or postpone the peak, but there really wasn't much they could do to prevent it simply because of the geology of the question.

Q: Were we concerned about ecological matters? Looking at the Caspian Sea, oil apparently was all over the ground. They weren't making any effort to reduce wastage. It was misuse of nature.

CLARKE: Right. We viewed those as Soviet problems rather than global problems in those days, it's fair to say. But even though we weren't generally able to go to oil fields, in our travels around the Soviet Union we had no trouble running into environmental disasters. In the case of Baku, it was not a closed city for us. We could visit Baku. I did several times, partly because of our interest in the oil industry. We had sanctions against the oil industry too, trying to keep American companies out of the oil business in the Soviet Union. I never did agree with that. But the scene around Baku is ghastly. That was not news. The question of whether they would reroute the northern Siberian Rivers to flow south into Central Asia was already an issue during the early 80s. It was being discussed. That was one of the few issues actually in which you could

find conflicting public opinion in the Soviet Union. There weren't many such issues but this was one. Russian nationalists would speak up when it looked like something disastrous might happen to Russia in favor of Central Asia, for example, in the case of these rivers. Some environmental protest was sometimes made.

One of the first signs that Andropov might be introducing some reform after Brezhnev's death was in the economic pages of *Izvestiya*. Even though I hadn't been there very long by then, it was my impression that they had eased restrictions on reporting about economic problems, specifically environmental problems. This was the end of 1982. I'd only been there for a few months. It was very interesting that we for once learned of an environmental disaster out of the Soviet press before we knew about it from some other source. This was a major waste chemical spill. I'm trying to remember now. It was on the Dneister or the Dnieper River. It was a disaster. It ruined the water supply for many, many towns and villages and killed all the fish for a long stretch of the river until it came to a dam where it was somehow contained.

Just the fact that the story was published while it was still news before everybody heard about it on Radio Liberty was an interesting sign. That continued pretty much after Andropov came in. Nothing changed on the front page of *Pravda* or *Izvestiya*. All the political propaganda was in place but if you turned inside, there were certain pages – I forget exactly which pages, but I think maybe pages two and three – that were usually devoted to economic developments. That went from almost totally phony stuff to some interesting stuff about such things as why they couldn't get spare parts for certain oil fields. Then later it even began to creep into TV. You'd actually see a TV program in which somebody would be saying, "Yes, this is not working right." That was unheard of when I first came.

Q: Were we looking at the relationship of the various elements of the Soviet Union, the ones that broke off – 12 or whatever it was that broke off about 10 years later? Were we looking at the relationship of Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan or Georgia to the Russian side in order to see who was coming out ahead, or were we looking at this as a totality?

CLARKE: Both. There was always somebody in the political section who was specifically responsible for knowing all the beefs of the different segments, not only the republics but the nationalities in general, had with the center and what they were most upset about. Sometimes there were economic questions. The prevailing public opinion among such intellectuals as we got to talk to in Moscow – I mean even informally volunteered – was that actually Russia had been strapping itself for too long by putting more investment into places like central Asia or the Caucasus than at home. There was a net shift of resources going into these other basically undeveloped areas by comparison.

The center of Russia, the heartland of Russia, not necessarily Siberia or the Far East, and not Moscow, as nobody ever claimed that Moscow wasn't getting its share, but the heartland of rural smaller town, small city Russia was being sacrificed. That's a respectable position. I'm not sure we had good enough or sophisticated enough figures to know where all of the Soviet Union's investment was going, at what rates, and at what times. But it was certainly plausible that the huge water projects, the huge mining projects, the huge transportation projects out across the remote parts of the Soviet Union, were not really balanced by similar infrastructure investment in

Russia itself.

Is what you are getting at, how might one have foreseen the breakup of the Soviet Union?

Q: Yes.

CLARKE: There was a book published, which I had read at the time, by a French woman, basically predicting that eventually the Soviet Union would fall apart because of nationalist pressures. I read the book, and later I even met the author – a real scholar. I traveled in many of those areas and concluded that this was a theoretical model that she had there and if the Soviet Union were maybe a little more democratic that might happen, but it wasn't going to happen under the Soviet system; I felt that there were too many people benefiting from the Soviet system and in the positions of power in each of the republics. A footnote to that is, I'm not sure in retrospect that I was entirely wrong. The Central Asians who were in power were in no big hurry to break up the Soviet Union.

Q: No. They screamed and yelled when it came. They didn't want to become separate.

CLARKE: Where the French author was correct was in identifying where the greatest strain was and that was visible actually even in the early '80s. Mainly that the Baltics were the worse case in terms of dissatisfaction and the Caucasus next. I don't think we even had a handle on what Ukraine would do. It was pretty clear that the Baltics were seriously disaffected, and maybe some parts of the Caucasus. The latter was not as strong a case as the Baltics.

Q: Were we seeing an underground economy? I served slightly earlier in Italy. Italy's announced national product and its underground, or gray economy, probably exceeds what they report for tax purposes. Did you see any of that going on?

CLARKE: Of course. Actually we used to draw the analogy with Italy all the time. I guess the question was posed when someone announced that the Italian economy was going to collapse. The answer was, "It can't collapse because it's already sunk. It's just sitting on a sandbar. There's no further way down it can go." And I think that's about right for the Soviet economy at that time. It wasn't floating on anything.

The underground economy was obviously critical to the performance of the main part of the economy. But when it reached the extreme of the Uzbek example I gave, about six million tons of non-existent cotton reported, clearly you couldn't have a planned economy where one third of your cotton supply didn't exist. Input-output tables had to be a little closer than that. So yes. There were both functional and dysfunctional elements of the underground or unreported aspects of the economy.

There were people thriving by supplying goods or services that the state could not supply, that certainly existed. The Caucasus and central Asia were already known as being more adept at doing that than the Europeans. There was a lot of discussion about that. But again, it was a system that could continue as long as the leaders were satisfied. I think it is fair to say that Gorbachev, who understood the problem better than all the old people who were in the Polit

Bureau (he was the best educated Polit Bureau member when he was appointed), was aware of all these problems, and he had the audacity to think that change could bring about better performance. Gorbachev didn't come to power until about three or four months before I left.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet leadership, Andropov, Chernenko and all, and before that Brezhnev?

CLARKE: We buried three of them while I was in Moscow. Brezhnev was already losing it by Aug of '82 when I arrived. We were all sitting around watching him, live, on TV making a speech in Baku and it was pretty pathetic. He lost his paperwork, or his paperwork got confused. Maybe that was not his fault. Nevertheless, he couldn't cope.

The camera had been focusing painfully on a struggling old man trying to collect himself in front of all the party leaders of Azerbaijan. Finally the camera mercifully turned away but you could hear his voice with his inimitable bad accent saying, "Comrades, I'm not guilty." That was, I think, the poor man crying out for help. I got to go to the October Revolution parade in November, because there were a thousand other things we were boycotting so that our ambassador couldn't go and they had to send a counselor and I got to go. It was snowing. It was miserable. Brezhnev was there and stood through the whole parade which goes on forever and ever and ever. Then he went to the reception, which our ambassador was allowed to go to.

Q: Who was your ambassador?

CLARKE: Arthur Hartman, who had been Assistant Secretary for Europe and Ambassador to France, really an outstanding American diplomat. He called a meeting not long after the reception and told us that Brezhnev was going to die and we'd better start figuring out what we were going to do, in our reporting, in our analysis, and about the funeral. He wasn't quite that blunt, but his sense was that the man was a goner, that he'd just done something that a man in his condition should not have done. Sure enough, he did die within a few days. We were really busy then coping with the end of an era. You could argue that the era didn't really end until Gorbachev came in, but the process of leadership turnover certainly began with Brezhnev's dying. Some say that it began actually when Suslov died a few years before, but that's an even more complex argument. Suslov would have been the heir apparent if he had been there.

Q: He was the ideological type?

CLARKE: Right. And it would have been a very different outcome from Andropov, who was KGB but somewhat more sophisticated, and who took over. Immediately he got sick and was missing from the public scene for most of the year that he lived after he took office. Economic reform, the phony reforms of the Brezhnev period, continued, but nothing real happened. So other than the thing I already mentioned about loosening up on the economic press, there wasn't much change there.

But some very important things were happening outside the economic field. They were very decisive things for both the end of the Cold War and I believe the change in leadership as well, which came about when we were able to deploy Pershing and cruise missiles in western Europe.

Q: It was close to the SS20 that the Soviets had?

CLARKE: Right. Because Foreign Minister Gromyko had a major campaign in Western Europe to try to stop deployment and he went so far as displaying the Soviet Union's dislike for German Chancellor Kohl and his reelection. Both efforts at Soviet foreign policy in Western Europe failed. NATO held to its decision. The deployments went ahead despite protests and everything. Kohl got reelected and some were saying it was partly because a few people said, "Well, if the Russians are against it, maybe we need this guy."

I believe Gorbachev, already sitting on the Polit Bureau and listening to these old men arguing about this, must have begun thinking about what he would do if he took over. Nobody was surprised by Gorbachev's prominence because he was a whole generation younger than the rest of them and he was better educated than any of them. He was what passed for the number one rising star of the Soviet Union. People were a little surprised that he didn't automatically become general secretary, but I think that's a failure of Kremlinology. They had to go through this business of the ranking leader succeeding.

Q: Was Chernenko viewed as a short term, interim replacement?

CLARKE: My interpretation comes to a certain extent from Russian sources who were questionable, but nevertheless plausible to me. It is that in exchange for a quick agreement that Andropov would become the general secretary, it was also at least tacitly but probably explicitly agreed, that Chernenko, the representative of the old guard, would be next in line. Every sign after Andropov's appointment, I felt, fitted that model. Then the other side had its day when Andropov died and it was Chernenko's turn. The more progressive members said the next guy is our guy, Gorbachev. So I believe this business of figuring who is number two helps explain why there was no great crisis in any of these turnovers. The Polit Bureau handled this transition, not brilliantly, but with tremendous stability.

Q: Did you sense during this '82-to-'85 period any change in the Reagan administration attitude towards the Soviet Union or was it fairly constant?

CLARKE: I think in the limited area where I was working, economic and commercial relations, there was some change. I think there was no change in the ideology of the Reagan administration. But on pragmatic issues, we began to see that after you got through pounding the table, you still had to decide what you were going to do. Negative things didn't seem to have any impact on the Soviet Union. So by the time I left, which was of course still during the Reagan administration, we were working back into a more official economic relationship. We were having meetings discussing the whole range of issues. The Commerce Department Secretary came out to chair such a meeting. We were loosening up the diplomatic isolation on the economic side. There was pretty much the end of our agricultural trade controls, which were intensely unpopular in the United States and which cost us permanently a fraction of the Soviet market. That policy was pretty much being wound down. Even self-inflicted wounds have to be healed eventually.

That policy was both sufficiently symbolic and practically important to the Soviets so they were willing to move forward, even despite this elderly leadership. We had a septuagenarian in the White House, and we had a whole row of septuagenarians in the Polit Bureau. But both sides began gradually to adjust to a more practical relationship. Most important, Gromyko failed in the arms control area and in the military area. It was a big relief to our military guys. They got to deploy the weapons they felt they needed. I think it was more important in terms of attitudes within the Soviet Union. They were not going to bring us down by just outsmarting us. That was not going to happen.

By that time, the American economy was starting to recover from the ghastly inflation and unemployment that we'd had at the beginning of the 80s. That may have had a demonstration effect on them too. This was a cyclical decline in the American economy, and there was no structural decline going on.

Q: Being on the economic side, did you help the intelligence community with satellites and looking at serial numbers and that whole thing?

CLARKE: They wish. They wish.

Q: They wish. Were you getting much information from the CIA and other intelligence agencies to make your judgments?

CLARKE: For most of the three years I was there, the bilateral relationship was in such bad shape that I had actually a lot of time to devote to analysis and studying the Soviet economy. Of course we looked with great interest at the finished work. The day to day operational stuff we didn't even see. But this group of analysts in the states would periodically produce important analytical documents on the Soviet Union, and we would always read them, not only to see what they came up with, but whether they agreed with us or whether they'd borrowed anything that we'd ever written.

I know there's a great deal of controversy still about the CIA cooking the books on some issues, but my humble opinion is they were doing a pretty good job with what they had at the time. They were not rosy about the Soviet economy. Nobody was. We also saw the academic economists a lot. Since we had no formal exchange program going with the Soviet Union at the time, little informal exchanges and non-governmental relationships were much of what actually was taking place. Leading American experts on the Soviet Union would come to Moscow, and we had a good exchange with them. We would tell them what we could tell them from sitting there and being there all the time, and they would tell us what they were thinking, based on what they could get and their more scholarly approach. I've had very few jobs in the Foreign Service where such a high percentage of the time was actually devoted to analysis. Maybe the only time I had more was when I was in INR..

Q: Arthur Hartman was your ambassador during this time?

CLARKE: Right. He was there before I got there and he was there after I left.

Q: How did he operate? What was your impression of him?

CLARKE: He had a tendency, despite the fact he always seemed very imperious in his posture, he always had this manner of saying, “Gee, I’m very dependent on you guys because I really don’t consider myself a Soviet expert and I really expect you guys to give me the best you can to bring me along.” This touch of humility, I felt, was a wonderful way of encouraging the staff to produce their best work, but it was also a bit misplaced. We had as our ambassador somebody who’d been ambassador to the EC, I believe, and to France – one of the very few professional diplomats to serve four years in Paris as ambassador – assistant secretary for European Affairs, an economic officer with great political savvy. We haven’t often done better than that, even though he didn’t claim to be a Soviet expert. I don’t think ambassadors necessarily need to be geographic experts. The one disadvantage he had was, although he worked on Russian, he never really mastered it. We of course have had other ambassadors there who did not speak Russian.

Q: Were you there during the Sergeant Lonetree business and the security problem?

CLARKE: Thank heaven I was gone when all that broke. I am pretty familiar with the situation that prevailed in Moscow before I left and therefore, I have some views on it. Even though I don’t ever remember meeting Lonetree, he might actually have been there as one of the watchstanders.

Q: Could you talk about the security situation?

CLARKE: I think, first of all, the effort to blame Art Hartman for failures in security in Moscow is totally misplaced. My impression is that he was careful about security in his own dealings with the rest of the staff. There are two places to look when the marines are not doing their job right. One is, who is in charge of the marines? And who is in charge of post security? If those two people are fighting with each other, you’ve got a management problem that somebody needs to correct. The agreement between the Marine Corps and the State Department on management of marine security guards is flawed. I found this out the hard way as DCM in Bucharest. But it can be made to work if you have good people.

I don’t know who exactly is to blame for what happened in Moscow because I wasn’t there and I have only all the horrendous amount of newspaper articles that I did manage to read. But clearly there was a collapse in discipline among the marines. If you have marines violating the no-fraternization rule, then you have lost discipline. If you have big parties and lots of alleged intercourse with the wives of the mission and all this kind of stuff, you’ve lost control of the Marine Corps at your post. It’s not the job of the ambassador to maintain the day-to-day discipline of the marines at post. It’s, first of all, the marines’ job and if they fail, it’s the post security officer’s responsibility to do something about it.

Q: How did you find the KGB? How was this when you went on trips?

CLARKE: We could spend the next several hours because I was there during the period in which the KGB was not allowed to harm us physically but almost anything else was okay.

Q: Could you talk a little about that?

CLARKE: I would say there were two levels of interaction with the KGB. On the Moscow level, there was the simple fact that some of the people that we met who were ostensibly members of the USA-Canada Institute or some other official organization turned out not to know a whole lot about that organization but seemed to know a whole lot about the American diplomats. So you had this question of a tainting of your professional dialogue, in which you had to recognize that the guy you were dealing with was probably interested in you for reasons other than the subject you were discussing.

The other element was when you traveled. The KGB had this impression that this was the opportunity to seduce American diplomats and they had to give it their best go even if they had failed before. As you would come into each area, there would from time to time be attempts literally to seduce you with women or to get you drunk or do something to build your file. This poor KGB leader out in this corner of the empire could report back to Moscow he fulfilled the plan and had run an operation against a visiting American diplomat. We traveled in pairs. Your pair didn't necessarily have to be a Foreign Service Officer. It could be a wife or it could be another western diplomat but because of this constant intrusive practice, we were not generally allowed to travel alone. In some situations that was very comforting. If something was becoming really rather hard to control, you at least had one other pair of eyes there to see what was going on.

Q: Could you give an example or two?

CLARKE: Okay. Tirnopol, Ukraine. I was visiting there together with a young officer from the political section, junior to me but more experienced because he had been stationed longer in Moscow. This was my first year in Moscow, and it was probably his last.

Q: This obviously was before the Chernobyl nuclear thing went up?

CLARKE: That didn't happen during my tour in Moscow. That happened when I was in Bucharest. That's another story for another day. We were visiting and after – we were in a snowstorm – after we sorted ourselves out, we wound up in the restaurant of the one hotel we could stay in. We were sitting at a table, and there were two young Ukrainians there at the next table, and somehow we got into a conversation with them in Russian. Suddenly two women came up - one attractive and one not - and bumped these guys, basically telling them, "Get out of here." Then they started to put the make on us, suggesting we get together the next night some place and so on. It was done sufficiently crudely that we were of course fully aware that this was not their hormones at work. Much as we'd like to think that they might enjoy that, we didn't believe that was why they were there. So we tried to avoid them. We didn't tell them what our plans were the next day. We deliberately didn't tell them.

We found another restaurant through Intourist so we wouldn't be subjected to this a second night and got a cab. That also had to be arranged through Intourist because Tirnopol is kind of a crummy place and we were enjoying what was indeed a better meal at this restaurant. We were almost the only guests when guess who shows up? Same two girls, who then arranged to ride

back with us to our hotel, stranded away from town and the more attractive one invited us to her flat. Any woman who has a flat of her own – a single woman who has a flat of her own either it's not her flat - who's flat is it? Or she's a full time worker for the KGB. She had some interest in living abroad. We asked her about her husband. She had no husband, but she did have a boyfriend. He was off in Poland and so she wasn't worried about him and so forth and so on. This is just a typical but sufficiently blatant example of how they worked.

Q: Did you see a difference between how things were in Moscow and when you got out in the country?

CLARKE: Yes. Generally speaking in Moscow, there was a sense of keeping track of the diplomats mainly by checking them in and out of their homes. We all had to live in certain places, and there were KGB guards in front of those who were observed from time to time to be taking notes on who was coming and going. They were probably smart enough to be able to recognize us about the third time we passed. So they were able to play a zone defense, if you will, in Moscow.

But out in the countryside, a zone defense would have been too manpower intensive so they had to go more one-on-one. They would actually track you according to your itinerary. But since your itinerary had to be approved in advance to get travel permission, they had it. They knew where you were going to be staying. They knew what appointments you were seeking. They knew who you were. They had the files. It was a piece of cake.

That being said, we still had conversations with people that maybe later got interviewed by the KGB but who were really willing to talk to us and who were not afraid to do so. But in Moscow, people were more likely to be afraid of the follow-up interview.

Q: You were a new boy on the block in the Soviet Union. Could you comment on your impression of the Soviet specialist core as it had developed because this is fairly far into the period. It started with George Kennan and Chip Bohlen. But by the time you got there, it sounds like there was a certain dissipation or it kind of wore out?

CLARKE: I don't know what happened to the economic function. It may have been that the economic function just never got started in this cadre. So this was mainly a political officer question. The system was that they tried to recruit the best they could get in political officers and put them to work in the consular section after they had their Russian, so that they could practice their Russian every day, and then would rotate them from the consular section into some other section – political or economic section. And then they would hope they could sign these guys, or women, up for later tours either at some sort of mid-career level if possible or have them come back as a section chief. It was expected that the DCM would be an old Soviet hand at least.

Q: Who was the DCM when you were there?

CLARKE: We started out with... I can't say his name. I can see his face; later ambassador in Belgrade.

Q: Zimmerman?

CLARKE: Zimmerman.

Q: Warren Zimmerman.

CLARKE: Warren Zimmerman. And then his successor was Kurt Kamman who was political counselor or political minister/counselor when I was economic counselor the first couple of years. Then he took over in my third year as DCM. He went on to be ambassador several times in Latin America. So I don't know what happened on the economic side. It didn't work as well. That was the expected pattern. I think it produced some very good people. No doubt about that.

I should say what they did not welcome was really long tours. They felt three years was the absolute max and two years was enough for a junior officer. That was because of the intensity of the fishbowl quality of living at the embassy there and the basically negative relationships, the isolation, the security concerns and so on. So they didn't push for long tours. What they preferred was for people to go off and serve some place else and then come back. I think it worked pretty well. I certainly never would have been economic counselor there if it had worked perfectly because they would have had somebody and indeed the guy who they did propose as economic counselor was Mike Joyce who was doing a fine job as the head of the science section. The trouble was, that was a boring job because we had wiped out most of our scientific exchanges through various kinds of sanctions. Mike was later DCM when Jack Matlock was ambassador. So I sincerely hope my getting that job didn't hurt him. It certainly made a big difference in being later considered for not only Bucharest but Tashkent for me.

Q: Was the radiation still going on during that time?

CLARKE: That was an irritating thing. I don't know exactly what's been made public about it. While we were there, they turned on the microwave again, and my understanding is that Art Hartman simply told them, "Either you turn off the microwave or I'll shut down my embassy."

I don't know whether he was authorized to do that from Washington or not. Probably not. They turned off the microwave. That was the end of the discussion. We were all very pleased with that outcome.

Q: You left there in '85. What was your impression of whither the Soviet Union and its relationship with the United States?

CLARKE: That was really fascinating. I was tired because it had been three hard years. But I felt I was leaving at the wrong time. We were all interested in what Gorbachev was going to do. I think I can speak in the collective on this because it was more or less an understanding within the embassy. We thought that because Gorbachev had studied agriculture – he'd been first secretary in Stavropol and had experimented with economic enterprises and what not, on a reformist basis there, and therefore knew something about agriculture – he had to know what was going on. We assumed that he would leave the international and military situation that he received more or less in place. Let the old guard continue to have the assurance of Soviet might, but meanwhile turn

his attention to the domestic economy outside the military sector and try to reform it. That was the theory but it was not based on a conversation with Gorbachev and indeed if Gorbachev had signaled what he wanted to do before he became general secretary, it's my view he never would have become general secretary. So we didn't discover it either. His fellow politburo bureau members didn't know what he was going to do. But I knew that all our predictions were off before I got home from Moscow.

I traveled east from Moscow and spent a few days traveling in China with my family. When we got to Honolulu, I picked up a newspaper and found that he'd appointed Shevardnadze as foreign minister and Gromyko was going to become president. I immediately knew this was way off the scale of anything we'd predicted while I was there. Although Gromyko was said to have supported this move and there was still the lingering possibility that somehow as president he could still run the Polit Bureau, he would still be in charge of a lot of things in foreign policy. We now know that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, as you might expect, knew each other from before and there was a whole new agenda in foreign relations going on. He appointed, maybe before I left, and this was a little puzzling to us, Likachev to be in charge of agriculture. He was widely understood to be a conservative hard liner, which seemed to suggest that his first moves were not going to be in agriculture. So when Perestroika came, it was not a particularly agriculturally oriented move.

But I was sure there was going to be big changes in foreign policy. I remember visiting in California on home leave and being invited to give a little talk to my father-in-law's service club in town. For what it was worth, I predicted that there would be a fairly significant change in foreign affairs. I wasn't exactly sure what it was, but probably it would involve a new relationship between the U.S. and USSR.

Q: What about family life, your wife and children and all that during this time? How did that go?

CLARKE: Moscow is not the greatest place, but my children were young. They were in the Anglo-American school, which was not a bad school. Many international schools, even in remote places, can function effectively. This one was certainly big enough for grammar school. It had enough classes so that there really were enough kids to make a very viable grammar school, not only for kids of American diplomats but all of the foreign community. There were no Russians in the school. It was possible to send your children to a Russian school and Greg Guroff sent his kids to a Russian high school, but I believe they had a little more of a break on language than most kids would have had because of Greg's excellent Russian. They survived pretty well. They were treated well at the Russian school. It was a particular school that had some foreigners, not just any school.

But certainly there was a social life within the foreign community and to a lesser extent some contact with Muscovites, limited, not very rewarding, but for those of us who were basically dealing with communist countries, it was not totally impossible. It was frustrating. You couldn't get people to come to your home, and when you finally got somebody who would come, it turned out to be another KGB guy. But you still had some interaction that was useful, and they weren't all KGB. There were those, especially in the artistic community, who I'm sure were not KGB. They were creative people who simply were willing to put up with the interviews that they

had to go through afterwards. At least that's my interpretation. They never said they were being interviewed afterward. I just assumed these were folks who were given a little more leeway and who of course had no access to any privileged information. So in that sense they were not a risk to the Soviet system.

I did take my family with me on some of my trips in the Soviet Union. We were able to mix tourism and official calls. That was important because a lot of times we would arrange meetings and they would just not happen when we got where we were going. So we had to do something and at least we could see the sights. Before we left, a group of the wives actually went on a trip by themselves to central Asia and had a good time. But the local officials couldn't figure that one out. They never figured that one out. I guess by the time they left maybe they understood they just wanted to see more parts of central Asia and they were willing to pay and they went. The husbands were busy with visiting delegations and couldn't travel.

MICHAEL A. BOORSTEIN
Soviet Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1981-1983)

Mr. Boorstein was born in Washington, DC and was raised in that area. He was educated at Beloit College, the University of Colorado, Harvard University and the University of Turku in Finland. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, Mr. Boorstein specialized in administration and personnel, serving in Palermo, Rome, Ottawa, Warsaw Curacao, Moscow and Beijing. In addition, Mr. Boorstein played a major role in the planning and construction of US embassies in Moscow and Beijing and in the renovation of consulates and embassies throughout the globe. He spoke six foreign languages. Mr. Boorstein was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

BOORSTEIN: The job I had in the State Department was the first full-time Washington assignment that I had and it was unusual as an administrative officer because I was a desk officer in the Office of Soviet Union affairs. I was attracted to the job because I was ready to try something different and a lot of my administrative colleagues were counseling me against it, saying "you're going to make a mistake, its going to hurt your career, you're going to be out of the mainstream." I said, "thank you for your advice, but I want to do this," and I did and I'm really happy that I did.

Q: You did this from when to when?

BOORSTEIN: August of 1981 to July of 1983, so just about two years. The office director at the time was Tom Simons. The office of Soviet Union affairs was probably the largest country desk directorate in the whole Department of State. We had four divisions. There was the office of bilateral relations. There was the office of multilateral relations. There was the office of economic affairs and the office of science, technology and cultural exchanges and that was the office that I was in. My boss for the first year was Ed Hurwitz who has been retired for quite a

while, but he was Charge' in Kabul towards the end of his career. He was consul general in Leningrad. He was a real Soviet hand. I was probably the second ranking officer and there were two other junior officers.

Q: Did you have a piece of the action?

BOORSTEIN: Yes I was going to say that you have to sort of look at the backdrop of U.S. Soviet relations in the summer of 1981 in late 1979, was it '79?

Q: December.

BOORSTEIN: December of?

Q: '79.

BOORSTEIN: December of '79, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The relations got very chilly. I talked about the closing down of our effort to open up a consulate in Kiev. Among the sanctions that President Carter imposed was that he basically ratcheted down with that order the array of formal bilateral science and technology and cultural agreements between the U.S. and the USSR to barely survival level. We didn't want to abrogate any of those agreements, but we didn't want to use them as a vehicle that would run counter to our effort to show our displeasure across the board to the Soviets' action against Afghanistan. There was a whole array of these agreements that had been developed and signed after the Second World War, primarily in the '50s, the umbrella agreement of science and technology exchanges and under that there were whole other agreements for cooperation in space, health, primarily heart. You know, Michael DeBakey the guy who did the first artificial heart was honorary chairman of the USSR joint commission on heart research. There was an agreement on housing, an agreement on transportation, an agreement on the environment, a whole array of things that were government-to-government agreements and the office that I was in was in charge of monitoring and supporting and backstopping those agreements and the activities that stemmed from them. When they operated in a very robust fashion, they sort of had a life of their own. Constantly delegations were going back and forth for different meetings and discussions and workshops and joint research and whatever. After the invasion of Afghanistan there was a requirement that any time a delegation was proposed either by the U.S. or was invited by the Soviet Union to go over to the USSR or the U.S. counterparts invited a Soviet delegation to come over, it had to have White House approval. I spent most of my tour writing these memos from the Department to the NSC. They were known as Bremer-Clarks because they went from Jerry Bremer who was the executive secretary to Clark who I guess was the national security advisor at the time. I learned a whole new style of drafting. I don't believe any of the proposed trips in either direction were ever turned down, but nonetheless it was a bureaucratic impediment that needed to be done for the sake of showing the Soviet government that they just couldn't take these things for granted. It was a fascinating tour in that I went all over Washington to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation, National Institutes of Health, the Department of Energy, NASA. I had contacts in all of these places that I worked with on a daily basis. One of the more interesting aspects of that assignment was the controversy surrounding a high energy electromagnet that had been loaned to the Soviet Institute of High Energy Physics in

the mid 1970s and that magnet, multi, multi ton thing, probably the size of this room that we're in which is what about eight by sixteen or twenty.

Q: Yes.

BOORSTEIN: Was owned by the Argonne National Labs in Illinois.

Q: A big nuclear lab, yes.

BOORSTEIN: Yes, well, but this was not a nuclear thing. This was basically a way to extract more energy out of burning coal to produce electricity. The initials are MHD. I don't remember what they stood for. It's a physics term, but it's a high-energy kind of thing that will produce energy cleanly and more efficiently. Its never even today gotten to the point I believe of being viable commercially, but nonetheless it was lent and one of the outcries from largely the conservative wing of the Republican party in Congress was to bring the magnet home. You would think that this was silly, but it was a big deal at the time. Towards the end of my tour I was sent to Moscow with one of the scientists from the Argonne National Labs to negotiate the terms by which the magnet would be returned to the United States and it was really bizarre because it was like going to a bazaar in the Third World to negotiate the terms because the director of the Institute of High Energy Physics in Moscow didn't want dollars as compensation to arrange for moving this behemoth thing through the streets of Moscow and out to the airport and whatever. We were going to fly in a C5A.

Q: That's our biggest cargo plane.

BOORSTEIN: That's right. What he wanted in exchange for him facilitating all of this was a whole array of audiovisual equipment, which was to help him with his presentation abilities in the institute. It was a barter kind of a thing. We talked about it and agreed that we would talk some more. Then my tour was over. Well, in August or September of 1983 after I left that assignment, the Soviet Air Force shot down that Korean airline, 747, and then all thoughts of us sending a C5A into Soviet air space was absolutely squelched. I believe to this day 22 years later that magnet is still in Moscow. It may be in mothballs. The technology may have totally surpassed its utility as a research tool, but to my knowledge that magnet never was returned.

I made one other trip back to the Soviet Union after a year on this job. I convinced Tom Simons that the woman I work the most closely with in the Bureau of Oceans Environment and Science, a woman named Sharon Cleary as a civil servant had never been to the Soviet Union and yet she worked closely with all the people across the board in the U.S. government with our visa office, obviously with me on the Soviet desk and would meet the Soviet scientists when they came to the United States. I thought it would really be good for her to have a flavor of actually going to the Soviet Union, going to Moscow and Leningrad and conferring with people in the embassy and Tom Simons agreed and the office director of OES, his name was Thomsen was the last name, he agreed, too.

So, Sharon and I went off on this trip. Sharon was an interesting woman. Her father was a CIA agent who was killed in Vietnam. Like I said, she had never been to the Soviet Union and for

reasons that were never apparent, when she and I got to Moscow she underwent culture shock. This was a very with it kind of young woman who at that point, how old was I, I was 35 and she was about my age and we had a friendly professional relationship. We got there I just noticed visibly that she stopped talking, looked distracted, looked depressed and wasn't eating. We were staying in the same hotel and so we would meet to have a meal and after, I mean we were in Moscow for about five days and then we were going to take the train up to Leningrad and then on to Helsinki and then fly home. Like the second day there we're having dinner in the Ukraine Hotel, one of these big wedding cake buildings that were there. One of seven with similar designs known as a group as "The Seven Sisters. I said, "Sharon, I have to tell you that you're acting strangely, that you're not just yourself. Is anything the matter?" She just looked at me and she said, "I don't want to be here. I don't like this place. I just want to leave." I said, "well, you know, we have work to do here. Are you going to be able to cope with it?" She said, "yes I can, but I'm just not very happy being here." I said, "well, how would you like me to treat you? Should I be concerned about your welfare or should I just basically leave you alone," and she said, "I just want you to leave me alone. If I need anything from you I'll let you know." This went on for another couple of days and then she sort of gradually came out of it. That was the strangest thing to witness in somebody else and I really never had. Later on she said that it just, she just felt totally out of her element and she had traveled abroad before, but somehow the environment there was such that this was the way she reacted.

In Leningrad she had pretty much recovered and we took the overnight train and we dealt a lot with Anne Sigmund. Anne Sigmund at the time was the branch public affairs officer. She was career USIA and she went on later to be public affairs officer in Warsaw. She was ambassador to one of the Stans (former Soviet Republic), I forget which. Then she was the deputy director of the office of the inspector general and she just recently retired.

Q: Do you know where she is?

BOORSTEIN: I don't.

Q: How do you spell that?

BOORSTEIN: S-I-G-M-U-N-D.

Q: S-I-G-M-U-N-D.

BOORSTEIN: Anne was her first name. She was also in my junior officer class. She'd be a good person for you to talk to because she was in the State Department for, maybe she retired two years ago, 33 years. She was a Soviet specialist and came in as a single woman and was told you can't go to the Soviet Union. Ultimately those rules changed. Ultimately those rules changed and she was able to go.

Well, anyway, working on Soviet affairs in Washington during those years was tough because of the sanctions against the Soviet Union.

Q: This is early Reagan, too.

BOORSTEIN: Reagan was elected in.

Q: This was.

BOORSTEIN: In 1980, so it was just within his first year.

Q: It was the evil empire, it was towards the end of the Reagan when things pretty well opened up.

BOORSTEIN: Exactly and it was interesting to be part of and I was still at a fairly junior level, the tussle between the NSC and the State Department over who owned Soviet policy. Ultimately the State Department prevailed as it usually does with a new president and new political appointees, but it took a while until a level of trust was developed between the White House, the NSC and the Department and that the career people were listened to. Rather than take this harsh attitude toward the Soviet Union there was still ultimately a sense of okay, look, we still need to engage with these people. We don't want to isolate them and alienate them too much. We have points to be made and after all it was Jimmy Carter who imposed the sanctions, it wasn't Ronald Reagan, but he certainly supported them and continued that attitude and that was appropriate, but again the nuances ultimately entered into the picture. Of course we were very much courting the beginnings of the changes in Eastern Europe at the time, but pretty much my activities were confined to the Soviet Union.

On the cultural side there was absolutely nothing that went on. It was just totally dead in the water whereas when I was in Moscow the cultural visits, the traveling exhibits I told you about, Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn in The Gin Game the last time that I spoke they came over and did that, but it was very rich. During the time I was on the desk, it was totally dead.

One other little story about that tour. There was a very wealthy Washingtonian, I wish the name would come to me who was the owner of the Madison Hotel and he lived on Massachusetts Avenue, very close to the British Embassy, but on the other side, had a fabulous home filled with wonderful art. He very much liked Russia; he traveled there many times and knew a lot of the Soviet officials. The name may come to me, it may not and he was giving a farewell party to the science counselor at the Soviet Embassy and so the invitation went out to Tom Simons to attend. (His name was Marshall Coyne.) I don't know whether it was for political reasons or Tom had a conflict, he said he wasn't going to go and the invitation trickled down to me and I was told to go to represent the office of Soviet Union affairs. Off I went with my wife to this fantastic home and I remember when I met the Soviet diplomat who I believe was going to be assigned as the Soviet consul general in San Francisco and he greeted me and started to me in rapid fire Russian and we knew that he spoke fluent English. My Russian was good, but I hadn't used it in a while and it was a little bit rusty and I was sort of taken aback and I chatted a little with him and I thought to myself this guy is just testing me. He's just playing games.

The party was like a buffet dinner and it was free seating so my wife and I saw this Russian gentleman and his wife, had no idea who he was and we offered to sit down and introduced ourselves and he introduced himself to me and it was Melor Sturua. Melor Sturua was a Soviet

journalist and he spoke fluent English, didn't play any Russian language games with me and its an interesting story about his name Melor and he was probably born in the late '20s, early '30s. Apparently, it was in vogue in those years to name your children with letters that referred to the Russian revolution. So, Melor, M-E-L-O-R stands for Marx Engels Lenin October Revolution.

Q: Oh God.

BOORSTEIN: It's a fascinating little story and my one cousin the one in Leningrad who was the Ph.D. chemical engineer, her name is Ninel. Ninel is Lenin spelled backwards, we called her Nyela, but nonetheless that is another derivative of that kind of name. Melor Sturua lived in the same apartment house as my mother in Chevy Chase, Maryland and he, all he wanted to talk about was fine wine, what were the best restaurants in Washington and he was dressed to kill. He had great Saville Row suit and very polished, you know, Soviet journalist. That was the dinner and it was very memorable. I'm telling you this because there's a follow-on story. Shortly after that dinner, within a week, Andrew Nagorski who was the Newsweek correspondent in Moscow was out doing something. I don't know whether he was in the Baltics and I don't know exactly what, but he was expelled. So, we retaliated. Who did we retaliate against? Melor Sturua and he was told to leave the United States. Tom Simons in a staff meeting turned to me and said, "Mike, I bet you they're writing up some extra things about you in the Soviet Embassy because you know, they're going to warn your people if you have dinner with Mike Boorstein and the next thing you'll be asked to leave the country." Anyway, Melor Sturua came back many years later after the fall of communism and was a visiting professor at the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota. The other thing that happened at that party it goes to show you the impact of our policy on the families, diplomats and their families and I talk about it when I talked about the closed and the opened areas in the Soviet Union and how we had the same sort of map in the United States, the Soviet Embassy had put in a request as an exception to allow one of their cruise ships to pay a call at the Port of Baltimore which was a closed area because what they wanted to do was to have the Soviet diplomats that were finishing their tour of duties and their families get on that ship and sail back to the Soviet Union. I handled that request as part of what I was; my office got involved in that a bit. They had just gotten the favorable word. Here I was the representative of the State Department there and people were thanking me profusely for this effort and of course it wasn't my decision, but then of course there was a follow by the expulsion of Melor Sturua. It was a very interesting tour of duty and like I said I took two trips to the Soviet Union during that time. The one with the magnet was a fascinating trip.

ROBERT E. MCCARTHY
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Moscow (1981-1983)

Mr. McCarthy was born in Canada and raised in New York City. He was educated at Fordham University, City College of New York and American University. After service in the US Army and studies in Paris, he joined the Foreign Service in 1973. His assignment in the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs was the beginning of a career dealing primarily with Public and Cultural

Affairs with USIA. His overseas assignments as Public Affairs and/or Cultural Affairs Officer were in Belgrade, Moscow (twice), Montenegro, Leningrad and Budapest. His Washington assignments also concerned USIA programs. Mr. McCarthy served as Diplomat in Residence at Georgetown University 1995-1996. Mr. McCarthy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: [laughter] Okay, 1981. Have we gone into how you got that job?

McCARTHY: Yes, we did. I had just finished an interview with the current PAO, I believe, and with my Yugoslavia PAO. We had known each other, so it was more or less an audition interview. Because I hadn't been there before, it was considered a tough assignment. At that time, checking off the Moscow box was one of the way stations in the Foreign Service, as you know.

Q: Yes. So you were there from when to when?

McCARTHY: I was there from 1981 to '83 in Moscow, and '83-'84 in Leningrad.

Q: What was the status would you say of the Soviet-American relations in 1981?

McCARTHY: Very tense. The Soviets had gone into Afghanistan in December of 1979. This was the time NATO was preparing to put cruise missiles and Pershing intermediate range nuclear missiles into Europe to counter the Soviet SS-20s. And a couple of years later there was the KAL airliner shootdown over Kamchatka. So it was a tense time. As far as our day-to-day activities, that is the activities of USIA were concerned, the cultural exchange agreement, which governed U.S.-USSR exchanges had lapsed because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. We did not want to renew those negotiations and accord the Soviets the respect and additional status that that would have meant. That put a crimp in a lot of what we did. Up until that time, we had sent large exhibits to the Soviet Union. They had Russian-speaking guides and reached otherwise inaccessible (except for short-wave broadcasts) areas of the Soviet Union. Exhibits would open up for six weeks or so. They would show an aspect of American life, and then the guides would answer questions about everything American. It was a way to get our message out. We had major performing arts groups coming through: Alvin Ailey, the Chicago Symphony, etc. They would play to packed houses; All of these activities gave the lie to the Soviet caricature of American society that was constantly portrayed in the Soviet media.

In 1981 those activities were not possible, because they required Soviet cooperation to book those groups into halls, etc. So what we tried to do was continue to get our message out, but use other means. The ambassador at that time, Ambassador Hartman, made Spaso House, the ambassador's residence, available as an ersatz cultural center. And we would do events there, nonstop. The ambassador just opened his residence completely. There was a special fund, private donations maintained by the State Department that was used to defray some of the costs. Large groups and small groups performed at Spaso. We would have invitations sent out to the elite, the creative intelligentsia. Sometimes people with political clout would come too, although they generally tried to boycott those events at that particular time.

Q: When did you arrive there in '81?

McCARTHY: I arrived at the end of the summer.

Q: What was the lean, you might say from the office or the American staff of the embassy of this new Ronald Reagan administration. It must have been viewed with a certain amount of trepidation, because he had been an outspoken anti-Communist, and very much to the right. What was the feeling?

McCARTHY: Among the staff... well now you're asking me to go back more than 20 years now and try to remember those atmospherics. Those feelings didn't leap out at me. I can say that.

Q: Well, that's an answer.

McCARTHY: But there's something else, too, I think. To a certain extent, we take on the coloration of the countries we're in. And I remember somebody came to talk to us about some State Department internal policy. They said when they went to Turkey, everybody there was yelling and asking them questions, like "young Turks." And when they went to Moscow, people sat and absorbed it. The only thing they didn't do was rhythmic applause. [laughter] That's going way too far as an explanation for lack of trepidation, but there was just a little bit of that. Remember also, when you were in the USSR, it was very clear what you were up against. It was very clear what the nature of that society was. Nobody had any doubts. A phrase like "evil empire," I don't think, would have registered particularly strongly with the staff of Embassy Moscow, the way it would in Western Europe or elsewhere. It was true, though, one might have picked other words. I don't recall it as a big issue; let me put it that way.

Q: Okay. You mentioned the, what was the term used, "creative intelligentsia?"

McCARTHY: Right.

Q: I take it there's a distinction. You know, in France you talk about the intelligentsia. What did you mean?

McCARTHY: By "creative intelligentsia" I mean people who are creating works of art in various ways that affect people. So, at that time for example, theater was the most outspoken art form. It was less subject to censorship, less so than the movies or television, which were mass vehicles. So, the playwrights who were writing in the theater would come to events at Spaso House, let's say. And when you went to the theater in those days, there were lines that you knew would be spoken in a particular play and you waited for them. It was understood by everybody that even though this play might concern a dispute between relatives, the particular lines also had political meaning. Sometimes, when a particular line was spoken, you could hear a pin drop in the house. Silence. And then a buzz as people whispered to each other after the line.

Or poetry reading would be another example of that – the creative artist affecting public perceptions. There would be readings where young people would read the works of Akhmatova, Pasternak, Tsvetaeva... poets who were not mainstream... but represented alternatives to

Socialist realism. There would be candles on the wooden tables in front of the readers. There would be young people in the audience. Many people's mouths would be moving as though they were praying, because they knew the poetry by heart. The poetry - and the reading - was a form of spiritual sustenance. So, the creative intelligentsia in the Soviet Union at that time were able to represent people when they could not be represented in other ways. They could not be represented through the political system. It was an alternative way of expressing deeply felt beliefs, of maintaining contact with important Russian traditions.

Q: Was "samizdat" still there?

McCARTHY: Yes...

Q: The publishing of Xeroxing or the equivalent of things that couldn't go through the regular publishing houses?

McCARTHY: Yes, you had some of that. You still had demonstrations that were spontaneous demonstrations that would be broken up immediately by plainclothesmen. The demonstrators would try to distribute material. You had magnitizdat, which is the tape recorder version of samizdat. And songs of people like Vysotsky would circulate, things like that. And there were publishers abroad, who published works that could not be published in the USSR, and one way or another people managed to become familiar with them. Some of that material would be read on the radios. The radios were extremely important. By "radios," I mean Voice of America, and Radio Liberty, which could reach large and remote audiences.

Q: Did we have any program of getting publications into the system from Moscow?

McCARTHY: We had *American Illustrated*, or "*Amerika*" in Russian, which was a glossy magazine in the style of the old *Life Magazine*. It used to be in over-large format the way *Life* was, and then it shrank down to a normal format. It covered different aspects of American life, complete with color photos, and the magazines were highly sought after. Like everything else, sales were regulated by intergovernmental agreement. There was a ceiling on the number of copies, number of exemplars per issue that you could have for sale. They would be sent around the Soviet Union and be sold at kiosks. In Moscow, you could go out to the kiosk when they were to be delivered, and there would be lines of people waiting for their copy of *Amerika*. You always had returns "unsellable" because there allegedly wasn't sufficient demand. But this was simply to make a political point. I think we estimated that every copy of *Amerika* went through ten readers or so. There were people who tried to save the entire collection. That was one way we put ideas into the system. There was some modest... we would give away books of course when we traveled... there was the Fulbright chair, de facto anyway, of American history at Moscow State University. But that's really more indirect. We didn't really have many ways to reach out to large numbers of people directly with print publications, though there were a few other specialized publications that reached small influential audiences. The radios were more effective that way.

Q: Was there a different life outside of Moscow as you traveled around? Exclude Leningrad at this point, but elsewhere?

McCARTHY: Oh, yes, it was much more remote, much more cut off, much more underdeveloped. That was one of the things that would strike Soviet visitors to the United States when they came on the International Visitor Program and would go out to Iowa or someplace off the beaten track. The fact that you could be living out in a small town and have access, pretty much, to the same types of food, the same types of clothing, the same types of appliances, the same types of reading material... was a revelation. Obviously, if you were in a large city with a huge library, you had more access, in the U. S. or anywhere else. But in the Soviet Union roads turned to mud in the spring, you wouldn't be able to get good consumer goods, you would not have access to information, etc. People came into Moscow for that. Yes, there was a big difference.

Q: On these receptions at the Spaso House and all, was this a place where you could talk? Did you talk?

McCARTHY: That was one of the great things about those events. You would find out what was going on. My job there was Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer for Performing Arts, and in the old days I would have been working with large American groups coming in. But, as it was, I was arranging events at Spaso House, and also reporting on the arts scene as partial barometer of what was happening, what was being expressed. You would learn all about that. It was a two-way thing. You would hear what was going on and your guests would hear from you and see some element of American culture. There was a range of events. There were jazz combos, for example Dave Brubeck or the New Orleans Jazz Ensemble. Jazz was considered a preeminent American art form then in Russia, and there was a large jazz movement. But we had other groups as well – the New England Conservatory Youth Orchestra, the Yale Russian Chorus. In addition to that, we had movie showings. There was an agreement with Jack Valenti and the Motion Picture Association of America that we would get first-run movies. We had 35mm projectors set up in the back of the ballroom, and the agreement was that when those movies came in they were chained to your wrist from the moment they got there until the moment they left. No chance of a black market copy being produced. But we would show those movies and you would pair off with Russian guests and translate the movie as it was going – could be embarrassing dialog to interpret sometimes. Those were wonderful events, really.

Q: What sort of feedback were you getting from the people. Was this just sort of 'here it is,' we're laying it out on the table, and just hoping something will happen?

McCARTHY: Well, the feedback from the people was not so much “there is what we are laying out for you, let's hope something happens,” although a lot of people certainly did want something to happen. This was the time of what they called “zastoy,” sort of a lethargy, a stall, under Brezhnev, where the leadership was stagnant. There wasn't much change going on and there was a dead hand of bureaucracy over everything. So burbling underneath all this, in addition to the international scene, was ‘what is going to happen post-Brezhnev?’ People did want change. They wanted some sort of reform. A lot of people who went to these events and who had engaged us were simply enlarging their area of personal growth. They made a decision, “Look, I can just stay back and never contact foreigners or anything and sort of keep my name clear or I can decide I'm going to live in a fuller more engaged way and I'm going to go to these

receptions.”

When they came to these receptions, it wasn't just that they walked up to the door and entered the residence. There was a little square outside Spaso House, a little park. Well before a reception or embassy event, there would be people out there reading newspapers (even if it was pitch black - in other words, plainclothesmen would be out there) as well as militiamen. And the officers of the embassy would be out there, sort of like lifeguards on chairs. They'd see somebody out there beyond the surf in a little bit of trouble, and they'd go out there and sort of take that person, rescue that person so to speak... well, "rescue" is too big a word... but bring that person in. "There seems to be a problem with this invitation" the militiaman would say, so you'd have to go out and say, "Yes, this person is on the list" and take them in. And invitations would be deep-sixed if you sent them out to somebody at a particular institution where they worked; they might not get there. So there were very elaborate instructions for delivering invitations to particular people. You might meet a contact of yours on the street corner giving six invitations for certain individuals. You're always walking around with a pocket full of kopeck coins so you could use the pay phones to call people. In short, people who did this made a decision that they were going to expand their life and take whatever consequences there might be.

Q: What were you observing in Soviet cultural life? Was it vital, growing?

McCARTHY: Yes, it was a very vital life. Music was of extremely high quality. When they held the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow, for example, and American performers performed, they always commented on the quality of the audience. Acoustics too, but mainly the quality of the audience, that feeling of understanding and support from the audience. I don't pretend to understand that, but performers who had good grounds for comparison would say that. Theater was very lively and very interesting. Playwrights and directors were always pushing the boundaries out a little bit farther. Ballet was good, not very innovative, but very, very good. There were some poetry readings around, still, as I said. I thought the arts scene, the cultural scene, was very alive.

Q: Did you notice, or was anybody remarking, because you were only there for a particular time. One thinks back to pre-Hitler's Germany where a really small, something like six percent, percentage of the population was Jewish. It was a salt in the German stew, you might say. The influence in music, in the arts, in movies, and literature was tremendous. In the Soviet Union you were having this leeching away, in a way, of the Jewish population into Israel and all this. Was this having an effect or was anybody ever remarking about that?

McCARTHY: I didn't notice any... there was that for sure... but I didn't notice any real leeching away of the creative juices. I didn't notice any wholesale departure at the top of these different professions. That wasn't something that I recall being remarked on.

Q: It wasn't being remarked on or anything like that.

McCARTHY: I don't recall that it was.

Q: Were you there when they had the Marine problem and all that?

McCARTHY: That was a little later. I had gone, by then, yes.

Q: How did you find living in the Soviet Union? Were you put upon, tried to be recruited, harassed or anything like that?

McCARTHY: You are always aware of that, and there was certainly a conscious effort to intimidate and it started at the very beginning. For me, it didn't involve anything physical, but let me give you an example. We had arrived in Moscow. We were living in an apartment away from the embassy; the foreigners tended to be clustered in apartment complexes with militiamen stationed in little booths outside. We were in a great, old merchant area of Moscow (Zamoskvarechiye") where you could walk out and be right in the heart of real Moscow. Something happened with the television set in the apartment. I turned the back of the television around and was fooling with it, figuring maybe just by luck I would hit upon something that would make the television work. And the phone rang. I pick up the phone and there's nobody on the phone. I go back and start tinkering with the television. The phone rings. Nobody on the phone. As soon as I touched the television again, the phone would ring. So I guess the people on the phone thought I was a little slow on the uptake, was not getting the message.

So the next time when the phone rang, I picked it up, and nobody was there, and I hung up again. But the phone continued to ring. The phone is hung up now, right? In its cradle, and just going, ring, ring. So they're telling me - this is the message for the less astute among us - that we know what you are doing, we are here. So I buried the phone under pillows and everything and it just kept ringing all night. Or, you'd be out someplace and the moment you came into the house, the phone would ring and there would be nobody on it. My assumption was that it was to sort of let you know that they're there. That type of thing. And you're always aware of possibly being approached. I never had anything that was definitely black and white. It's more you're always wondering why this person is telling you this particular information, why is he taking you to this theater production when he really doesn't know about the theater. So you are wondering, "Well, why, I wonder why" and you just sort of tuck that away in the back of your mind. And this is going on constantly, part of your internal processing. It gets into your veins so deeply that I recall being back in the U.S. and riding with friends in New Jersey, on a highway in New Jersey, and somebody asked me a question about my personal life. Something normal that friends would ask about. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

McCARTHY: And I remember my stomach tightening up and thinking, "What an indiscrete question to be asking in a car (which could easily be bugged)!" [laughter] Now that's crazy, and I'd only been there two years, so you can imagine the self-censorship mechanisms that people develop who grow up in that culture.

Q: When you traveled, did you always travel in pairs?

McCARTHY: Yes, you always traveled in pairs. During that time there was even a rash of food poisonings of the defense attachés, so they had to take samples of food back, just to make sure.

So, yes, that was a problem. You couldn't travel alone.

Q: I take it that Soviets would not talk about, you know, after Brezhnev... Obviously that whole regime was straffish, as you would say. They were all aging and you had the feeling that their minds weren't working too well. In fact, one wonders all about the Afghanistan invasion - it didn't make an awful lot of sense. But, did you get into any political discussions with anyone?

McCARTHY: With a few people, but generally people didn't bring that up. That was something they didn't get into. It wasn't as though they thought they were going to have a role in deciding whom it was, or determining anything, it would pretty much be somebody who was on the politburo and they wouldn't decide it.

Q: Well, in a way you were spared. Being in the cultural field, you didn't have to read Borba or Pravda on a daily basis.

McCARTHY: No, I didn't. Some of my colleagues did. And there was also a dissident account in the embassy. Officers had that responsibility - just what you asked about. You know, going out and talking to dissidents to find out their views and why they thought what they did. That was their political beat. The average person would not talk to you about that, thought some friends would.

Q: I was wondering, we put an awful lot of focus on dissidents, and I guess it sort of came with the territory, but how did you feel about this? Was this just sort of keeping the flame alive or it was the only game in town? Was this of any real importance?

McCARTHY: Dissidents is a big word. We are talking about major figures like Sakharov all the way down to somebody who is more junior. But a lot of people who were already in that category had made their decision on what was important to them in life and what risks they were going to run, and what consequences they were going to live with and they wanted to get information out. They wanted people on the outside to understand what was going on. Information would get into the external press, be reported on the radios, inform opinion. That was in their interest, too, so there was a mutuality there, I think, in a lot of those instances.

Q: What about newspapers, what reviews of plays in all this? Was this a political area at all, I mean reviews?

McCARTHY: Yes, well the reviews don't come out right away. It's not like the play opens and then the next day you go and see what the review is. There would be a delay and then something might be written up in "Literaturnaya Gazeta," the Literary Gazette. And depending who wrote it, it could be rather informative, but the real information on a lot of things, so many things, was word of mouth. You'd hear that there was a theater being closed down by the police. So you'd go over to the theater, and they'd invite you in, and you'd talk to them about it. You wouldn't read about it in the paper. Or you'd hear about a politically sensitive play and go to the dress rehearsal.

Let me give you an example of how information traveled unofficially. Gary Burton on vibraphone and Chick Corea on piano were to give a concert in the Composer's Union Hall in

Moscow. This was a big deal already but they were letting us do this. It was a modest hall, there were no announcements in the papers, or anything, nothing public. But people from as far away as Vladivostok, on the Pacific, seven time zones away, heard about this and came. Jazz buffs, aficionados... because there is a network of information in any particular group you want to name that gets that information around. So at an unadvertised concert, there was a square full of people outside the hall, wanting to get in. The seats inside were already full up.

That same concert illustrates another point about how information gets around. Willis Conover had hosted a jazz program on VOA Radio for 30 years or so, a forbidden radio. He was in town at the same time as Gary Burton and Chick Corea, but nobody really knew about that. They knew about Corea and Burton through word of mouth. Imagine the scene. The hall is packed, they're expecting this performance by Gary Burton and Chick Corea. The lights go down, it's very dim. You see a standup microphone on the small stage. Now a figure walks out and stands by the microphone, and he says, "Good evening, ladies..." and that's as far as he got...the place went crazy! People standing on chairs, cheering, clapping. It was Willis Conover ...his voice so familiar for so many years, right there in Moscow. All the audience needed was a couple of words. And they were so familiar with the voice and loved it so much because of a radio (VOA) that had no official standing at all.

Q: Did you get involved in observing these, I guess they're called educational lectures or something...?

McCARTHY: Oh, God. [laughter] Yes. Particularly in St. Petersburg, the year after Moscow. They were called the Znanie Society lectures, the Knowledge Society lectures. And you would attend and it was so painful. You spent three hours and took notes on what the individual said and what the questions were and the general tenor of the discussion. And you'd do a cable on it. This was one way of reporting back what the Communist Party's popular outreach was on different issues. And you'd be in there on a Sunday afternoon and you could count on probably five or six hours of daylight that day, and you're spending three of them sitting there in the Znanie Society Lecture. That came up every five weeks or so in St. Petersburg on a rotational basis among Russian speakers.

Q: When you left Moscow, you went to, well we're talking about Leningrad in those days...

McCARTHY: Right.

WARREN ZIMMERMAN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Moscow (1981-1984)

Warren Zimmerman was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale in 1956 and attended Kings College, Cambridge as a Fulbright Scholar. He served briefly in the U.S. Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1961. Ambassador Zimmerman's career included positions in Caracas,

Belgrade, Moscow, Paris, Madrid, Geneva, and Vienna. He was the ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1989-1992. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 10, 1996.

Q: Today is June 9, 1996. Warren we are in the fall of '81 and you are going to Moscow. You served in Moscow this time from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I served from September '81 to July of '84.

Q: What was your job?

ZIMMERMANN: I was the DCM.

Q: How did you get the job?

ZIMMERMANN: I got the job because I had worked for the ambassador, Arthur Hartman, twice before, once in the European bureau and once when he was ambassador to France. He was somebody who had not had a lot of general Soviet experience. He ran the European bureau but he had never served in Moscow before. He didn't speak Russian so he wanted somebody whom he knew and who also had the Moscow credentials, so he fixed on me despite the fact that I had promised my wife that we would never return to Moscow.

Q: Yes. It is the type of job you can't turn down isn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Even she thought that.

Q: Well, what was the situation in '81? This would have been Ronald Reagan had just come in.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, we were probably at the lowest point of our relationship with the Soviet Union in the past two decades since maybe the Cuban missile crisis. Reagan had come in. The Soviets thought he would be another Nixon and be in favor of detente and would be able to deliver the American conservatives toward detente. As it turned out, Reagan had no interest at all in detente. So, the Soviets were not only wrong in their analysis but they were doubly furious at him because he didn't conform to their analysis. So, we got there in the fall of '81 after Moscow had been without an American ambassador for nearly a year with the mission, although it was never clearly expressed, to try to hold things together against the day when the relationship might take a turn for the better.

Q: Well, before you went out there, were you talking to people at the Soviet embassy and getting or from Soviet intellectuals or people that you had contact with, I mean how were you finding that they felt that somehow Reagan was going to be another Nixon?

ZIMMERMANN: Well we heard it. I am not sure we heard it before we got out there, but it became clear to us through our contacts at the USA Institute in Moscow which of course, was a very powerful intellectual organization that our Yuri Arbatov, the head of that institute had advised Brezhnev, who was then still the general secretary and the President, that Reagan would

be another Nixon. Arbatov had been proven wrong and was in a very surly mood when we got there because he was out of favor for having miscalculated the American election. So even the contacts which we normally had with the USA institute which usually were more or less good, were circumscribed because of Arbatov's pique at having gotten things wrong.

Q: Could you talk a bit about the role of the USA Institute in the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: The USA Institute was 50% a research organization on the United States and 50% a propaganda organization which was designed to be the host of virtually all intellectual American visitors to the Soviet Union and to give them the Soviet line on practically everything. It was heavily infiltrated by KGB as we suspected when we were there, and we later found out to be true, once the Soviet Union collapsed. So it was meant to be the more or less exclusive funnel for American visitors to the Soviet Union. This was in great contrast to Soviet visitors to the United States for whom we had no funnel and they were totally free or nearly totally free to investigate every nook and cranny of American life. We had a filter in Moscow in the USA Institute. American professors visiting and others visiting had to use that filter.

Q: What was the political situation in the Soviet Union like when you arrived in '81?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, it was now called the period of stagnation. Brezhnev was in his dotage. He was slurring words; he was falling asleep. He was getting drunk. There was a general perception that nothing was happening. In fact, Brezhnev died shortly after we got there and was succeeded by Andropov who didn't last very long either, who was succeeded by Chernenko who also didn't last very long. So it was a period, it was probably the period in which the seeds for the destruction of the Soviet Union were coming to bloom. When Gorbachev, who was a dynamic energetic individual took over after I had left, Hartman was still there, he was taking over on the ashes of an absolutely paralyzed ineffective political apparatus.

Q: Well, lets talk about the embassy first. How did Arthur Hartman work in Moscow?

ZIMMERMANN: Hartman was and is a genuine intellectual, somebody who approaches problems with a very clear insight into them. He was extremely frustrated by the inability to get to see Soviet officials at a high level and on a regular basis. He turned in a direction which no previous American ambassador had ever turned which was toward the dissident and refusenik community. He decided if he wasn't able to get to official Soviets he was prepared to talk to unofficial ones. He became a great leader in the cultivation and the support for the dissident community in the Soviet Union including many people who are now holding important posts today.

Q: Did this sort of upset you might say the embassy establishment in this. I mean this is a turnaround and sometimes there is the feeling would we do that, don't rock the boat or something like that?

ZIMMERMANN: No, the people in the embassy loved it because first of all some of them were assigned to look after the dissidents, and secondly, they felt as he did that these were people that it was the duty of the United States to support. I think most people in the embassy thought it had

not been done adequately before Hartman arrived.

Q: Well, when you say dissidents, often this was focused on the Jewish community but this was a far broader group.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. There were essentially two types of people who were on the outs with the regime whom the U.S. embassy could see. One group were dissidents, that is people who were focusing their lives and their careers on opposing one way or another the policies and the structure of the communist Soviet Union. Those were people like Alexander Solzhenitsyn who by then was in the United States, Andrei Sakharov, people most of whom had no intention of leaving the Soviet Union. They were reformers. They were interested in improving. Then you had a second group. The first group was not primarily Jewish. They were primarily Russian or primarily Ukrainian or Baltic, where ever they came from, although there were many important Jews among them including Sakharov's wife. But secondly there was the group of refuseniks. These were almost entirely Jewish. These were people who wanted to leave the Soviet Union, go to Israel or the United States who felt that they had been subjected to tremendous ethnic discrimination which was the case. They felt no particular allegiance to the country or to the regime or to the doctrine of communism. They simply wanted to get out. Perversely, although they were a thorn in the side of the Soviet authorities, the authorities decided to prevent them from leaving. We saw both of these groups, and they had not been seen at the ambassadorial level before at any point during the whole history of the cold war.

Q: Well on this new focus, there is always almost this competition between one trying to influence people, you know, and present the American point of view with the hope that eventually they will be in positions to do something, and the other one is sort of from the intelligence side to milk them of everything they know. Was that a problem because the intelligence side can taint the other relationship? Did that come up?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the Soviets, of course, had a traditional paranoia about the United States and, they certainly felt that our desire for contact with them was driven by the desire to find out illicit information about them. That's why they went to such ludicrous extremes to prevent us from meeting with Soviet officials, with Soviet citizens, with scientists and so forth. Certainly there was a desire on our part to learn as much as we could about the Soviet Union, particularly those things which pertained to American interests. But there was also a desire to find people we could communicate with in order to have a dialogue and project the American point of view and get an authoritative version, not just out of Pravda, of the Soviet point of view. In those three years '81-'84 when I was there, that was denied us.

Q: Well, Well the KGB, at this point Andropov was running the country to begin with, wasn't he still running the KGB?

ZIMMERMANN: He was running the KGB. Of course, we knew that every phone conversation we had that every conversation we had within our own apartments or residences was bugged and listened to. I heard estimated by a person in the CIA when I was a very junior officer in Moscow, when I was a first secretary in the '70s, that no fewer than six KGB people were assigned exclusively to me to collect telephone transcripts and buggings from the apartment and to follow

me where I went and so forth. Six were dedicated to me. In an embassy which probably had 40 or 50 officers that is already an enormous expenditure of resources. They would have to do the same to the British and the French and the Germans and some of the other embassies in town. So this was a police state in an absolutely accurate sense of the word. The promotion career possibilities for people in the KGB were better than for people in the foreign ministry for example or people in the other civilian ministries. The KGB was more or less the top of the tree for ambitious careerists in Russia. It dominated everything.

Q: Was there any feeling that in the long run the KGB might be almost the answer? They were really much more exposed to the real world than other parts of the Soviet Union.

ZIMMERMANN: We were anxious to get to know KGB people, people that we knew or suspected were KGB. KGB people were more interesting to us because we assumed they would be better informed, would be closer to what the really authoritative elements of the regime were. So, we rather than shun them, we were very anxious to talk to them.

Q: I mean again we come to these two sides. One, to try to turn a KGB agent of course is the goal of any decent CIA man, as the reverse is true. But there was more than that. This is to, not to influence them but to reform them and get from them. Did you find them a good source?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Any diplomat wants to talk to people in the host government who are important and authoritative. In the Soviet Union that meant in most cases the KGB, so we were very interested when we knew or suspected that somebody was a KGB person to give them our position and to listen carefully for theirs.

Q: What about daily life there? Was it a problem; had it gotten worse, better?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, there was very little difference between our first tour and our second tour six years later. Everything in daily life was a hassle. I am speaking about diplomats now. For Soviet citizens it was a hassle times ten. Shopping was difficult. Getting anything repaired was difficult. Finding people to talk to was difficult. It was a very stressful life for diplomats. There were very few occasions where you could totally relax because you were constantly under the surveillance of the KGB who would exploit any weakness, drunkenness, sexual aberration, affairs, that kind of thing. They would try to use those against anybody they caught doing it.

Q: How did Arthur Hartman relate to his staff?

ZIMMERMANN: Hartman, I would not call him a chummy person. He had a certain aloofness and dignity. He also presided over an embassy which consistently I think got the highest marks by the inspectors for morale. He was very sympathetic to individual problems. As I said, this turn toward human rights made him very popular with his staff. I recall as a matter of fact, that the first lunch he had at Spaso House, the ambassador's residence, was for the spouses, the Soviet spouses of American citizens who were unable to leave the country. The spouses couldn't leave the country, so we had our own group of refuseniks. There were about 30 of them. Most of them were Jewish but not all. Nobody had thought to bring them together as a group, and Hartman did that. He brought them together as a group, we had lunch. He expressed his strong support for

getting them exit visas so they could join their husbands in the United States. It was a wonderful gesture which had never been done before and which I think immediately ingratiated him to his staff because many of the staff in the embassy had been taking care of these people. They had been having them around and cheering them up and so forth. There were some people in the embassy who felt that since Hartman was not a traditional Soviet type, that is he had not done his apprenticeship in previous tours in the Soviet Union. He did not know Russian. That he was inappropriate for the job. I detected some feeling to that extent. I disputed it. I was opposed to it, but I think it did exist. I would say by and large, when he was an ambassador, he was very much admired for his diplomatic ability. To my mind he was one of the best two or three diplomats I have ever seen, not just worked with, but seen in my career. He was greatly admired for that. He was greatly admired for his integrity which was rock bottom 100%. I think essentially he had a very positive, gave a very positive feeling to people who were in the embassy.

Q: Well his not being a Soviet Russian expert, I would think that would cast you in a somewhat different role than the normal DCM who was supposed to be the inside man who administers the embassy. Did you find you were called on more somewhat different than the traditional DCM role?

ZIMMERMANN: Well I think I in a way had to be in the traditional DCM role in the sense that DCMs look after the running of the embassy, are the lightning rod for morale problems and so forth. I did that. I had never really done that before. I discovered I liked doing that quite a lot because it brought me very closely in touch with varieties of people. But, Hartman did look to me for that, and I worked very hard at that part of it. That was certainly well over 50% of what I did, although previous to that I had been primarily a substantive political officer.

Q: Well, looking at both the political and even more so the economic officer's part of this, what sort of information were they getting? I mean was it still the traditional looking up at the newspapers and newscasts and that sort of thing?

ZIMMERMANN: You got very little from people. You got most of it from published sources. I think certainly that was true with the economic section. They had to rely on mostly what was published, and what they could see with their own eyes.

Q: Well this is it. This, of course, came up about a decade later with the essential collapse of the Soviet Union mainly because of economic inefficiency and political stagnation. Were we looking at the Soviets and saying you know, Gee this doesn't work, or was it just more of the same the way we were seeing it? Or were we seeing any increase in the non workingness of the whole system?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I think there was a general feeling that it was grinding down. Brezhnev had become a figure of ridicule while we were there.

Q: Ridicule in the embassy or ridicule in society?

ZIMMERMANN: Ridicule in society. Now when Andropov took over, strangely enough, he was seen as a kind of a reformer. Somebody who was going to get the system moving again. Of

course, he didn't have much time to do it, and the things he did were not very radical, so nobody will ever know whether he would've moved things or not. But, even Soviet dissidents and people who were on the leading edge of independent culture were quite sympathetic to Andropov, at least in comparison to Brezhnev. I remember for example, Yuri Lubimov who was the head of the Taganka Theater which was the most avant garde Russian theater. It did some productions which were very critical, inferentially critical of the regime. But Lubimov was an admirer of Andropov. Andropov had sent his son to try out for Lubimov's theater, and Lubimov tried him out and turned him down, and he went back to his apartment and waited for the inevitable phone call that would tell him he was fired. He got the phone call. It came from Andropov himself and it consisted of two words, "Thank you." So Lubimov who was a very influential person in the dissident community was propagating Andropov. Roy Medvedev, who was a dissident historian, was strongly supporting Andropov, so Andropov had a mixed reputation. Some of the dissidents supported him; others felt that this was just a somewhat more palatable version of a totally corrupt and ineffective and oppressive regime. Then when Andropov died and Chernenko took over, that was a step backwards because Chernenko was a Brezhnev person and was very old and infirm.

Q: What was the general feeling about this Chernenko taking over from Andropov? I mean what was our analysis?

ZIMMERMANN: Well the analysis was simple and I think even obvious that the politburo was not up to pushing reform further than Andropov was prepared to take it, and instead took a step backwards from reform by choosing someone who wasn't even politically important. He had been an apparatchik, a bureaucrat all his life, and had been associated with Brezhnev, the model of stagnation. So, it was a clear indication that this politburo was not up to reform. Actually when they chose Gorbachev not so long afterwards, it is doubtful that very many of them realized that Gorbachev would become the reformer that he turned out to be. He certainly was more energetic than the others and younger, but he had been an orthodox communist up to that point, and nobody had guessed that, neither in the west nor in the Soviet Union he was going to turn out the way he did.

Q: Did you feel that you were as sometimes embassies do having to fight fires on both your rear and your front? In other words you were dealing with the Soviets who were difficult, and then you had the new Reagan administration. The Reagan administration changed over the years as most do, became more subtle in how it approached problems, but you had the brand new Reagan administration, the NSC, the White House particularly. Did you feel they were unhelpful, or was it a problem?

ZIMMERMANN: Well the NSC was absolutely terrible in the sense that it took a bad relationship between the U.S. and Soviet Union, two countries which after all were capable of destroying each other, took this bad relationship and made it worse on purpose. Richard Pipes for example, who was the Soviet expert, a fine historian of Russian history from Harvard, he would take drafts of letters from Reagan to Brezhnev and sharpen them so as to put in insults, the kind of language that the Soviets would immediately take to be insulting. Something that no head of state should ever do. Of course that would infuriate the Soviets and we would end up with a kind of a non-existent relationship. The State Department was not like that. You had people in the

State Department who were pragmatists. Larry Eagleburger who at that point was undersecretary for political affairs, and was Hartman's major interlocutor, understood the need to keep a relationship going, and most of all George Shultz. When he became Secretary of State, he had a clear view that we had to maintain a relationship with the Soviet Union. He worked very hard on Reagan using whatever tools he had to move Reagan toward a more cooperative relationship with Moscow. Shultz worked with Mike Deaver who was a public relations guy but was very close to Mrs. Reagan who had doubts about the tough policy because she did not want her husband to go down in history as the man who messed up relations with the Soviet Union. So, she was a factor for a better relationship. Deaver fed that, and Shultz in the State Department was working in that direction. Finally, we got by 1983 to a situation where we were able to make a number of small agreements with the Soviets. They didn't amount to much individually. Collectively they didn't amount to much either but at least there were elements of cooperation that were going on. Things were beginning to pick up. Then you got the Soviet shooting down of the Korean airliner sometime in the spring or summer of 1983, and that knocked everything back.

Q: Before that you were talking about Richard Pipes, sharpening and exacerbating the situation. What was his motivation in doing that?

ZIMMERMANN: He was anti Soviet. He is a Polish émigré. He had a traditional Polish view of the Soviet Union which was 100% negative, and he did not want a close relationship with the Soviet Union. It is actually amazing to me as a professional diplomat that people should not want even a minimal relationship with a country that was as powerful as the Soviet Union. But Pipes didn't want it. Richard Perle who was a very important force in the Pentagon didn't want it. His boss, Secretary of Defense Weinberger didn't want it. These were people who were so ideologically hard over against any relationship with the Soviets that it became very hard for Reagan who may have been ideologically in the same camp, but personally wanted a relationship. He wanted to get to know Soviet leaders. He thought he could influence them. It made it very hard for him. So during most of his first term nothing happened that was cooperative.

Q: Also there was a period of what I gather was a sort of a freewheeling national security council who didn't really have any leadership in the National Security Advisor. You had some rather weak people who didn't know the territory.

ZIMMERMANN: You had weak people and it was a kind of a revolving door. They changed all the time, and there was no discipline anyway in the White House.

Q: It allowed sort of the people who had their own agenda, the Pipes and later Ollie North and all to sort of go ahead and do their thing.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. There was nobody telling them to stop.

Q: I have been interviewing Frank Carlucci talking about when he was eventually called in just to clean up the mess. He fired a lot of people and just sort of got the thing organized because it was sort of all these independent operators. Were you feeling that?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh yes, sure. Definitely on Soviet policy. People would come in with their own agendas. There was no sense that they had to discipline themselves, that they had to stick to any policy line at all other than what they decided in their wisdom was the right one.

Q: How about high level visits; were there many?

ZIMMERMANN: There were none at all. Reagan didn't meet Gorbachev until 1985, so we had no major visits I can remember at all. In fact, Gromyko who had the habit of going to the UN every fall for the opening of the UN general assembly and would usually go down to Washington and meet the President, we sanctioned his plane. We tried to prevent his plane landing at Kennedy Airport which of course was ludicrously ineffective and stupid. As I recall the ruckus over that effort resulted in no Gromyko meeting with high level American people.

Q: Sanctioning it, here somebody is coming to the UN. I mean what the hell was this all about?

ZIMMERMANN: It had to do with some effort by New York State I think it was or the governor whoever it was at that time, to grandstand and to make a stand against Gromyko. Of course Gromyko had a perfect right of going to the UN to land. We have a treaty obligation to provide that, but that didn't stand in the way of people. He eventually did land, but he was furious that it just made the atmosphere for any serious discussion with him impossible.

Q: How about Congress? Was there much Congressional to and fro?

ZIMMERMANN: Congress was very interested in the human rights side of things, of course. I don't think Congress was a major factor in trying to hold back the relationship in the first Reagan term. We got a number of Congressional visitors who were anxious to meet at the highest level possible with Soviet officials. In a way, I think Congress may have had a moderating effect on the extremes of the Reagan administration's anti Sovietism at the beginning.

Q: What was the feeling your feeling and maybe by inference by Hartman and all about Reagan during this time? Was he considered such a right winger, you know sort of a we just have to get through this administration or was he seen as maybe something could be done?

ZIMMERMANN: I can only speak for myself on this. I am not sure what Hartman would say. I voted against Reagan twice. I am a Democrat. I didn't like what he stood for at all. I didn't have much respect for his competence before he was President. When he came into office, I was faced with the normal choice of every foreign service officer is faced with, do you want to serve this president or not. If you serve him, you are loyal to him and you carry out instructions. I grew to think quite quickly that Reagan because of his strong belief in personal relationships actually wanted to have a better relationship with the Russians. He wrote Brezhnev hand written letters occasionally talking about peace, and getting rid of nuclear weapons. So this was a man that I thought would come around if you could somehow reduce the influence of these baleful advisors that he had who didn't want any progress at all.

Q: What about Afghanistan during this time? You arrived sort of two years into the Soviet

invasion of Afghanistan. At that point I guess it looked like the Soviets were really going to subdue Afghanistan didn't it? What was the feeling?

ZIMMERMANN: The feeling I think by 1981 was that the Soviets were in a quagmire. They didn't seem to be able to deal with anything. We began to get probes. I don't know if it was disinformation or real information, but they were looking for a way to get out. They wanted the United States to help them. Of course, the price of that might have been pretty high I guess. Even as I recall Dobrynin said something.

Q: Was he ambassador?

ZIMMERMANN: He was ambassador to Washington. As I recall he said something to somebody in the State Department about the need to get U.S. help to help the Soviets out of Afghanistan. The rumor when Andropov came in was that he was going to get them out of Afghanistan. That was a rumor that was so widespread it almost certainly was being spread by the KGB. Of course he didn't do it. He didn't do it in the year or so before he died.

Q: Was the embassy sort of saying here is a target of opportunity? Let's make it more difficult for them. How did we feel about that?

ZIMMERMANN: I wouldn't say the embassy was involved in that. There was a strong Congressional view which resulted in legislation to arm the mujahideen in Afghanistan, which I have to say I was not sympathetic with but which actually turned out to work to make it more difficult for the Soviets. Indeed that is what happened. There is no doubt at all I think that American arms help and training for the mujahideen helped them to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan. Now of course, we have a mujahideen problem.

Q: What about Soviets in this period internationally? Were they messing around? How did we feel about what they were doing in let's say Central America?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the relationship with Cuba was as strong as ever. We were on a crusade, of course, in Nicaragua and El Salvador and were alleging a lot of Soviet and Cuban communist influence there. I think that was a big exaggeration. A lot of the dissidence there it seems to me was indigenous. But we had major disputes with the Soviets over Nicaragua for example when we mined the harbors of Nicaragua; they were furious at that, of course. I don't think Central America was a major issue for them. It was for us, and we imputed to them a lot of things I think they weren't actually doing. As far as Asia was concerned, trying to think back, I don't think we had any serious problems with them then. The North Vietnamese who had taken over in '75 had not really extended their influence very far, so there was not a feeling that the Soviets were piggybacking with the North Vietnamese into new areas of influence in Asia. Africa was such a mixed picture. I didn't feel that we had serious problems there. The middle east was a major area of confrontation, as it traditionally had been and it remained. Europe was very important because we were trying to put in intermediate range weapons. As far as the Soviets were concerned the major question was would the Germans be prepared to accept these missiles that could reach into the Soviet Union.

Q: Well, the Soviets had already introduced their intermediate one the SS-20.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the Pershings and the cruise missiles, the INF weapons so to speak were designed to be a counter to the SS-20s. If you look at it, and we get into strategic arms theory here, but if you look at it from the point of view of the doctrine of deterrence, we wouldn't have needed to put intermediate range weapons in Europe because we had the triad of American strategic weapons in the air, ground based missiles, and submarine based missiles. If the Soviets attacked with their SS-20s we could destroy the Soviet Union with these strategic weapons. But there was a strong feeling that you needed to balance the SS-20 off with an intermediate range weapon that would be stationed in western Europe. For example, this would be the first nuclear weapon stationed in Germany ever.

Q: Well they have had, I remember as a GI, I could see this cannon being rolled around Frankfurt and other places, huge atomic cannon.

ZIMMERMANN: I may be wrong in this; they may have had tactical nuclear weapons, but these were the first nuclear weapons the Germans had that could reach the Soviet Union. The Soviets mounted a major campaign to stop that.

Q: Well, if I recall, that the Soviets had put in the SS-20s mainly to tell Europe say look the United States might not support you if we just have these, and therefore you are under our gun. I mean ours was a response in a way wasn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Ours was a response to the SS-20, there is no doubt about it. The SS-20 was certainly a weapon that intimidated and was meant to intimidate western Europe. So the issue boiled down to Germany and who would have the greater influence on the Germans. The Russians waged an all out no holds barred campaign of threat, intimidation, inducement, bribe, whatever to insure that the Bundestag did not vote to accept the weapons, and they lost. I think it was in the fall of 1983 that the Bundestag voted to accept the Pershing missiles. I happened to be in Berlin. I had gone from Moscow to a conference at the Aspen Institute in Berlin, and it was the day after the vote. One of the members of the German Bundestag who was at the conference from the social democratic party which was the party in power, Schmidt's party, said, "This is the blackest day for Germany since the war." I said, "Coming from Moscow, this is the blackest day for the Soviet Union since the Cuban missile crisis." Indeed the Russians had lost big, really big.

Q: Was that manifested from Moscow, I mean from you point of observation?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh sure, absolutely. This was their major foreign policy objective, and it failed.

Q: This is right from the institution of the SS-20. It was a whole follow through we will, this will help separate Europe from NATO in a way.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. It was very definitely a political agenda as well as a military agenda there. The reaction to it, the fact that the Germans and the Italians accepted nuclear weapons on

their soil brought them even closer to NATO, made them much more an integral part of NATO's overall defense, so it was a real defeat for the Russians.

Q: How was this played publicly in the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: I can't remember exactly, but of course in their press they never lose a battle. I think it was played as perfidious American forces working on German opinion, that the Germans took a decision which was against their basic interests under the influence of American pressure and American power and so forth.

Q: Was there any feeling, you know, during the Kissinger years at least in some of my interviews, I have had the feeling that Kissinger was basically pessimistic about the ability of the United States to stick to it, that the Soviet Union was here to stay, and that it was best to cut a deal earlier rather than later with the Soviets because in a way, time was on the Soviet's side. This may be unfair, but I had this feeling. I was wondering what the feeling was during this time. Was the feeling that time was on our side or on the Soviet side or what?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, my feeling and I suppose it was fairly typical in the embassy was that we were stronger than the Soviets in every countable way. We were stronger militarily. We were stronger politically. We were stronger in the allegiance of our people. We were stronger in our ability to win genuine support as opposed to coerced support from other countries. But I also believed as I think everybody in the embassy believed, that the Soviet Union was going to be around for a long time and was going to be our adversary for a long time. I cannot pretend that I sat at the U.S. embassy in 1983 and 1984 and predicted that in six years the Soviet Union would be gone. I didn't think that. I don't know anybody who thought it.

Q: If they did they certainly kept their thoughts hidden. What about the ethnic problems? Were we watching that? I am talking about the various ethnic, the Ukrainians the Kazakhs and all. Were we watching that?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, we had people in the embassy who were assigned to different areas and who would travel as often as they could to those areas. I think there was no misunderstanding of the ethnic tensions that were a part of Soviet rule.

Q: But did we feel that they were pretty well sat upon and kept from...

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I think everybody in the embassy exaggerated the ability of the repressive elements in the Soviet regime to keep things under their thumb. I can remember saying, and I wish I had followed this to its logical conclusion, I can remember saying, "The Soviet Union is a stable country, but it has the stability of a catamaran to use a sailing term, the multi hulled sailboat rather than a single hulled sailboat. A single hulled sailboat can keel way over but it will come back up. A multi hulled sailboat won't keel over, but if a big wind hits it, and it goes way over, it will go all the way over. And the only things that could drive the Soviet Union over, I thought to myself, were a combination of major economic crisis and ethnic unrest." That of course, is what happened, but I was assigning a very low probability to both of those contingencies, when in fact there was a high probability to both of them.

Q: Well, I think this is one of the things that really everyone missed, both in the Soviet Union and the west was how poorly the system, everybody knew the system was working poorly, but you know there was the feeling yes it is but it will always stay the way it is.

ZIMMERMANN: Well I think that is right. It had been around so long working poorly that I think most people assumed it would be around for a long time working poorly.

Q: Were you there when announced the Star Wars Initiative?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes.

Q: You might explain what that was and sort of the reaction both within the embassy and what you were getting from the Soviets.

ZIMMERMANN: Without any staffing out or briefing papers or consultation, at the end of his speech Reagan announced...

Q: I think it was a state of the union speech.

ZIMMERMANN: Maybe it was that, announced that he was prepared to build a space based defense, that is a defense that could strike and destroy incoming Soviet missiles in space. The Soviets didn't waste a nanosecond in deciding that this was a very dangerous idea. They worked very hard propagandistically to denounce it, to try to show that it would exacerbate tensions, that it could lead to world war III, that it would be too expensive, that they could match it, which of course they couldn't and didn't, and it would drive the arms race into unparalleled heights. They were genuinely scared of it, because they knew they couldn't duplicate it. They assumed funnily enough that we could build it. As it turned out, we faked our tests, and they believed it. I later negotiated on this. I didn't know we were faking tests, and the Soviets didn't know we were faking tests. They assumed because they had this rather pathetic admiration for American science, that we could do anything we wanted to do, and they couldn't. So they saw this as giving us what they called the first strike capability. If you want to get into the strategic aspects of it, I can do that, but essentially they saw it as unilaterally putting us way ahead and putting us in a position where we could destroy their country without them being able to destroy ours. This was another objection which was a genuine objection, they considered it violated the ABM Treaty which had been signed in 1972. Indeed most objective American observers agreed with them on that.

Q: What did this cause, did the embassy get involved in this or was this something that was worked out, I mean was there higher levels to deal with the Soviets?

ZIMMERMANN: Nobody talked to the Soviets before Reagan's speech, and I think very few people talked to the Soviets after it. I certainly don't recall that the embassy weighed in against the initiative. After all, it was announced by the President. It was American policy, so we thought that our job was to report what the Soviets were saying about it. It took a long time for it to have any concrete nature in American implementation. It was an idea that took a long time to be

brought to any kind of production phase, even research and development phase.

Q: I recall President even said something about and we will share this with the Soviets or something like that.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, he did say that. Of course they didn't believe him.

It is unbelievable to me that we would share with them technology which we had which was much better than their technology. Whether Reagan wanted to or not I just don't believe it. And the Soviets certainly didn't believe it.

Q: I think it was Ronald Reagan sitting practically alone in his room coming up with this and would pass it on to other sort of the American military and scientific establishment in a scramble to figure out what the hell this was and how to do it. in a way wasn't it.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, everybody was caught by surprise except I guess, Dr. Teller, who apparently was the one who convinced the President to do it.

Q: That was Edward Teller.

ZIMMERMANN: He was the one I gather who faked the tests.

Q: Speaking of technology, did you see, you I am speaking about our collective Soviet experts, see the advent of the computer technology which was coming in? We are talking about personal computers and general communications and all of being something that the Soviets couldn't, I mean the system wouldn't allow it to get out in their own hands, that was a real threat.

ZIMMERMANN: Absolutely. I mean they were paranoid about Xerox machines or the Soviet equivalent of Xerox machines. If you were working in a Soviet institution, you had to go through the ordeals of Hercules in order to get to use a duplicating machine because they were so afraid of the power of the duplicating machine to disseminate information that they didn't want spread around. Samizdat got stuff typed on carbon, one carbon after another because these poor guys who were doing it couldn't get access to duplicating machines, but the cybernetics revolution was a major threat, was an enormous threat to the Soviet Union because the Soviet Union operated on total control of information. If they couldn't control information, then they couldn't proselytize and control their people the way they wanted to. So, there is no doubt at all that they saw it as a major threat.

Q: Well, but also at the same time, if you wanted to be a modern nation you had to have these things and throw them into the masses so they could all produce.

ZIMMERMANN: You had to have them, you particularly had to have them for your defense industry because it couldn't possibly compete with us if it didn't get into the computer age. So, they were faced with this problem, a delicious one from our point of view because it challenged the very essence of Soviet dictatorship.

Q: Were we kind of putting these things together at the time.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, that was an obvious one because it was so clear to anybody who had anything to do with the Soviets that control of information was a paramount objective of theirs.

Q: Were there any efforts made on the part of Soviet scientific community to say come on fellows, let's swallow this pill if we want to be part of the modern world?

ZIMMERMANN: I think that the work remains to be written about the role of the Soviet scientific community in the modernization of Russia. We assumed that the Soviet scientists were among the leading liberals, the leading would-be reformers in the Soviet apparatus. Occasionally one or two of them would pop up to give evidence along those lines. Like Sakharov who was a significant nuclear physicist, and there must have been others like him who weren't quite as brave maybe who were trying behind the scenes to move things. Sagdayev who is now married to Susan Eisenhower and was the head of their defense program was a person like that, a man of extraordinary integrity. So we assumed the scientists were among the leading wedges of reform in the Soviet Union. That is exactly why the Soviet Academy of Sciences and its political apparatus made sure that the scientific community was totally under the thumb of the party. The way that the Academy of Sciences worked was that you had party people, reliable party people at the top who could not only prevent the outbreak of dissidence or quell it if it happened, but could also restrict the contacts that Soviet scientists had with scientists from other parts of the world. Of course, a soviet scientist would not get travel permission unless he was certified to be politically correct. The dissidents would rarely be able to travel. Sakharov for example, never got to the west as far as I know except maybe once for humanitarian reasons to see a family member.

Q: I mean this was just one more of those factors that was thrown in of how the Soviet system is crippling itself because for science you have got to have these contacts..

ZIMMERMANN: Of course you do. I remember talking to the scientists at Livermore and Los Alamos. I asked the heads of those labs about Soviet military science. They said, "Theoretically it is the best in the world, but they can't implement it." That was an interesting comment. They can't actually produce the stuff.

Q: Did you have a science attaché?

ZIMMERMANN: We did; we took that very seriously. He was in fact not a scientist, but he was somebody who had an enormously probing intellect and was very much involved in the importance of science in politics which was really what that job entailed.

Q: What was the role of Dobrynin who had been for so many years the Soviet ambassador in the United States? I mean in the old days he and Kissinger bypassed everybody it seemed. Was he a spent factor by this time?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I don't think he was a spent factor, but I think he was a very negative one. In the embassy we did not share the view that Dobrynin was the liberal or in the reforming wing of the Soviet communist party, that he was a reliable interlocutor. Our sense of Dobrynin was

that he was an opportunist, he would tell his bosses what they wanted to hear. He would make things up occasionally to put himself in a better light. WE had one piece of actual evidence of this because Hartman had a meeting with Gromyko, and the meeting had to do with a subject, I don't remember what it was, on which there had been a meeting in Washington the day before between Gromyko and Secretary Shultz. Between Dobrynin and Secretary Shultz. We had our reporting cable, almost a verbatim cable from that meeting, and Gromyko had his. There was nothing in common with the cables. It was clear that Dobrynin who rarely took a note taker anyway into meetings just distorted what had gone on, where we had a pretty near verbatim account. I don't know whether Gromyko felt that this was helpful to him or not.

Q: It's scary really.

ZIMMERMANN: It's scary. There was one other example from Dobrynin which comes from 1985. This was a meeting which I did not attend but it was during the first Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Geneva. Hartman was there and told me the story that Gorbachev led off with a totally erroneous misperceived view of the United States, that it was run by the Jews and the industrial capitalists and so forth. He turned to Dobrynin and Dobrynin reinforced that view. Dobrynin had lived in the United States for nearly two decades, for over a decade, over two decades, and knew the United States very well. He knew that was wrong, but he was not prepared to move Gorbachev away from this very erroneous view, even gently. In fact, he reinforced it; he stoked it. Now I will say I have read Dobrynin's memoirs carefully. I use them in my teaching. I think it is a very important book. It rings true mostly in the various things he describes, so the reflective Dobrynin is maybe a bit better than the operational Dobrynin, but the operational Dobrynin had no fans in the American embassy. There is another thing I should say out of fairness. We resented the fact that Dobrynin had terrific access in Washington whereas our Ambassador had very little access in Moscow.

Q: But just emphasizing, could you point out why it could be considered just plain dangerous to have an ambassador who is not reporting accurately.

ZIMMERMANN: I am not sure it is always dangerous, but if he gives a distorted view of the position of an American administration, it makes it much harder for a Soviet government to formulate a policy that deals with those positions. When we set out a position whether publicly or in confidence to the Soviets, we want them to understand it. We don't want them to carry away a different view of what we are trying to say than what we are trying to give them. I think Dobrynin at least in some cases, did that.

Q: Were there the problems of the security of the embassy while you were there or not?

ZIMMERMANN: They happened shortly after. I am trying to think. I can say this. The problems happened after, the Lonetree and Bracy incidents happened after I left.

Q: Could you explain what they were.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Lonetree and Bracy were marine guards of the American embassy, and they were arrested by the U.S. government and accused of spying for the Soviets, of letting

Soviet people into the embassy. The charge against Bracy was dropped. Lonetree was convicted and sentenced to 30 years. This came at a time when Hartman was ambassador, and Hartman was heavily criticized in the United States on television for being lax on security. That is an issue I would like to address because I can address that from my own experience in the embassy in Moscow. Hartman believed that if you can't communicate with the Soviets personally, there is still a way you can communicate with them. You can talk to the bugs. He would have, for example, visitors from the United States, Congressmen, businessmen, professors, policy people, etc. He would sit them down in his residence at Spaso House and speak totally frankly and openly about American policy toward the Soviet Union. He had in mind two audiences: his guests and the people on the other end of the listening devices because he wanted the message to get through. If he couldn't get to see people, then he would do it this way. He used to say quite openly, this is what I am doing. I believe in this. Now, some of the right wing conservatives in Washington began to spread it around that Hartman was lax on security because he was saying things to listening devices that were sensitive. Hartman knew exactly what he was doing. It was exactly the right thing, I believe.

Q: This is part of getting to the intelligence apparatus that was such a major factor, because these would be read at the very top level.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, exactly. Andropov would have probably seen them or his successor. So, that was number one. Number two was that the security people in Washington decided that the new embassy which was going up already in Moscow could be made absolutely bug proof. They had never made a totally bug proof embassy anywhere in the world, so they were going to choose the toughest city in the world to do it in. They came up with a project which would have produced an embassy with no windows because windows are easier than stone walls to transmit radio signals. With no windows, and artificial light, therefore everywhere in the embassy, so the little amount of sun you get in Moscow with its long winters would be reduced to zero in the working environment. It was going to be highly complex because a lot of the intricate equipment was going to be ensconced in ceilings and behind walls and so forth where it would be very difficult to get at to service and to monitor and to check. Hartman felt it was a Rube Goldberg scheme, and he also felt it would diminish security because you would create such a morale problem which was bad enough in Moscow already for people working in this cave. They would seek relief by drinking, by having affairs, by all the kinds of human foibles that can happen to you when you are depressed. They would make themselves vulnerable to a KGB probe, and then you would have an American sitting in the embassy who would be passing out secrets, and your perfect security wouldn't work. So, Hartman strongly opposed this on security grounds. To my mind he was absolutely right, but he infuriated the security community in Washington by opposing their pet project. He said, I remember one of his grace notes was, "Look, if you are going to try to have a perfect security embassy, try it somewhere where our security is not so important. Don't try it in the most difficult country of all with the most sophisticated penetration devices. Try it somewhere else." So that was the second thing. The third thing was that we had Russian employees in the embassy. We assumed that every single one of them without exception reported to the KGB or was in fact a full time KGB officer. This was understood, and of course there were parts of the embassy they couldn't go into. There was a strong move in Congress to get rid of the Russian employees and have American employees come to Moscow and do all the menial stuff that the Russians did, the char force stuff and drivers and things like that. Hartman

opposed this again on security grounds. He said, "Look, we know the Russian employees are KGB people. We don't let them into parts of the embassy which are sensitive. Our people are all trained not to spill sensitive information in front of them. What if you get Americans? They will come and do menial tasks; they will have a low level of education. They won't speak Russian. They won't be trained for service in a foreign hostile difficult country like the Soviet Union. They will be sitting ducks for the KGB."

Q: Oh absolutely.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, you know, they didn't like that. I should say one other thing to go back to the so called fully secure building. Hartman said, "Look, there is a simple way to provide security within the embassy building without getting rid of the windows. It has been existing for 30 years. It has only been penetrated once in Harry Barnes' shoe. It is the secure rooms." He said, "If you make absolutely sure when there are meetings going on in those rooms that you are monitoring them in real time, you can't miss," which is true. The problems of the bubbles historically as I understand it is they are not always being monitored when the meetings are taking place, so you can't be sure stuff is coming in or out. But if you monitor them as you could do in Moscow, you can be absolutely sure.

Q: We are talking about a plastic room inside a room and the monitoring being...

ZIMMERMANN: To see if any radio signals are going in or out, any emissions going in or out. It is a very easy thing to do, low technology.

Q: You mentioned Harry Barnes' shoe, could you explain what that was?

ZIMMERMANN: Harry Barnes is a now retired foreign service officer and was one of the great foreign service people, ambassador to many countries. When he was a junior officer in Moscow, I don't remember all the details, but there was some evidence that things were getting out of one of these bubbles, so they examined the clothing of everybody that had been in a bubble. Harry Barnes had sent his shoes to a Russian shoemaker. He had big feet, and they got into the heel of the shoe and implanted an emitting device. I can remember when I was taking the security course before going to Moscow the first time, they had Harry Barnes' shoe and they showed it all around to us, and they showed us the device in the shoe. It was a very graphic indication of what even back in those early days could be done.

Q: Was security, I mean as DCM this was sort of on your plate. Was this, did you find this much of a problem for you?

ZIMMERMANN: I supervised security. Actually it was not a huge problem. I will tell you why. Because there is very little, amazingly little that is a genuinely sensitive nature that even an embassy in Moscow does. One of the things that is sensitive of course, is protecting the names of your CIA people. Even more important than that is protecting the names of their Soviet agents. But they never told any of us including the ambassador the names of their Soviet agents, so we never knew them to tell anybody. But there were very few things, and the reason I know this is because the Soviets managed to bug my secretary's typewriter for a year, so we had to assume

that every cable that was typed on that typewriter was in the hands of the Soviets. When this was discovered, I was called back from vacation in Vermont to Washington to go over every cable or memo that had been typed on that typewriter for the course of a year to assess the damage to U.S. security interests. I discovered that there was nothing. There was no damage because the cables we wrote, these were cables that I wrote or the ambassador wrote. They were analytical cables which had been overtaken by events. They were a policy recommendations which would have been of interest to the Soviets but probably of no surprise to them. They were records of meetings with Gromyko which he already knew about because he had been in the meeting, although our comments on the meetings following at the end of the cable might have been of interest to him. There were complaints to the State Department because we weren't getting this or that. These things would have been interesting for the Russians, but there was nothing that I could find that damaged in any serious way or in any way at all U.S. national security. Now that doesn't mean you don't need to have rigorous security rules, and you have to indoctrinate your people into knowing what the score is and what the enemy is doing out there. I would say with my experience of a total of five years in Moscow, that people who had Russian training before they went, people who had been prepared at least for a couple of months for this assignment, were very good at knowing when you could speak freely and when you couldn't.

Q: What was our reading on Gromyko at this time? I mean he was probably the worlds most experienced diplomat. He had been going since WWII as actually ambassador to the United States, I think, during the early '40s, wasn't he?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes he was.

Q: So here we are we are talking about 40 years later. What was our reading about him and what sort of an influence he had on Soviet affairs and American relations?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't have anything that would contradict the basic view that Gromyko was a quintessential cold warrior, that he saw us as the chief adversary. What we learned in Moscow about Gromyko was a couple of things, one, he was almost entirely focused on the United States. I mean we Americans were his major and almost sole foreign policy interest. Secondly, he was an incredible workaholic. The stolid kind of exterior reflected a man who just worked all the time. Third, he probably didn't count very much in Soviet decision making. Perhaps he did at the very end when he became a member of the politburo. I think he was seen as an implementer of policy not as a creator of policy. Fourth, he actually had a very nice sense of humor which I had not been prepared for, and a kind of a sensitivity. Hartman was very tall; he is about 6'5", and Gromyko used to kid him. He would say Hartman, you have grown taller today. Next time he would see him, you have grown shorter. I remember once I was chargé. Hartman was away, and I had to take Gromyko a demarche. It was to tell him we were mining the ports, the harbors of Nicaragua which was an issue what was later taken, as I remember, to the International Court and we lost.

Q: It did. We lost.

ZIMMERMANN: We lost. But I was supposed to tell him we were doing it and why we were doing it and it had to do with Soviet meddling in Nicaragua. It was a very difficult demarche for

me as my first demarche to Gromyko, to this storied Soviet foreign minister. I knew I was going to get a blast, and of course he knew what I was coming in on so he was ready. So I gave it to him in English. He read English perfectly well. He looked at it and he read a response which was a nasty response, but he read it in a kind of a monotone to try to take as much of the edge off it as possible. I knew as I was listening to it this was exactly what was going to come out in the Soviet press word for word as it did. He then said, "Is there anything else you would like to discuss?" I said, "No, Mr. Minister." Then he, I can't remember what it was, but he made a kind of a pleasantry. It was a sort of a how are you getting along or how are you finding things. He understood I was nervous about this demarche, and he wanted to put me at ease. This was not the stereotype of Gromyko that I had been led to believe.

Q: What was your reading on how well the politburo whatever the decision making body was, I guess it was the politburo, read the United States?

ZIMMERMANN: My sense of it is, this is a bunch of 70 and 80 year olds, some of whom had never been out of the Soviet Union, others of whom even if they had, had been only to the communist bloc, very few of whom had been to the west. Of those who had, very few had took in what they should have taken in. I think their view of the United States was entirely stereotyped based on what they read in their horrible magazines and newspapers, based on what their Marxism-Leninism told them we were. My guess is that we would all be appalled if we were able, if we had been able to examine these people in any depth about their views or knowledge of the United States. I think we would be appalled at the shallowness, the failure to understand the simplest issues about America. I say this in the knowledge that even a very sophisticated Soviet can make mistakes about the United States that no American would make. For example Arbatov, the chief Americanist in the Soviet Union in the mid-1970s did not understand that Richard Nixon because of Watergate was in real danger. He didn't understand something that every American knew. I am not making the criticism because of that. I am saying these members of the politburo have only the most rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the United States. Probably worse than any leadership in any other communist country in Eastern Europe with the possible exception of Albania.

Q: Was there the equivalent of American studies that or was getting to the second layer down of the Soviet apparatus particularly communist apparatus or was this a lack?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, they could do things like studying the labor movement in the United States, and if it had a kind of Marxist zing to it, they could study it. Of course they had to study it in very stereotyped formalistic fashion without access to the kinds of documentary information that would make them objective. It was possible to study American literature, and that was done. I don't know how widespread it was but it was certainly done. I can say for one that people who in American literature who depicted decaying cultures were extremely popular in Russia, primarily Faulkner and Tennessee Williams. One day when we were in Moscow during the 1980s there were seven Tennessee Williams plays playing in Moscow. Seven different Tennessee Williams plays playing simultaneously in Moscow while we were there.

Q: I would be hard put to remember, to think of seven different...

ZIMMERMANN: I know, but they loved that, because it was a free and legal way to make the connection with their own society and its decadent nature.

Q: What about turning again to foreign relations, China. We had a I mean an ongoing relationship with China. How did that fit?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, they didn't like it. The Russians certainly didn't like it. They never wanted to talk about China with us in the Soviet foreign ministry. I don't believe we ever got to see the Chinese desk in the Soviet foreign ministry. We could see the institute people. Some of them were very good on China, but it was considered highly sensitive, high security, and we weren't privileged to have a dialog with the Soviets in Moscow on China. The Chinese embassy, which is huge in Moscow, would cultivate us, but they would never have anything to say about their relations with the Soviets. They would talk a lot about what is going on in the Soviet Union, usually missing it completely. They were not good analysts to my mind.

Q: Well, I was thinking that really they a huge Chinese embassy with probably less connections than we had.

ZIMMERMANN: I would say less connections than we had. I think that's right.

Q: And also they were inhibited by the fact that they had their own ideology to filter things through which would make it even more difficult.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. I don't think there was much going on. If the Soviets talked to the Chinese, I don't think they did it in Moscow.

Q: You mentioned the middle east before and the Soviet's interest. The one big thing that happened in the middle east was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Did that raise any tension or interest?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the Soviets, I think, saw the middle east as a chess game, as a way to diminish American power. They didn't see it as an area that affected their own security very much the way Europe did and the way China did. So, they were constantly looking for advantages over us in the middle east. Any mis-steps we might have made, they were quick to pounce on. And of course, their assets in the middle east were not too great. They had a close relationship with Syria. They had a pretty close relationship with Iraq, with Saddam Hussein. Pretty close with the Palestinians although I am not sure really in the end how close that was. We were much better placed of course, because of our relationships with Israel and Egypt.

Q: What about, you mentioned how things changed dramatically. It had been pretty bad, but after the shooting of the KAL plane over the Kamchaka Peninsula, Sakahlins.

ZIMMERMANN: It was horrendous. First of all the Soviets lied about it. Then they had a cover story which implied that the plane had been challenged and had flown away. Then there was a silence for a couple of days. I was chargé again at the time. We were beating up on the foreign ministry for information about...

Q: You might explain what this was.

ZIMMERMANN: This was a Korean airliner that took off from Alaska bound for Seoul, and probably because they fed the wrong numbers into the computer, it flew over Sakhalin island which is territorial Soviet Union, and militarily very sensitive, and was shot down by Soviet fighter planes. Apparently without any warning, although that is disputed. There was one American Congressman on board. You know it was a horrendous thing to do to shoot down a civilian airliner over your airspace. It is illegal. You are not supposed to do that. The most you can do is force it to land. It happened, as I said, right at the time we thought our relationship was improving a little bit. First they shot it down. Then they pretended it hadn't been shot down. Then after a couple of days of trying to figure out what to say, they argued that it was an American spy plane, that somehow we would use a Korean airliner to spy on what they had, what their military dispositions were over Sakahlin Island. It was just absurd. Unfortunately the administration didn't make it better by arguing they shot it down, they had orders to shoot it down from the top more or less which was never quite cleared up, and that they knew what it was. They claimed they didn't know it was civilian airliner although that didn't quite jibe with their story that it was a spy plane. In any case, it was a stupid act of brutality by a dictatorship showing in spades its paranoia. The way they tried to justify it was even stupider. That just set back the relationship for a long time.

Q: What about during this '81-'84 period, Soviet support of terrorism? What was our reading on that?

ZIMMERMANN: We didn't know much in Moscow as I recall. We assumed that they were supporting these primarily middle east organizations, but we didn't have much information on it, and it was the sort of thing you couldn't see and you couldn't get anybody to talk about.

Q: So you couldn't raise the subject particularly.

ZIMMERMANN: I am sure we raised it, but we would not get any, obviously no confirmation.

Q: Were there any lines that despite the bad relations and all sometimes there are things that are going on that are really going quite well between two countries. Were there any of those? Weather research, Antarctica?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, things like that, yes. Those were the kinds of little things I was talking about during the run up to the shooting down of the Korean plane. We were doing some things like that. I don't remember all of them, but they were small signs that on both sides the go had been given to an improved relationship.

Q: What about student exchanges? Were these still going on or was that pretty well dead for most of this period?

ZIMMERMANN: We did have some students, so it wasn't entirely stopped. There were students. I don't remember now what the programs were, but there were some, not a lot. Not as

many as in the '70s when I had been there. On the line of cooperative events going on in 1983, I was actually the head of an American delegation which negotiated an upgrade of the hot line with the Russians during that period.

Q: Could you explain what the hot line was.

ZIMMERMANN: The hot line is a communications link between the politburo or the Kremlin and the White House, so in the event of a crisis, high level communication can be made. In fact, I always thought the hot line was a telephone. It is now, I am sure. But in those days in '83 it was a teletype, very slow actually. It wasn't in the White House; it was in the Pentagon in our case. It was not necessarily a personal communication between. It could have been between anybody the president designated, and it would have been too slow to prevent a real crisis. But what we were doing in our upgrade was to speed it up so that it would have more of a crisis possibility. Not now, I have lost touch, but I am sure it is very fast and undoubtedly direct.

Q: Well, what about communications? Were they a problem for the embassy? I mean we have good communications.

ZIMMERMANN: With Washington? We had a secure line to the desk. We could talk to anybody in the State Department or the Pentagon or the White House by secure line, so that wasn't a problem. Of course, cables were very quick.

Q: Well, I am just thinking were there any other things that we haven't covered?

ZIMMERMANN: About those Moscow times? Let's see. Nothing much comes to mind. Well, there is one other thing which was an interesting sidelight on religious fanaticism on the Soviet system. When I arrived in the Embassy the new embassy hadn't been built yet. The old embassy was in a very cramped courtyard in which there were also Oh I don't know, 60 apartments. My wife and I lived in one. We were hosting seven religious fanatics, Pentecostal believers who had rushed into the embassy several years before past the guards who were all KGB, and in the mistaken hope that if they had got on to American territory and we could get them out of the Soviet Union which they dearly wanted to leave because they were being oppressed. The decision was originally taken by Ambassador Toon who was the ambassador when they rushed in to the embassy in the late '70s to take them for awhile but to make their living conditions so difficult that they would leave of their own accord. When Hartman got there, this is another example of Hartman, he looked at their living conditions. They were living in one room, seven of them, or maybe it was two rooms. He said, "We have to do better for these people. As long as they are here, we have to make life as comfortable as we can." So we increased the space they had to live in. He encouraged people in the embassy to find ways to employ them. One of them did crocheting. They were very simple people, very poorly educated. So some of them worked and did gardening in the tiny courtyard and actually made some friends. Meanwhile we were trying to get them out, to get the Soviets to agree to give them exit permission if they would leave. Reagan got into this. This is an example of Reagan and his strong view of human beings. He heard about it and he said to Dobrynin, "Let's get these people out, I mean come on." It was actually being very bad publicity for the Soviets. It was a good idea to get them out from their point of view. But they had this neuralgia about letting anybody leave the country who wants to.

So, finally one of the Pentecostals went on a hunger strike. We took the decision in the embassy that we would have the embassy doctor monitor her health, and if it got to a certain stage where it became life threatening, we would commit her forcibly if need be, to a Soviet hospital. We didn't know how long this would take. Finally after about three months, she got to that point. We had told her all this. She knew. We got to that point. Hartman was away just briefly, but I was there. I sent a cable to Washington, It was Friday, saying tomorrow is Saturday. We are going to have an embassy van take her to a Soviet hospital as agreed. Washington had approved all of this. Well, alarm bells all over Washington began to ring. I got a call from Walter Stoessel, undersecretary for political affairs, saying you have got to hold up. Judge Clark, the National Security Advisor thinks this would be terrible to send this woman out of the embassy. I said, "The choice is having her die." I said, "Look, I am sorry. I don't care what you instruct me, but she is going to a Soviet hospital tomorrow. If I am against instructions, if I have to resign, I will do it. I am not going to be responsible for the death of this woman." Walter Stoessel is a very nice man. He said, "Thanks a lot for your views." I didn't hear another word about it. It is a wonderful story. Then next morning at ten o'clock, the van came into the courtyard. She was a very feisty woman. She had many temper tantrums during the course of this hunger strike. Aged about 30. She put on her good dress; she had come downstairs, and she was saying good-bye in the courtyard to all of her friends. There were about 50 or 60 people lined up to shake her hand, kiss her and so forth. She got in the van with a lot of dignity, with an embassy officer. Driven to a Soviet hospital. An hour and a half later I get a phone call from the embassy officer. He said, "She's eating, voluntarily eating." Two hours later I get a phone call from her saying, "Thank you for doing this to me." She needed it to be done against her will. She had decided it was the right thing. The story has a very happy ending. Because of Reagan's intervention with Dobrynin, the Soviets gave her an exit visa. She had to go back to her hometown in Siberia, apply through channels and - whammo - she got it and left the country and went to Israel. Then we had the job of persuading the other six to leave the embassy. They didn't trust anybody; they didn't trust us. As Tom Simons' suggestion, he was the head of the Soviet desk, we brought in Olin Robison, who at that point was head of Middlebury College and a Baptist minister with long experience in Russia, to come and talk to the six and try to persuade them that they should leave, that what happened to the first one, would happen to them all. Of course, the Soviets would give us no assurances. That again had to do with their pride. Olin spent three days praying and arguing with them and finally they agreed to go. But they set a condition that every member of their nuclear family would go too. So from seven it became about 35. All this was being done in Washington with Dobrynin. Dobrynin was given a list of about 35 family members. He said, "I'll do what I can." They left the embassy and went to Siberia, and they all got out. So it was a happy ending. They all were able to get out with their families. But it was interesting, their psychology was interesting, their enormous distrust of the Soviet authorities and of us. And the Soviet psychology was interesting. They wouldn't do anything that looked like weakness. They would not make a guarantee. They insisted that the dissidents go back to their home town and apply through channels, but they gave in. They gave in on something they had been very reluctant to ever concede before.

ARTHUR A. HARTMAN
Ambassador

USSR (1981-1984)

Ambassador Arthur Hartman was born in New York, New York in 1926. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in France, Vietnam, and the United Kingdom (England), and an ambassadorship to the Soviet Union. This interview was conducted by Bill Miller on May 31, 1989.

Q: How did the appointment to Moscow take place? What were the circumstances of that?

HARTMAN: Well again, it was I was just there for the Carter administration really in Paris and the Reagan administration came in and I of course knew Al Haig very well and he said, "I think you better stay on in France. We've got a transition period now with Mitterrand coming in, but eventually we'll have to think about a successor." I don't know what all the considerations were but I'm sure there were many. The President had a lot of friends I think that he was thinking of sending to Paris and Al finally called me back and said, "How would you like to go to Moscow?" I was torn because I was not a Soviet specialist, I did not have the language, but I was very much given to understand that if it didn't go to me, it would probably go to a non-professional. I felt at least I had a lot of experience dealing with the Soviets even though I didn't have the language. I felt very strongly about not having a language and I went to some of my old friends, I went to George Kennan, I can remember talking to Foy Kohler, Marty Hillenbrand; a number of the Soviet specialists. I remember asking them, "should I take this, or is this going to hurt the cause of professionalism?" They all encouraged me to take it and I'm glad I did. I picked up some of the language for social use and obviously for professional use, and we stayed five years; to be sure through three slow deaths of leaders before we got to the interesting period of a new generation coming into power. Intellectually I think I found the experience of being Ambassador to the Soviet Union the most challenging thing I've ever done and the most rewarding.

Q: Let me take you through that if I might. You're appointed Ambassador and you have all of these questions if it's the right thing to do, whether your the right person. You come to the conclusion that you are the best person given the circumstances and you've had a lot of experience on the vital issues of arms control, you know who the players are, you're very familiar with the literature, all the briefings and the various attitudes of our country in the past and so on? You go to Moscow.

HARTMAN: There's a step before I go to Moscow. I talked with Al Haig and with the President to find out what they're after because that to me was important. I mean I've had a lot of feelings that ordinary citizens had of the President and what his views were, and of Al Haig and what his views were.

I knew those perhaps better than I did the President's, but I sort of had doubts as to whether or not given what I had heard, if I could seriously carry forward in what the President wanted. I must say those discussions relieved me. Obviously the President was more ideologically, had a more ideological bent. What I was assured of in that period was that after an initial period of wanting to get the defenses in a better shape. I agreed with that analysis, I think we had delayed

many of the decisions in the seventies which we should not have in terms of modernizing our forces and not being able to choose. There was no consensus between Congress and the administration as to what particular things should be done, there was no defense policy that was accepted. I felt that that was a necessary basis with which to be dealing with the Soviet Union. Once I was convinced that this was not totally ideologically bent, and you know the “Evil Empire” thing is often pointed to a low point-high point of the exchange. As a basic principle it is an evil empire, it does evil things to its own people. I could accept that, what I could not accept was that this would be the sort of language of our discourse with the Soviet Union, I just didn’t think as a practical matter that it was going to get us anywhere. Indeed the President doesn’t think so either and has moderated his sort of public usages, although there are a lot of people around him who would like him to continue batting away. Since I didn’t have the feeling from him that he felt that things could only be done in one way, I thought that this was something I could do with full feeling that I would be heard and that I would have an influence. Al Haig certainly led me to believe that and indeed during the time that he was there, and later with George Shultz that I would be an important part of the process. This is again, it’s unusual for Ambassadors, but we had developed a means of communication that made that the case.

Q: To that you had direct contact with the Secretary of State and with the President?

HARTMAN: Yes, less with the President. This is not his style of leadership, he doesn’t deal on a daily basis with other people and the ones that have immediate responsibility.

Q: So that aspect of contact and the ability to discuss fully and frequently with the Secretary was very appealing to you.

HARTMAN: No only the Secretary of State, but with the Secretary of Defense, the arms control people, I kept my contacts with all of them.

Q: You were involved in the preparations for START and the other arms control negotiations?

HARTMAN: Yes, and Yes, less so in the detailed things rather than the sort of general objective. On detailed negotiating, I think I had an influence on those as well.

Q: What was the date that you arrived in Moscow as Ambassador?

HARTMAN: October of 1981 and its less than a year after the Reagan administration took office.

Q: And one leader is dying?

HARTMAN: One leader is on his way out although I met him several times and he wasn’t totally gaga but I remember on one occasion, a November seventh, I can’t remember whether it was the first November seventh or whether he was still alive at the second one. Going through the line I said something to him, I guess it was the first one, the last time I had seen him was in Vladivostok I think. I said that he had very nicely taken us to Vladivostok because the meeting actually took place outside the city limits on the outskirts as it was a closed city. He kept

promising us a trip through Vladivostok if we were good and if we reached good agreements. There was a lot of joking back and forth, in any case he had to kind of be nudged by Gromyko to recall this because he really was just about to turn ga-ga at that point and a kind of sad figure.

Q: When you go to Spaso House at that time what size embassy do you have?

HARTMAN: Well there were you know sixty odd professional officers, another forty or fifty staff, plus the large Soviet staff about which we are hearing so much these days. The basic job in the Soviet Union is to penetrate a closed society and I used a lot of the experience that I had in France, which in another sense is a closed society, it's closed intellectually sometimes. You have to invent techniques to sort of get at people, they don't want to talk to Foreign Ambassadors, they have a funnel through which they like to pass all Americans called the U.S.A.-Canada institute headed by Doctor Arbotoff. This is a tradition that comes at them from Russian days. Before I went to Moscow, George Kennan said "Look you've got a good month off in Maine, get yourself some good nineteenth century memoirs and read those, you'll learn more about Soviet society." He was right!

Q: Were these the memoirs that he had edited?

HARTMAN: No, not the ones that he edited. I got earlier ones, you know people like Coustine, and one remarkable one that he put me on to called "The Memoirs of Lady Londenderry" and it was a description of a trip that she took with her husband who was a General in the Napoleonic Wars and had gone back to visit some of their own friends in Russia and how they were shunned, and how people were suspicious of them. They were handed onto people that the Czar had designated to talk to them and they were not allowed to see some of their old friends. Well this is very much the Soviet Union today. They fear foreigners, they fear foreign contact and even with all the Glasnost that Gorbachev talks about, he's basically dealing with four-hundred years of a closed society, of a feeling that they are at the mercy of foreigners, that they are weaker than foreigners, that they are inferior to foreigners in many ways; and yet they have a great patriotism and a great closeness to their soil that gives them the backbone to resist all of this.

Q: You used the word penetrate as though it were a military operation?

HARTMAN: Well it is in a sense, I mean what I did was try to bring people to Spaso House who would be live bait for some of the intellectuals and even some of the party people because they wanted to see them. So I brought over for example, Murray Feshbock who knew more about their demography than they were willing to admit, and indeed if they had let Murray in there and talked to him very freely in that period and later they might not have had to rediscover the wheel under Gorbachev because he was already saying that alcohol was their major problem. He was already saying that they were losing young men to this, that many of the problems that they saw in trying to get their economic growth started again were do to basic undiscipline and alcoholism. Well we used people like that to sort of get a discussion going with certain elements of the Soviet bureaucracy and society as a way for us to learn more about what they were thinking.

Q: You had sixty people officers, you had resources in Washington, and you were familiar with a

lot of the writings and scholars, you had consulted and did a lot of reading. How did you ask your embassy to assess the situation for you? You arrive and you are a new boy on the beat and what was it that you asked your embassy to do first?

HARTMAN: We looked at personnel first. I brought in my own Deputy which Ambassadors normally do, an excellent man who had been in the Soviet Union before, Warren Zimmermann. We had a good staff, at the lower levels excellent people.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, you've just arrived in Moscow and you've had this careful preparation in Washington briefings, you've consulted with former Ambassadors, you've read memoirs, you've gone through intelligence material and the best insights that you can find in the Department, but it's a new place. You have this staff of sixty people and one of the questions I'm sure in your mind is "Tell me what I need to know. How should I go about learning about this place?" How did you do that?

HARTMAN: I had one other thing, I participated in my first meeting with Gromyko at the UN in New York.

Q: Was this before going out to Moscow?

HARTMAN: Yes, before going out to Moscow at the usual UN meetings in September. We had I think tried to build a staff there that had really good qualities. There is a tremendous depth of talent I think in the people who had gone into Soviet affairs as a specialty. So we had people who were experts in the internal situation and analysis of the economics and politics of the Soviet Union party organization, and people who were experts on the external aspects of Soviet policy either in arms control or in regional policies. So a lot of the early days I think were spent talking to them and beginning to make initial calls. The Soviets don't allow you to make that many initial calls. You are allowed to deal with the Foreign Ministry that's fair game, you're allowed to deal with the Cultural Ministry that's fair game, the Ministry of Foreign Trade. I can see my old friend who is Head of the Central Bank Alkimoff. After that I never got to see in all the time I was there the Head of the Plan. I mean I complained to Gromyko about it once and said, "You know this is crazy an Ambassador can't see the Head of the Plan, what's the matter here?" He said, "Oh I can't believe that's true." And sure enough he apparently leaned on this fellow and I got a call saying that at four o'clock on a Saturday afternoon I could come around and see him. Well I happened to have something else to do at that time and I never got another offer, so it was clearly reluctant on his part. Meanwhile of course he saw all the manner of Americans as they had come through or other Ambassadors from other countries.

Q: What was the, what were they trying to say to you or was this simply the bureaucracy?

HARTMAN: I think this is traditional and it applies to most Ambassadors except those that they are cultivating, because they come from a country like India for example. The Indian Ambassador gets pretty well received. I've since learned in the last year or so that even the East European Ambassadors have troubles.

The Soviets like to deal with those governments through the party apparatus and sometimes

Ambassadors are cut out of that. So it's a common problem and the way we tried to get around it was by bringing delegations in so that we could go in with the delegations that they wanted to see; either of private Americans or public officials to discuss official exchanges or particular negotiations.

Q: This is where two-tracked diplomacy works together?

HARTMAN: Absolutely, it's the only way to work there and through oddities. For example, an old friend of mine that I had met because of my interest in architecture in Paris is Kevin Roach. We invited Kevin in and suddenly found ourselves open to the architectural community. We found some rather remarkable things in the Soviet Union and we'd bring musicians in and similarly we would get to meet the musicians and artists and we would get to meet the artists. We would use Congressmen when they would come, and so otherwise you tend to be thrown onto the Refusenik community, and the semi-dissident groups. There weren't that many dissidents by the time I got to Moscow. They were either all in the Clink or out of the country. Sakharov was already in Gorki although Mrs. Bonner was still in Moscow and we would see her. So we did this, applying all these techniques in addition to the rather regular contact that we would have with the Foreign Ministry on particular negotiations on particular problems. I would regularly see the Foreign Minister, it was Gromyko at that time and later Shevardnadze to have general discussions with them and I talked with their Deputies from time to time and have general discussions, or particular things that I may have been instructed to do. Washington is very bad about getting instructions out and in the end I usually prefer not to have an instruction. The reason that instructions are hard to get out is they have to be cleared. Once you start the clearance process you get the lowest common denominator and it's really bad, so I would rather not even start that. By going back to Washington often enough, I know what's on the Secretary's mind, I know what's on the President's mind, I'd get around to other senior people in Washington. Let me alone, let me go in and do my own discussing, unless there is a particular point that they want emphasized in a particular negotiation, or a particular regional area. I remember Al sending me back and saying, "I want you in another month or so to go into the Foreign Minister and you emphasize the dangers if they start shipping certain kinds of equipment into Nicaragua." We really hit that very hard. Unfortunately we didn't make the definition quite broad enough to include helicopters, but high-performance aircraft they have stayed away from. So that kind of thing, and then having senior people from Washington come to discuss regional matters, or arms control matters, or whatever gave us the opportunity as an Embassy of getting at more people. The only point of having an Embassy in Moscow is to get at Soviets and this is something that is very hard to explain here. It's particularly hard to explain here in the kind of paranoid atmosphere of concern about security. This is a closed society, the point of being in Moscow is to do things that you cannot do in Washington.

You can read Izvestia and Pravda in Washington and do all the analysis you want. The reason for being in Moscow is to get the reactions of Soviets, real live Soviets to those articles to see whether there is anything more we can pickup that will give us an indication of what the real trends are, not just what they are saying, but what they believe. It is very difficult to do and you have to find all kinds of strange ways of doing it. In this period when we tend to be concerned about security and about what might happen. Indeed things have happened in terms of the spying back and forth. We tend to forget that there is a purpose of being in Moscow and that is to *have*

contact and not to cut ourselves off from contact. We always have to weigh that and the security risks with allowing people to have contact. We don't obviously want non-professionals to have this contact, that's the thing we try to prevent.

Q: On the official list of contacts that you were permitted to have or you were able to have, were there any that you were able to develop a close enough personal relationship where you would go to their houses for dinner?

HARTMAN: No, Ambassadors by and large don't get invited officially to anybody's house of an official nature. The houses that we got to are the intellectuals, the artists, the musicians, the refuseniks; the people who are kind of out of phase with the official society. I have never been invited to an apartment of an official. Now some of my officers have occasionally, but very rarely. When the officials want to entertain you, they do it in an official entertainment place, or at a restaurant. I suspect that there isn't that much official visiting back and forth among officials, they don't want each other to know the extent of their benefit of the nomenclature system; the access to better goods, or imported goods, they really want to keep that in the family.

Q: What about travel within the Soviet Union?

HARTMAN: Travel I could do as much as I could, I probably should have done more. I got out to the Far East, I got out to Siberia, I got out to Central Asia. My wife actually did more traveling than I did, she went out with Diplomatic groups. I always seemed to have somebody in town and I couldn't go on those trips. I went to Tabriz and Armenia and Leningrad of course, and Murmansk. I got around but I really would have liked to have got around much more.

Q: If some of these un-official visitors, some of the scientists or say groups like ours had gone a Department as sometimes happens, and they had said "Why don't you come along?" Would that have been possible?

HARTMAN: It could have been, but it would have been a big policy issue for them. Normally they just don't want it.

Insofar as they are taking any risk at all, and normally most people get permission to invite not only officials but also unofficials to their apartment and those that are given permission are trusted and they think there is some good that is going to come out of it. They would not want to get involved with the Ambassador because that raises an added dimension that they probably wouldn't want to get into, and I wouldn't want to subject them to.

Q: So it's a very circumscribed and almost an art form in Ambassadorial roles?

HARTMAN: Yes, but you meet a lot of people, I mean a lot of people came to my house through all of these non-official and official visitors we would have receptions for them, they would come, we would be able to talk to them. I would visit when visitors came through.

Q: So this is the lifeblood?

HARTMAN: Yes, and again the French experience helped. If I hadn't have had that experience I think I would have been more at a loss in Moscow as to what to do and how to get engaged enough so that you can have some discussions with Soviets and really get to know better what makes them tick.

Q: How would you assess the various, let me describe them this way; accessible institutions within the Soviet Union. For example, the nexus that seems to provide a lot of opportunity for going to the Soviet Union and conferences and what have you is The Academy of Sciences, generally. Within that there is U.S.A. institute and then for the scientists there are many numbers of groups, and for the lawyers there is?

HARTMAN: The Soviets use all of these groups to get at private citizens in other countries mainly for influence, that's what they want to do. The individuals involved in the exchanges are interested in other things, in their professional development. In other words, there is a use of the system by individuals in the system in the Soviet Union for their own purposes. So a man like Velukoff for example who is one of the leaders of the Academy, he's a physicist and he likes to keep in touch with other physicists so he does his business and he does it very well, but he also wants to keep up his professional interests. The same is true of a number of other scientists. The one area where I, the man I have the least respect for is Zarbotov who seems to me is a maneuverer of the first order who has never done any real independent work himself, and who is a manipulative individual who is the natural enemy of the Ambassador. His job is to keep as much control and contact with Americans in the private exchanges, and even officials. He is the clearinghouse, he is the guy who wants to form their opinion on any particular issue.

My job is to break that hold and so I'm naturally going to be against him and everything that he is doing, and aside from his character, which I can't stand I spent a lot of time doing that and getting around him, and getting to know his colleagues in the Central Committee, and even getting to know members of his staff better.

Q: Who did you find the most interesting?

HARTMAN: I don't really want to get into that (for security reasons), but there were people that I found genuinely good on their subject and very interesting to talk to. Other institutes like the MMO, which is the World Economy Institute headed now by Primakov, very good, solid intellect, a man who you can deal with on a variety of regional issues as well as economic issues. Other people in the scientific community for a variety of subjects that we have dealt with; people on Atomic Energy, people on environmental problems. All the things that we've had exchanges with the Soviet Union about are there to be developed and bring people over to talk to them. This administration starting out with sort of a prejudice, well picking up from a Carter policy. I mean Carter I think made a great mistake. As a sanction for Afghanistan, he shot us in the foot by cutting off cultural exchanges, that is the only reason for having a mission in Moscow is to make contact and to try and open up that closed society, and it's no sanction to the Soviets to participate in their cutting themselves off. It's a sanction against us, and it was wrong. I kind of sympathize with political leaders in this country because the major reaction whenever something happens in the world is "What are you doing?" Even if it's something totally out of control of the American President, the speeches on the Hill are all going to be "What have you done? You just

stood there and let this happen!” With the invasion of Afghanistan, well what the hell possible thing could the United States have done to stop that? This was a stupidity on the part of Soviet leadership which they now admit five years later and our policy has been to make that as difficult for them as possible there, and to talk to them about getting out. That was a good policy, but cutting off all of these exchanges was not a good policy, it was done primarily for the American market, not for what it did to the Soviet Union.

Q: So a very helpful adjunct to what an Ambassador has to do is to have vigorous exchange programs and lots of visitors to attract diplomacy?

HARTMAN: Absolutely, absolutely. Also that with those visitors you should do as much as you can to influence them to have a healthy exchange, that is one that is not controlled by the Soviet Union in which they treat people as though they are objects to send back with their policies. I think that the main thing there is to encourage people to go in for much better preparation before they come, with much more experience and substance and be prepared to discuss real topics. I think one of the most interesting things we could do as a people is to get exchanges going of a non-political nature, that is dealing with topics totally foreign to politics.

We could get dentists together with dentists, and I shouldn't say doctors with doctors because you might end up with this doctors coalition which I think is kind of, really does not accomplish a purpose. I would much rather have doctors talking to doctors about their professional lives, cardiology rather than ideology, that that would open up a part of Soviet society and have an exchange that in the end would be beneficial. What it would do is introduce new horizons for these very confident scientists and professional people and be very subversive of the Soviet system.

Q: Well what about at the political level, the visits of Congressmen, Senators and staff?

HARTMAN: I think there are good to, but there again with careful preparation. I've just been up on the Hill talking to the Speaker about his trip. They've got to get individual Congressmen up on the issues as much as the Soviets they are going to meet. The members of the Supreme Soviet are often the negotiators for the Soviets, so they know the issues. Our Congressmen don't have that kind of benefit of experience, so they have got to really study and be up on the issues and Tom Foley led a group over there several years ago in which he did that. Members of the group were organized to talk about human rights, to talk about arms control, to talk about regional problems broken down, and some bilateral issues. So when the Soviets raised these issues they found on the other side of the table a man who had done his homework and it was good. I think that's now that way that the Speaker is now going to organize this trip.

Q: In tracking the intellectual movement, you've got under Gorbachev what appears to be a significant, even revolutionary departure from the previous groups. You witnessed that and have seen some of the effects. How did you intellectually become aware of that? Did your embassy rediscover it in the journals? Was it a matter of conversations with their contacts? What was the way, how did you see something new?

HARTMAN: Before Gorbachev came to power, we had had through these visitors contact with

people like Aganvagian who at that time was in Novosibirsk and studying the economy writing in a journal called Echo, his views about how society ought to change. Occasionally we would see that he would be censored and he would tell friends of ours that he was not allowed to express the real views that he had, so there were a whole series of people like that who were advocating certain kinds of change. Gorbachev didn't sort of bring a new era with him, in fact were not even sure to this day how new it is, or how much of a change he really favors. The talk began in Andropov's time, the criticism of the kind of stuck in nature of the Brezhnev era when decisions weren't taken, where the growth rate dropped, where a lot of mistakes were made in handling things like Afghanistan. Some of the young people that we talked to would reveal in their odd crab-like way that they didn't like it and that there were better way to do these things.

So you could see a first of all a necessity for doing something because clearly the Party was not doing its job, and the civilian side of the economy wasn't working. The military side was doing quite well, there was a ferment in the intellectual community they were kind of mad that they weren't allowed to do the kind of things that they wanted to do. We had been reporting on these trends, we had been talking to people. Now we find, or I find that a lot of my job is to kind of caution people not to think that because Mr. Gorbachev looks different, talks differently, and seems a more modern person that he is the greatest performer that has come down the pike. I don't believe he is, I think he is basically a pretty orthodox fellow who has come up through the party structure, who thinks and believes that you can make the Marxist-Leninist system work; and so his first objective is to make it work. He follows I think the Andropov line that the way to do that is to create the new Soviet man, and that the perfectibility of man without real material incentives is possible. That's what he's trying to do, although he promises material incentives as well, he can't produce them at the moment. So it is a fascinating period now and I don't think we have yet seen what the real Gorbachev policy is.

Q: How do you think it (the new Soviet policy) should be followed, for our government, for the informed public? What are the best ways to follow Soviet policies?

HARTMAN: I think the best ways are to engage and to have as much going on as possible, to get in touch with as many people as possible, in as many areas as possible. The last thing I would do would be to make U.S. policy on the basis that we want to help him in some way. I think that one thing that the experience of the last forty years has taught me is that Americans are not very good at having a good enough analysis of another countries situation to know when a policy decision that they take is going to help somebody else. Think of U.S. interests and just play it straight, if it has a beneficial influence then so be it, but don't try to predict what your policies are going to do to be helpful to somebody else. We just don't know enough to do that. With Gorbachev particularly I just don't know him, I disagree strongly with the kind of Steve Colin analysis that we already know the direction he wants to go in and we should be helping him. I don't think we know the direction he wants to go in yet, my own view is that it is a pretty conservative direction; it wants to make the Marxist-Leninist system work and I have no idea why the United States should help that process, since it doesn't believe that it is going to work anyway.

Q: So through as much contact as possible and careful reading of what they say you were able to gain most of your knowledge?

HARTMAN: Yes, private exchanges and public exchanges. I mean if he really wants to begin to open Soviet society that's totally in our interest, if he's going in a different direction on inspection and verification; we want that, that will build greater confidence. They've got along way to go.

My favorite story of this is that when you go out of the American Dacha just outside of Moscow, and you want to take a walk in the woods and you walk down the road about three-hundred yards, there is a road that goes to the left and another one that goes straight ahead or to the right over into the woods. You can't turn left, there is a militiaman there. I know for a fact because I've looked from the woods on the other side of that road over across, there is nothing, absolutely nothing there that would be abnormal for the sight of a foreign diplomat. Well in a country that just outside of Moscow won't let you walk down a road in the country that has nothing on it; there's no secret installation, there's absolutely nothing there, they've got along way to go to achieve any kind of openness that would give the outside world confidence that we knew what was going on. So I say work at it, but you are overcoming four-hundred years of Russian history, not just Soviet history.

Q: What about the embassy itself? At some point our government entered into a negotiation with theirs about the embassy itself. How should that be staffed?

HARTMAN: Well, were now in a situation where the Soviets overdid, that is they brought too many people here who were engaged in straight intelligence work and so we had to cut them back, both in the U.N. and in there mission here. So were now both of us operating under ceilings, that is we have 225 people in the embassy and they have 225 people here in Washington and they have a very reduced presence in New York and I think they will meet those limits. What this means is that we will have fewer slots for substantive officers because of that 225 we now must use a number of those slots to do the jobs that the Soviets were doing before and all this winter our officers have been doing them. Through a very cold winter they have been going out to the airport and picking up a ton of pouches because we ship a lot of thing in by pouch that we don't want the Soviets to get a hand on; and bringing in the milk from Finland from the station and a whole series of things that had previously been done by either escorted Soviets our unescorted Soviets. We're never going to go back to a different system, we will not go back to a system where we use Soviet employees and that's both because of Congressional pressures, and other pressures here now and incidents like this Marine incident; and because its just felt that that is a way to build greater security. I have disputed that in the past saying that going to zero Soviet employees brings in added risks, you are going to have to bring in young Americans whose ambition is not to be in Moscow for intellectual reasons to learn more about the society, but its another place to make money. These people will be subject to pressures by the Soviets as we've seen with the Marine cases and they will be eventually somebody gets recruited. Now people say to me that if you hadn't had Soviets on the site to sort of see who was vulnerable, then these people wouldn't have been picked up; well that shows a total ignorance of what goes on in Moscow.

You fire all of the Soviet employees and one of the first ones I fired by the way was the barber, a wonderful old lady who did nothing but pump the Marines and pump everybody else as to what was going on, and I fired her early on. Well Marines need haircuts so they go off to the hotels

and very charming young ladies do the barbering in hotels, so contacts can be made. There is no substitute for picking mature people who will not get themselves into these problems, and watching them all the time and building systems to keep these people from getting out of hand. My own view is now, and I've recommended to my successor that we take the Marines out of Moscow, that we go for a kind of British system. This system uses retired policemen, retired NCO's married who come over there and do the guard duty; their wives work so we get two for one under our ceiling, and that this is what we are going to have to do. We are also going to have to have much more differentiation which we have started a number of years ago about where people can go on our premises. In other words not every American will be allowed anywhere near the classified areas, there is no reason for all of them to be there. We've already done that with the pass system, what we didn't do and what we all feel stabbed in the back is to think that our Marines would do what they have done there, or apparently have done at this point.

Q: The new thinking, what is it? This is a very difficult subject and one that many people have discussed, many people are following carefully, but you've always paid a lot of attention to intellectual currents, what's happening in painting, what's happening in various forms of writing, in the theater and so on. What was your appreciation of what seems to be exciting the Soviets themselves?

HARTMAN: They are very much excited about Gorbachev's movements. It has begun to affect the artistic community and your seeing it in play. It is a conscious policy to open up enough, not completely, to attract the intellectual community. This is not to because you want to see what they are going to produce in terms of what they have already been writing, but I'm sure Gorbachev's purpose is to try and harness the intellectual community to help him accomplish what he wants which is to modernize that society, to get people motivated to work harder and to do fewer of the things that have been debilitating to that society in the past, but be good Communists. This can be turned on, it can be turned off; Khrushchev did the same thing for awhile and then it got turned off. The trouble with a society that is based on the principle of Democratic Centralism, namely authoritarian is that it doesn't let loose totally of control, it is not a Democratic society. So the poets are unleashed at the moment up to a point. Bella Akmandulla has had all of her poetry printed now except for one paragraph that they wouldn't put into a page poem that she had written. She wrote out that paragraph for me so that I would have the complete poem. They're just getting around to publishing Dr. Zhivago for God's sake! Another perhaps more important book is going to come out soon by Ribicoff which will be a condemnation of the Stalin period and very well done and he's a great writer; incidentally, also a Jew. He is a Jew who doesn't want to emigrate, he is a member of the established class although a man who wrote a book that's been on the shelf since the seventies, and a vigorous condemnation of the Stalinist period. Movies are coming out now talking about the Stalin period, all that it seems to me is to the good, it should be encouraged, but one should not think that this is a precursor of a change in society that is so great that they are going to move away from some of the Marxist-Leninist principles that got them in trouble in the first place.

Q: That's where the debate is whether your right, or whether some of the outsiders are right?

HARTMAN: You mean debate among the outsiders, there is not much debate among the insiders about that.

G. PHILIP HUGHES
Deputy Foreign Policy Advisor to Vice President George Bush
The White House, Washington, DC (1981-1985)

Ambassador Hughes was born and raised in Ohio and educated at the University of Dayton, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Harvard University. His career with the US Government included service at the senior level with the Congressional Budget Office, the Departments of State and Commerce, and the White House, where he served two tours with the National Security Council. In 1990 he was named US Ambassador to Barbados, where he served until 1993. Ambassador Hughes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

HUGHES: From January/February 1981 until September 1985.

Q: What was the role of the Vice President as you saw it from your perspective? Where did he fit in particularly in the foreign affairs field?

HUGHES: In the beginning of the administration President Reagan had brought on Al Haig to be the Secretary of State. Even as a young staff member who didn't have access to the president's daily briefing or his daily national security meeting or things like that, but just watching what Dan Murphy did, hearing the conversations that went on in his office and phone conversations with the West Wing of the White House and so forth, it was plain to me that there was a lot of mistrust among the Reagan insiders on the White House staff. Maybe Jim Baker, maybe Mike Deaver, maybe Ed Meese, the Reagan boys. It was a triumvirate at the top of Meese, Baker, Deaver with Baker as chief of staff, Meese as Counselor to the President and initially the overseer of the National Security Council staff though that didn't work out, and Deaver as Deputy Chief of Staff and sort of chief image manager for the president. There was great mistrust of Al Haig, great mistrust of the institutional State Department and great mistrust of the foreign affairs establishment, if you would, of the government.

It was plain to me in the early days of the Reagan administration that the State Department were regarded as not red-blooded patriotic Americans who really stood up strongly and assertively for our country's interests, who really stood up strongly and assertively in the face of menaces and threats from Russia or Russian surrogates, whatever. They were suspect and Al Haig was suspect for different reasons. Not that he wasn't a full red-blooded American but that he either wasn't a team player or he wasn't a player on Reagan's team or he was too egotistical and too uncontrolled for his own, or the nation's, or the administration's good. In any case there was a desire to, I don't know exactly the right word, but to box Al Haig I guess and that George Bush as Vice President was supposed to play a role in that.

It was never plain to me how much of this was Mr. Bush's own personal doing and how much of it was simply people in the West Wing around Reagan saying "How can we keep this from being Al Haig's responsibility? Let's give it to the Vice President." Nobody can complain about that

because he is the Vice President and besides he has all this foreign affairs experience and so forth. It was plain to me that George Bush as a Vice President was going to be the most loyal, the most thorough going team player Vice President that you could get. But at the same time because of who he was and what his background was and his extensive foreign affairs experience, that he was going to be interested in finding somehow a role that President Reagan would be comfortable with that wouldn't upstage or trample on the President's prerogatives. It would be a role in which he could complement Reagan and make a contribution to the administration in the foreign affairs field, but delicately, not trying to upstage the Secretary of State, not trying to trample other departments of government, not trying to upstage the President but to play a useful role. Clearly this would be something that Bush would be thinking about.

In the early days of the Reagan administration the whole issue of how the crisis management structure of the White House should be set up was a topic. I don't know if it was in response to a proposal from the State Department. I should say by the way that in the initial days of organizing the Reagan administration, I believe that Secretary Haig generated a lot of suspicion and maybe hostility at the White House from the way he went about staffing the State Department. Clearly he was a Washington operator and an insider who really knew how the game was played.

Q: He had been with the NSC and worked at the White House.

HUGHES: He had been Chief of Staff for Ford.

Q: He and Kissinger had sort of presided over the last days of Nixon and the whole Ford administration.

HUGHES: And so he clearly knew how the game was played or considered that he did. In the very beginning of the Reagan administration, once Haig was named as Secretary of State, I have no idea how that came about, he moved out faster than any other cabinet officer who had been named to announce his lineup of subordinates at the State Department. It was apparent even to somebody who read the newspaper that his strategy was to get his team on the field faster than everybody else and make up as much yardage as possible, to use a football metaphor, before the other teams could even get organized. He described himself as the vicar of foreign policy for the Reagan administration, making a lot of people wonder what it meant to be a vicar of foreign policy.

I think all of this excited a certain reaction inside the Reagan loyalists who came with Reagan from California. In that process George Bush could be very useful.

When the issue of setting up the crisis management structure in the White House came up, there was a discussion (I happened to be around for part of it in Dan Murphy's office as Chief of Staff) when the West Wing of the White House called to ask if Mr. Bush would be willing if in the structure of the National Security Council [NSC], a subcommittee under the NSC was set up called the Special Situation Group [SSG] which would be the crisis management group that would be presided over by the Vice President which would make recommendations to the President on what to do in certain crises so the President himself wouldn't have to chair the NSC to actually thrash out different opinions and so forth. People might speak perhaps more freely

before the Vice President than they would before Reagan himself and then they could recommend to the president via the Vice President rather than the Secretary of State. The SSG was to try to find a way to perhaps compensate for what some people thought of as Mr. Reagan's limitations as a chair of a crisis management NSC session, and maybe account for what were already perceived as some of the limitations of his initial National Security Council staff and particularly Dick Allen and Ed Meese, who were regarded as unable to move paper and unable to reach decisions and unable to get things done, and certainly though to box out Al Haig, to make sure Al Haig was not running the show on major foreign policy crises.

Q: I would have thought that there would have been a natural affinity between Al Haig and Vice President Bush in how they looked at the world. Bush had been head of our liaison mission in Peking, had been a director of CIA and had been around. Haig had also been around whereas the people you mentioned, Ronald Reagan, Baker, Meese, and Deaver were really sort of the typical things that come with an awful lot of presidents, including Carter and all. They were boys from the home state coming in and were suspicious of the foreign affairs establishment which is usually dealing with the crisis. The situations don't change from administration to administration but a new administration seems to feel this. I would have thought that Bush was an old hand at this, Haig was an old hand at this and almost that he would be considered by the Deavers and company to be in the enemy camp.

HUGHES: I think there was in the initial days in the Reagan administration a certain suspicion of Bush and of the people who were around Bush as not being really conservative and not being really with the Reagan agenda. I mean after all the "voodoo economics" slogan from Bush's primary campaign still rang in people's ears, referring to Reagan's economic policies. After all Reagan had done a very brave thing in bringing his primary opponent in as Vice President and a representative of what you might call the more establishment or east coast or Rockefeller wing of the Republican Party. That even spilled over sometimes to us members of the staff. I remember once being introduced to a very conservative member of the presidential personnel staff by another good friend of mine who happened to be on the presidential personnel staff at the time. The information was of the form "he works for Bush but he is very hard core conservative" because that is what it took to establish your bona fides.

Q: Did you find yourself having to almost, it's probably the wrong word, but almost to posture a bit in order to maintain your credentials: I'm tougher than you are?

HUGHES: No, not really. I don't think so. I think that the people in the White House figured out quickly who [inaudible]. It was once you got in there and we were all pitching together on a whole range of policy issues for the next five years inside that Old Executive Office Building, the National Security Council staffers from Dick Pipes and Paula Dobriansky to Norm Bailey, a whole bunch of people who were very identified with Reagan policies, as I'd like to think I was identified with Reagan policies, we all figured out who was playing on the same team. If there were people who were thought of as not really being with the program so to speak, people figured out who they were, too, and then you sort of worked around them or you didn't collaborate very closely with them or whatever.

In any case to go back about Bush and Haig, I don't remember ever being in the same room with

the two men, to be honest, at the same time. After all, Haig was only Secretary of State for about 18 months or less. What I do recall is that Mr. Bush had a sort of delicate problem because in his conception of government and his conception of the role of the Vice President, he had a very, very complicated game to play so to speak. His conception of the role of the Vice President was it was to be a loyal deputy and do whatever the President wanted and whatever would help the political fortunes best of the ticket once he was Vice President. His conception of his institutional role was that it was a role that had lots of potential but only to the extent that he could carve a space and carry out a role without trampling, as I mentioned, on the other cabinet departments and secretaries and their proper responsibilities.

He had a third problem in that there were those in the Reagan administration, but probably not Mr. Reagan himself or his wife I suppose, but certainly advisors who must have wondered, especially with Jim Baker, who had been after all Bush's campaign manager, becoming Reagan's Chief of Staff: was Bush going to try and to take over this presidency? Was he to somehow play a super role in the presidency? He had to establish that he wasn't a figure of suspicion and that he also was with the program, he was with Reagan, not publicly espousing but secretly undermining Reagan's policy, but he was with Reagan. This is entirely speculation on my part, but I would say that even if he had been some kind of a foreign policy guru establishment of Al Haig, the last thing in the world that he could have afforded to do would have been to appear to be the ally of Al Haig, even if he thought Al Haig was completely judicious and completely even-tempered and completely balanced and completely sort of calm and deliberate in his reaction to all sorts of things.

Q: You're exaggerating because Al Haig was not...

HUGHES: He was the antithesis of all those things in his public image.

Q: Intemperate from time to time was not an inapt word.

HUGHES: Yes, and of course an early defining moment I think for Mr. Bush came in March, as I recall, of 1981 when the assassination attempt on President Reagan occurred and Mr. Bush was at that time traveling in Texas. Al Haig came to the White House and he convened a meeting of the NSC to go over the situation with Reagan's advisors. There was of course great public anxiety, and someone had to go up and make a press statement. Either Haig nominated himself or someone nominated him but in any event he walked into the press room breathless. I remember watching this on TV from my office. He walked into the press room breathless. He looked perfectly flushed and frazzled.

Q: He had a heart condition hadn't he at that time?

HUGHES: Possibly. I don't really know. I think that is right. He announced that the situation was normal and there was no cause for alarm. The Vice President had been notified and he was flying back from Texas and in the meantime Al Haig was in control at the White House. A particularly infelicitous choice of words which, I think, already in the minds of many Reagan supporters and staff, for Al Haig to come up and say that "I, Al Haig, am in control here at the White House," just convinced many people that, first of all he was intemperate and injudicious

and not suited for the role, and further that he had vast ambitions of power in the administration which were not in keeping with the way that Reagan cabinet secretaries were expected to behave. So frankly then there were a whole bunch of battles after that and Mr. Haig passed from the scene.

Q: What was your role during this time? What were some of the things that you did?

HUGHES: The role of the Vice President's Deputy Foreign Policy Advisor is a hybrid role. It is a lot like the role that you might perform on a professional staff on Capitol Hill. Briefing your principal for his next meeting with a foreign dignitary, helping prepare his public remarks on a foreign policy topic, representing him at meetings or briefing him for meetings of the National Security Council or other cabinet level meetings that might pertain to foreign policy. In our office we had a National Security Advisor, myself, a couple of military aides, and then some enlisted personnel. We sort of divided up the world between us. I drew Europe and the Soviet Union, Latin America, and then bunches of other functional topics: the intelligence portfolio, the international economic and trade portfolio, human rights and international organizations oriented portfolios. I typically didn't work on Africa. I worked a little bit on Africa in the beginning. I typically didn't work at all on the Middle East and typically didn't work on Asia.

What was my job? Mr. Bush in those days was receiving sometimes as many as three or four foreign leaders a day visiting Washington. I had to brief him for most of those meetings. I had to prepare his briefing paper and his talking points. Liaise with the State Department or other agencies that had an interest in this meeting to make sure that points that they wished the Vice President would get across would be gotten across. I had to minute the meetings in many cases. Just producing three or four briefings a day and doing the logistical coordination of the meetings, greeting the foreign visitors at the door, taking them to the Vice President's office and taking them back out again, that takes a lot of time. There is a lot of writing involved.

Why was he meeting so many foreign leaders? President Reagan's schedule was very tightly controlled and he did a very limited number of meetings a day. The emphasis was on quality versus quantity. Especially in the early years of the administration when governments all around the world wanted to get to know the new leadership in Washington in the White House, they were clamoring for President Reagan to meet with their visitors. He wouldn't do many of them. He only did those that were most important at the advice of his staff. Mr. Bush basically handled the overflow.

There is another perverse aspect of working for the Vice President, and in dealing with the State Department you get a fair dose of this, and that is he also ended up sometimes at the behest of the Department handling the overflow from the Secretary of State. That is, if the Transportation Secretary of Ghana is coming to the United States and he wants a meeting with the Secretary of State but the Secretary of State can't see him, the enterprising desk officer is likely as not to think, who could we get him to see? How about the Vice President? We ended up with all these sorts of odds and ends meetings that were recommended to Mr. Bush, many of which he did cheerfully until we got wise enough to ask questions like "is the Secretary of State seeing this person?" "Well no actually he is too busy." "Well, if he is too busy, then why do you think he merits the Vice President's time?"

Meetings of the National Security Council. Briefing the Vice President for those and keeping abreast, working closely with the National Security Council on what are the issues.

Q: I would like to grab one thing at a time. Visitors. Somebody is coming from Ghana or somewhere, what would you do and what would be the sort of the things, how would you get information?

HUGHES: It is pretty straightforward. You want me to describe how a visit is handled entirely for the Vice President?

Q: Yes.

HUGHES: For the Vice President, the idea of a visit might arise in several ways. A foreign government might request the visit through our embassy overseas or directly to the State Department through their embassy in Washington and then the State Department would contact the Vice President's office. Once they get comfortable with who are the new crew of people in the White House, officers will contact the Vice President's office directly by phone otherwise they will send over a formal request from the Executive Secretariat. It proposes a meeting between the Vice President and the Defense Minister of Germany who is coming, that is a fairly common kind of thing. That is a way it might happen. Another way it might happen is that as the Vice President's office, once the administration settled in, develops wider and closer relationships with the embassy community in town, the German embassy might call directly and say the German Defense Minister is coming and can we arrange for him to meet the Vice President?

There are certain countries and certain officials that you know are so important that the Vice President is certainly going to meet with them if at all humanly possible. There are certain people that you may come to know over time that the Vice President doesn't particularly like and he is not going to meet with them in any case. You just have to find a diplomatic way of saying so. There are other people that are really marginal calls and then especially if the request doesn't come initially from the State Department, you may have to go through an elaborate consultation first about whether we are even going to recommend this to the Vice President. Mr. Bush wanted to approve all of his own appointments so the next thing was to make sure there was time on the calendar and send a memo to Mr. Bush urging him to meet with this person and explaining why. It was usually very short and he usually checked off on it in his night reading and sent it back to you saying set it up.

We would then set it up with the scheduling office and that involves determining which office we are going to use: the West Wing office, the Old Executive Office Building office, or sometimes, rarely but sometimes, his office in the Senate. Who is going to come with the foreign leader? Who is going to come from the State Department and the National Security Council? The State Department would then prepare a briefing paper on a schedule that we'd set up. There is a standard arrangement that we worked out with the secretariat. The briefing paper would come over in a specified format. We evolved the format over time so that it was more suitable for the Vice President. Then we would rework it into our own briefing paper basically for the Vice

President. Oftentimes meetings would happen on such short notice that we wouldn't have time for the State Department to generate a briefing paper.

Once upon a time at the beginning of the administration when everybody was struggling to do a great job and to show off their staff expertise for the Vice President, Dick Allen decreed that the National Security Council should prepare a briefing paper for every Vice Presidential meeting and the State Department would prepare a briefing paper for every Vice Presidential meeting. Of course the Vice Presidential staff, not to be outdone, was going to prepare a briefing paper for every Vice Presidential meeting. The upshot of it was that Mr. Bush, for a 20 minute meeting with the transportation secretary of Ghana was going to get about eight or ten pages of written prose, much of which would be repetitive. A State Department paper covered by a National Security Council paper, covered by a Vice Presidential office paper with all this supposed information in it. We got that all streamlined into something much more workable so eventually Mr. Bush pulled a set of talking points off the back of his briefing paper and he just went through the meeting with a few points. There was then participating in the meeting, minuting the meeting, and doing any follow-up from the meeting. So that's how a meeting happens.

As I say over time you learned some things. You learned who are really important to the Vice President or to the agenda that we are trying to evolve. The German Defense Minister comes to town at the height of the Euro-missiles crisis, there is no question that the Vice President is going to see him especially since the president will not see defense ministers for the most part. We have to make sure that the Vice President is primed in what to say. Usually that involved liaising with the State Department, liaising with the NSC and sometimes liaising with the intelligence community often over the phone, sometimes over the secure phone, to gathering information about what was currently hot with these countries. Although on the staff we are following the daily traffic and reading the NID [the National Intelligence Daily] and other daily intelligence publications, if you are covering Europe, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and Latin America and Canada and all of those functional portfolios, nobody can be absolutely on top of every development in every country at the rate of three briefing papers a day, or three meetings a day, or two meetings a day, or one meeting a day. That is a big part of the job.

Another part of the job is briefing the Vice President for meetings with the National Security Council or other cabinet level meetings in which foreign policy related topics are going to be discussed. Once again there it is working closely with the NSC. You will have been participating probably in inter-agency deliberations representing the Vice President's office for weeks or months in advance of the NSC meeting, as options and issues and ideas and recommendations for the president are developed. From all of that participation you will sort of know where the bodies are buried, what agencies are taking what positions, what cabinet officers are probably going to argue what positions. You'll have a sense of what you think is the right thing to do. Both the right thing substantively and what comports with what you know to be the positions of the Vice President from things he has taken or said or done in the past.

You write him a briefing usually in close consultation with the NSC because in those days we were trying to make sure that the president and the Vice President were together in these meetings. Our briefing paper would cover the president's briefing paper for the NSC so the Vice President would see what the president was given by the National Security Advisor. On top of it

would be a spin paper, if you would from us, from myself and my boss when I was involved in these briefings, to say this is how we think the meeting is going to unfold and this is what we think this cabinet secretary and that cabinet secretary are going to want to say. This is where we think the NSC staff wants this to come out, and this is what we think would be a good posture for you to take in this meeting. You might want to make these points or you might want to ask these questions or you might want to concentrate on these issues. And brief him for the meeting. Usually my boss would go along with him to the NSC meetings, or Dan Murphy, the Chief of Staff. Usually Dan Murphy would go with him to NSC meetings. Then we would learn about what happened and there might be some role for the Vice President in implementing the follow-up, i.e. if the NSC decides the Vice President needs to take a trip.

Preparing the Vice President for his visits abroad, Mr. Bush began traveling slowly and somewhat reluctantly. He didn't take his first trip abroad until as I recall June of 1981 when he went to meet Francois Mitterrand at Mitterrand's installation as President of France. He stopped in London on the way back, meeting with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. He didn't take another trip abroad until I think September of that year when he went to Mexico for the Mexican independence day celebration. Each time the Vice President traveled abroad, he need to be briefed for the travel. The travel needed to be arranged. The countries that he was to visit and the reasons for visiting, the agenda, the purposes of the trip and the expected accomplishments of the trip all had to be outlined and discussed. When those trips happened in my part of the world, that was part of my job.

Representing as I mentioned the Vice President's office in inter-agency deliberations was another important part of the job and having the opportunity to staff and support the Vice President for crisis management responsibilities. My most memorable experience in that regard was the Grenada rescue operation in 1983.

Q: This is tape two, side one with Philip Hughes.

HUGHES: As I was saying my most memorable crisis management experience was in the planning of the Grenada rescue operation in 1983 so that was another aspect of that.

Q: I want to come back to that but first I want to go back to these visits. It may be a small matter but I was wondering, were any visits, people calling on the Vice President, particularly notable either from a serious, humorous or annoying matter that sticks in your mind?

HUGHES: There were lots of visits that were memorable or humorous or annoying. I remember several visits where various funny things happened. On one occasion in the early '80s we had been trying very much to continue pursuing the policy of differentiation vis-à-vis Romania compared to the rest of the Eastern Bloc because of their more independent minded and intractable sort of policy with respect to the Soviet Union. You might say it was a way of wedge driving in the Eastern Bloc. Although we had our difference with the Ceausescu Government over certain human rights things and Mr. Bush had particularly crusaded for the release of certain families from Romania whose cases had been brought to his attention particularly after he visited Romania in 1983, we nevertheless did attempt with Romania's ambassadors in Washington and by meeting with Romanian officials, Vice Presidents and other people when they came to call in

Washington, to maintain a very cordial set of relations with Romanians. I remember on one occasion where this was totally thwarted. A Romanian ambassador was brought to see Mr. Bush as a courtesy introductory call soon after coming to Washington and presenting his credentials. The ambassador's job of course was to maintain good relations with the United States and he proceeded to get into a fight with Mr. Bush over some issue of how policy was being handled in Romania.

I remember a Hungarian ambassador who did the same thing. The outgoing Hungarian ambassador had been regarded as just sort of sweetness and light, a fine representative of his country even though it was then under Soviet domination. His successor was brought to the White House and there was every hope that he would strike off a good relationship with the Vice President. Once again the Hungarian ambassador took on a very pugilistic approach with the Vice President and they ended up getting their relationship off on rather a sour note.

The Vice President had, I remember, a discussion with Helmut Schmidt in his OEOB office once Schmidt had ceased being chancellor. It was one of the most far ranging and visionary discussions between two statesmen about the panorama of the world that I can recall. Just sort of a wonderfully visionary discussion.

Some of the Vice President's meetings that for me were the most memorable in terms of the witticism that came out of them actually were meetings that he had overseas rather than in his Washington office. I remember once he was meeting with Franz Joseph Strauss in Bonn in connection with a trip he made there in '83 or '85, I don't recall which one. It was at a time soon after Gorbachev had taken power so we can date it. Mr. Bush was asking Franz Joseph Strauss's views about Gorbachev and whether Gorbachev could be successful in achieving reform of the Soviet system. Strauss said to Bush that reforming the Soviet system was like trying to make roasted snowballs. There were a number of other funny meetings like that. We can go over more of them. They will come back to me as we talk along I am sure.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point. I would like to put at the end that you were talking about maybe there were some other incidents of meetings, overseas travel and all. We can talk about the role of the Vice President as you saw it and what you were doing on Vice President Bush's overseas travel. Also I wonder if you could comment on the fact that more than most, George Bush seemed to be collecting names of people that he could call on in the international field which he certainly did in spades during the Gulf War crisis when he was president. Was there a sort of plan or was he building up a repertoire there? Also some comments again from your perspective, did you see particularly after George Shultz came in, the clash between George Shultz and Casper Weinberger? Did the Vice President play any role in trying to keep these two people, who apparently couldn't stand each other, apart? And then more about Ronald Reagan and the field of foreign affairs and various people on the NSC. Again, all of this from your perspective and any things from the White House. Of course we will come to Ollie North and that whole thing too. Whatever you can talk about and then we will keep going from there.

Today is the 28th of January 1997. You heard that list of things. Let me ask first about Bush and collecting names. Were you involved in this?

HUGHES: To the extent that I was right in the middle of Bush's foreign policy operation, yes. But I think that it would be not quite the right view to think of what the Vice President did during his time in the foreign affairs field as just amassing Rolodex. That was sort of a byproduct of the other things that Bush was doing in his foreign policy role as Vice President. As I was reflecting on the last story that I was telling you about, sort of funny episodes from the Vice President's travels, it reminded me that Bush was in contrast to some Vice Presidents whom, the legend was anyway, the President stuck on a plane and just kept them flying. This was something supposedly that was a famous pitfall of Vice President Agnew, that he was sort of put on a plane and kept flying. Mr. Bush traveled a great deal but the overwhelming majority, I think, of Mr. Bush's foreign travels had behind them some central mission that he was on for the administration. Sometimes that mission was the initiative of the President, or the President's staff. Sometimes the idea was Bush's own idea and sometimes it was an idea that his staff, I or my colleagues, got up with others in the administration.

When I think back over those travels, there are certain trips that are sort of hallmarks for me. Things Mr. Bush was doing to carry water for the administration on foreign policy and in the course of doing those, he interacted with a lot of people, he formed personal friendships. He introduced into his travels and also into the visits of foreign dignitaries to the United States, a special personal touch and I think part of that was his own personal graciousness. Part of it was going the extra mile to invest in personal capital that would pay off for the United States in our dealings with a country, with these leaders over the long haul and part of it was probably also cultivating relationships that, if he became President, would serve him in good stead.

Q: You are quite right to mention this. It is not a Rolodex of gathering names but more than almost anyone I can think of, he seemed to both go out and make the contacts and obviously get the name, but I mean make the contacts which he was able to pull in as President which was a very important element.

HUGHES: I think there is another element of Bush's style that is probably important to bear in mind and that was his penchant for doing special personal things for visitors. Later on in the vice presidency, particularly in the second term of President Reagan and then this carried over into Mr. Bush's presidency, he took to the idea of extending personal invitations to leaders with whom he felt special friendship to visit him in Kennebunkport at his family home. I can't remember offhand the names of all the leaders that he invited to do this. After he became president he invited President Mitterrand of France for example up to Kennebunkport, I recall. Every one of the those evolutions in Kennebunkport was an investment in relationship building and personal capital building that would pay off later.

Q: Let's talk about some of the trips that you were involved with because I also want to keep it from your perspective of how you saw this, what some of these particular trips were doing?

HUGHES: In 1982 we had a major challenge in Europe to keep the allies together in support of INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) missile deployment in order to be able, we felt, to bring the Soviets to the INF negotiating table and to get an INF control or reduction agreement. Mr. Bush undertook a mission in 1983 to visit all the capitals of countries that would be key to INF deployment and other capitals that would be important, like Paris, to persuade the allies to back

the administration's position on INF deployment, to go forward with INF deployment, so that we could credibly represent that NATO was not going to be deterred by the Soviets from deploying intermediate range nuclear forces to counter the Soviet SS-20s. And the only way that Russia would be able to deal with this would be to come to the bargaining table. He made that trip, he made that case, and it was quite successful.

His very first trip was to welcome President Mitterrand to the family if you would of western leaders. The first socialist president of France in the post-war period who had a couple of communists in his first cabinet, something that was very worrying to the allies. Mr. Bush went to reach out to Mitterrand and there began a long and close relationship between Mitterrand and Bush, and the Reagan-Bush administrations and France. On that same trip he visited Margaret Thatcher in England as well, our closest friend in Europe.

Mr. Bush made a pair of visits to Geneva as I recall in 1984 and again in 1985. In 1984 laying down the U.S. position on a Chemical Weapons Treaty before the United Nations Disarmament Committee. A very controversial position which called for any place, any time inspections as the centerpiece of the verification provisions of the treaty. A provision that some people thought was a sort of killer amendment and that other people thought was frankly necessary in order to be able to have any assurance of verifying something where you are dealing with essentially chemical compounds that could be put anywhere. Weapons that could be small enough and have low enough signatures that they could be put or hidden anywhere. The difficulty with verifying this sort of thing is pointed later in Iraq.

The next year in 1985 he went back and laid down the text of the treaty. First the position, then he presented our draft treaty. This was at a time when he had been in the position of having twice cast tie-breaking votes in the Senate on binary chemical weapons production in the U.S. -- something he joked publicly that his mother called him about and sort of gave him a "shame on you" for. I am not sure what his personal commitment to chemical weapons arms control was, as a sort of deep seated personal belief, but clearly it helped balance, if you would, his image on this issue to be the administration's most visible spokesman on chemical weapons arms control in Geneva in those two outings.

Q: I want to come back because this is focusing on you. What were you doing and what were some of the pressures when say Bush would go out and take a trip? You had a rather peculiar White House at that time, I am talking about the staff and lots of jealousies, lots of stuff going on. What were the pressures on you and all?

HUGHES: Let me just mention one other trip that I would like to mention, then I'll go back to your question. That trip was the Vice President's trip to Central America in 1983 as I recall in which the central mission was the trip to El Salvador. The central mission was to lay down the law to commandants of the Salvadorian military that death squad activity had to stop or we wouldn't be able to sustain aid to the Salvadorans and the whole effort would collapse. He went and made that case to the Salvadorian military commanders and there were subsequently important changes in command, important reform, death squad activities substantially did stop. We were able to not only continue assistance to Salvador but began a lethal aid program to the Contras partly as a result of that.

What was I doing in the midst of all of this? Each of his trips I was involved in preparing and on some of them I accompanied the Vice President. In preparing each trip, each was slightly different. Let's take the case of the Vice President's trip in support of INF deployment in 1983. We recognized that we had a problem on our hands in Europe. Not just a publicity problem but a policy problem in which the commitment, the backbone of our European allies was being tested and where we needed to do something but what something wasn't entirely clear. I think that the idea of the trip emerged from an initiative of the staff, either myself or in consultation with the Vice President and my boss, that perhaps it would be a good idea for the Vice President to visit a number of capitals in Europe. It might even have been suggested by the President's National Security Advisor at the time, probably Bill Clark, to the Vice President and it may have filtered back to us that way.

But in any case, I'm trying to remember the rough timing of the trip, I believe it was early 1983. We were clearly preparing in late 1982 for this visit or thinking about the idea. The question came up, when should it happen? There was as I recall an election or a set of election events in Germany that some people were sensitive to and felt that the Vice President should go later. I don't remember the exact event but there was a politically sensitive event in Germany and it appeared the Vice President should go later. This was, I think, the view of the State Department. There was a different view on the NSC from Bill Clark and an officer that I worked with at the time a great deal, the number two guy on the European account, Dennis Blair, who was working then under Dick Pipes, the senior director for European and Soviet Affairs - he was really a Soviet specialist. Dennis and I were consulting about this and it was very much Dennis's view, and I very much concurred, that we should not wait to do something to shore up the support of our allies for INF deployment. There were many pressures and stresses on them. The Russians were being very energetic in trying to bully the allies into, in a salami slice fashion, one-by-one, dropping out of their commitment to deploy especially since the German commitment to deploy - had been made contingent on a couple of other countries, including Benelux countries, committing to deploy.

We felt that the Vice President should travel earlier; so Dennis with the connivance or the cooperation of Judge Clark sent a back channel message to then Chancellor Kohl's National Security Advisor who I believe was Wolfgang Schaeuble. It was 13 years ago so I am a little bit hazy but I think it was Wolfgang Schaeuble. Clark sent this message to Schaeuble asking how would the chancellor feel about a Vice Presidential visit earlier rather than later in 1983? We got back from the Germans that there would be no problem going forward. So we informed the State Department, and did go forward with planning the trip.

What did the planning involve? It involved first of all selecting what capitals the Vice President would visit. It was pretty obvious that it had to be the main deployment capitals of NATO: Germany, Britain, France because of France's overall importance in NATO, and Brussels and The Hague because they were the two Benelux countries in this mix. I am trying to recall whether it was on that occasion or on a later occasion that the Vice President visited Luxembourg. I think we did not visit Luxembourg on that occasion. In any case that was the trip that was got up and the Vice President made those visits and managed to keep the allies together. We selected the capitals.

Of course in every case there is a pre-advance visit which goes out and I did all of them in my areas of the world that I was responsible for. These involved basically going with some advance people to do essential advance things. On the substantive side I basically went over what would be the agenda for discussion and set some limits on what we would do in the way of events and what sequence of events we would accomplish to try to project the image or project the agenda or mission that the Vice President was on. When should a press availability take place? What should be the ground rules? Do we want to have joint press events? Those sorts of things were things that I and the press folks would work on. Usually that mapped out pretty much what the Vice President was going to do, I don't recall there being a great deal of pulling and hauling over the substance of the trip.

From there on it was a matter of putting together the Vice President's briefing. Usually there were a series of oral briefings that were given to the Vice President beforehand and I would orchestrate those -- what would be the topics, who would be the briefers. You think there would be a lot of controversy or a lot of pulling and hauling over who got in to brief the Vice President but I don't remember receiving many appeals that these people are getting in and we also want to brief the Vice President. As I say, beforehand there was usually a series of pre-trip briefings and I don't remember anyone really second guessing or appealing the lineup of briefers. And then there was preparing the Vice President's briefing package which meant all of his substantive remarks, his talking points for meetings, a trip book with background material on every issue that he could read along the way and then either sending him off, if I wasn't going on the trip, or going with him on the trip and then doing a bunch of support things along the way. That gives you a sense of what that was like.

For the two outings on the Chemical Weapons Treaty in Geneva, there was an important policy issue at stake. What was going to be the U.S. position on verification? What was the Vice President going to say and eventually what was the treaty going to contain? Leading up to that there were a series of inter-agency meetings, some of them formal, some of them informal get-togethers up in the NSC staff offices on the third floor of OEOP, one floor above mine. I participated in those for the Vice President's office and in those kinds of meetings the approach I think that I took to performing my role was to try to figure out where the administration's center of gravity was on these issues. What was likely going to emerge because you had a very conservative White House with quite a number of people who were politically and ideologically identified with Ronald Reagan in the White House, both with the senior staff and in the ranks of the NSC, often standing off against federal bureaucracies. I mean, that is, permanent government staff with career civil servants or career public servants in them. That was usually the cleavage I found between where does the permanent bureaucracy stand and where do people in the White House want to go. I was trying to figure out what's the center of gravity here -- both what are the equities at stake, and which positions seem to have the most merit and also the most chance of winning. There is an element of advising the Vice President on what we think is right or what might you think is the right position and what's safe for you. What is safe for you, where should you be? Should you take sides or is it safer to stand aside until the dust clears?

Q: Did you have the feeling that you were both trying to carry out obviously the President's policy but protect your principal, being the Vice President, against the inevitable jealousies,

egos of others in the White House?

HUGHES: Yes, and also to protect him sometimes from what might be positions of the administration. I remember on another matter, it was a speech that the Vice President was supposed to give, some remarks that he was supposed to give on the Strategic Defense Initiative [SDI]. This was actually later on in 1985 but it speaks to the point that you were just raising. In collaboration with the NSC, the Vice President's speech writers (and I had some role in this) had to come up with a draft set of remarks for the Vice President to make on SDI. These remarks echoed what the president and others in the administration said about building a defense system that would stop Soviet missiles from an attack on the United States. Our Chief of Staff then, himself a retired admiral, read these remarks. I remember, I was standing in the Vice President's outer office in the West Wing and we were waiting to go in to see the Vice President. He was reading these remarks, again echoing the standard line of the administration. He turned to me and said, we can't have the Vice President say this. It is fine if Ronald Reagan says this. Everybody knows that he doesn't know what he is talking about, but people assume George Bush knows what he is talking about so he can't say this.

Q: This is the thing that I find absolutely amazing about the Reagan administration in that in a way the President was deniable but the other people around him weren't. He would set the course but then sort of the staff would kind of take over from there and then all of a sudden you had all the various elements playing on more in the staff side than really on the President. Maybe this is unfair.

HUGHES: No. I don't think it is unfair but I think it's actually maybe not a bad way to run the railroad. The President set the general course; he left it to the staff to work out the details. Sometimes the staff disagreed sharply about the details. Sometimes the details they disagreed about were fundamental to whether you could achieve the stated course or not. Sometimes I think those who didn't like the destination we were headed for came up with essentially detailed procedural kind of disagreements that were really disguised disagreements about fundamentals. The President was sort of left above the detailed fray, but he was there to adjudicate the differences and if necessary say "look, I said I wanted to do this. We are not achieving that so let's do this."

Back to your question, were we there to protect the Vice President from cabinet battles and so forth? Yes, you are always there to protect your principal but sometimes you are looking at what is the substance of policy that he is going to be associated with and you are not making administration policy. To some extent you are in a position to say, well, if we put it that way or if we go quite that far, this may be difficult for the Vice President to do. But in that sense it constrains a little bit more what the people around the President might be willing to do but it doesn't drive them. Then you try to figure out what is safe for your principal.

I remember another instance where two senior officials, an Undersecretary of the Treasury and an Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs came over to see my boss. They came up with this great idea that the Vice President should go to one of the UNCTAD meetings in Yugoslavia; it was a pledging conference. They came up with this brilliant idea that the Vice President should go to this UNCTAD meeting and he should present the U.S. position because it would mean so

much to the UN to have an official of his level. It would make such an important statement for an official of his level to go to UNCTAD about our seriousness and our commitment and our devotion to the underdeveloped world and so forth. My boss -- I don't mean to be critical of him -- but he rather naively took this all in and seemed to be thinking more about another trip and how Mr. Bush would like that.

Q: Your boss being the admiral?

HUGHES: No, my boss was Don Gregg, Bush's National Security Advisor. So he seemed to be receptive to this. For my part I saw it as nothing but a can of worms because it was plain that we were not going to be coming up with any meaningful financial pledge for UNCTAD and many in the administration had serious problems with both UNCTAD and UN organs in general as reliable vehicles for American foreign policy interests. I was right away calculating as I heard about this, well if this is so important, why aren't these senior officials who are going to talk to us about this also going? Perhaps they know that something unpleasant is going to happen and they are not eager to be there to watch. Should the Vice President be eager to be there to watch and be on the receiving end of blasts from the third world about the U.S. parsimoniousness and stinginess and so forth?

Anyway the key thing was, from my point of view, to see if these gentlemen's approach really represented an inter-agency viewpoint or were they basically just fishing for some high level official to get out there to take the flag so the Secretary of State wouldn't have to go or they wouldn't themselves have to go. I made a quick call to Rick Burt, who was then the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs and said this has been proposed to the Vice President, what do you think about this? I knew perfectly well what he thought about it. The idea was shot down in flames within about 48 hours and that was protecting your boss. How to keep something that was just going to embarrass him publicly from embarrassing him publicly. To keep him from blundering into that. So yes, we were sometimes protecting our boss, but I don't remember protecting Mr. Bush so much from inter-agency battles as I remember protecting him from bad ideas, just dumb ideas that would not enhance his image or his substantive role in the foreign policy process. Ideas that would not advance administration policy, and that would get him associated with things that he might later live to regret in his political life. Those were the things I remember trying to be a bit protective about.

Q: How about on a trip, what sort of things did you find yourself doing? Were there any particular problems on any trip?

HUGHES: No. Actually there was a funny episode that happened with respect to Ollie North that I can tell you about, but on a trip it is pretty cut and dry. The first thing is don't miss the airplane when it takes off from Andrews Air Force Base. Everybody needs to be aboard. On the flight over to wherever the destination is, at some point typically Mr. Bush would have his briefing in his sort of the onboard air force office. The planes we dubbed Air Force II in those days, 970971 to 72 were the tail numbers. Old presidential aircraft that had been retired to the Vice Presidential and other dignitary fleet. There was a central lounge with a sort of boomerang-shaped desk and a banquet and a central swivel chair for the Vice President. He would gather his press advisor, his chief of staff, his national security person, the NSC person who was along for

the trip, the State Department person who was along for the trip. He always invariably took someone from the State Department and from the NSC. It was a very consciously coordinated inclusive sort of thing, and from other agencies when it was important to the purpose of the trip, maybe someone from Defense if that was important, maybe someone from the EPA if that was important. But anyway, those core people would be invited up and they would brief and discuss with the Vice President, but it wasn't so much in the form of a briefing. Sometimes it was a bit moderated by the chief of staff but it was more in the form of a roundtable discussion. Those would happen not only on the flight over but typically in between stops if we were flying on the airplane.

Once on the ground, basically you fit into a schedule that has been worked out by the advance team. It is what is called the line-by-line schedule and it controls every movement of the party. The Vice President may arrive and he might go straight to the ambassador's residence to be lodged and the rest of the staff go to the hotel. On the trip the duties of a foreign policy guy are pretty straight forward. You are to accompany the Vice President to his meetings. In the Vice President's office when I did this, I always took the notes. On other trips, I know sometimes my boss, the Vice President's National Security Advisor Don Gregg, or others left it to the State Department to take notes. If there was an embassy person who was permitted to be in the meeting, that person might be the note taker. I considered it though to be my job to take the notes so I took notes on each of the Vice President's meetings and did the memcons. I thought it was very important that the Vice President's staff have control over how the official records of those meetings were made and what they said or didn't say, again from the standpoint of not just the judgment of history but people riffling through the files in future years. Then I typically did the minutes that day as soon as I had a free minute. I remember on one occasion in Brussels, I kept my secretary up until about 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. We just did all the memcons from that day that night. I'd do very voluminous ones, almost verbatim ones.

You would attend the Vice President's social functions. You would be called upon if a problem came up in the course of the trip, a question and a demand for something to be put on the schedule. Someone who has tried to pass the Vice President a message. A problem about a future stop that is upcoming where there is a hiccup in the schedule. You would be called upon to maybe sort it out. Sometimes we were working on multiple projects at once. I remember coming back from Ecuador on one occasion, we were preparing the text of a speech the Vice President would give in Baltimore about 48 hours after our return to try to put pressure on congress to achieve support for an MX missile appropriations vote. Once again the Vice President was called upon to articulate the administration's message and do it in a public place that would be a little bit away from Washington where we would be able to get some national press and do it in a very forward leaning, forthright way.

Q: Speaking of this, on the foreign affairs side, the Vice President has another job which is to be president of the Senate and there are foreign affairs votes and all. Did you get involved in that?

HUGHES: When it came to votes and vote counting in the Senate, the Vice President has a legislative affairs assistant. That person typically works and lives up on Capitol Hill. He or she were the people who were mainly responsible for the liaison with Congress.

The Vice President's national security affairs staff got involved in selected issues in this way. If the administration thinks a key vote or there was a key congressional consideration of some matter where the Vice President was going to be called upon to intervene with members, say make calls to members and try to persuade them to support the administration's position or oppose legislation the administration opposed, that would usually be deliberated between the NSC staff and sometimes most often the relevant agency. That agency might be the State Department, it might be the Defense Department or the CIA or the intelligence community. On occasion when the Vice President's help was needed, the pull that those agencies would use to approach the Vice President, the Vice President's national security staff, was we need the Vice President if he is willing to make calls to these members or to make representations to members. If the Vice President was needed to say stay up all night to provide the tie-breaking vote on binary chemical munitions production or some other issue like that, that would usually come to him through his legislative affairs office. But if on the other hand we faced key opposition to say a major intelligence collection program and the DCI [Director of Central Intelligence] and his staff wanted to get the Vice President involved with key members to ask them to (again these things aren't publicly discussed it's all inside this select committee on intelligence or the House Permanent Select Committee on intelligence) support the program, then the approach would be made typically either from the DCI staff or from the NSC's intelligence unit, to me or to my boss. We would work up a little briefing package and in coordination with the chief of staff or with the chief of staff's approval, run it in to the Vice President to see if he would be willing to do this. Similarly on a defense matter. I don't remember too many foreign affairs per se matters where this happened but I do remember some defense procurement items. I do remember some intelligence community concerns where the Vice President was brought in.

Q: Did you find yourself involved at all, or the Vice President, sort of between the Defense Department and the State Department? Relations weren't great between the two leaders.

HUGHES: I know that and you sort of heard the tensions between Shultz and Weinberger inside the administration and sometimes saw the effects of those tensions. I myself can't think of an instance where the Vice President was himself sort of torn between these two, or mediating between these two men. I think first of all in order to see those instances you probably have to be in the room with them when this occurred or you would have to be in the room privately with him immediately after some discussion in which Shultz and Weinberger may have sharply disagreed with each other before the president and Mr. Bush reflected on that after the fact. I don't remember, there may have been some episodes like that, but I don't remember them.

I don't believe that Mr. Bush would have sought to insert himself in the middle of that. It was not his style in the vice presidency to try and mediate inter-agency disputes much less to mediate inter-personal disputes between cabinet members. It was much more his style in my judgment to take the posture of you guys work it out and once we've got a policy that I am supposed to sell so to speak in the world abroad, then I will take it to the world abroad and sell it as long as it's something that I can sell. As long as it is something that is not either harmful to me personally or politically or intellectually, so unsaleable that I can't really do it.

When Shultz came to the State Department one of his first challenges was to unwind the frayed, the skein of terribly strained relationships between the U.S. and its European allies over the

Soviet natural gas pipeline. I don't have a lot of detailed commentary on this to offer you but this was clearly a case where the Defense Department was strongly of the view that the pipeline needed to be stopped at all accounts.

Q: We're talking about a Soviet gas, natural gas pipeline?

HUGHES: The Buringori gas pipeline through Eastern Europe to Western Europe which would have made certain Western European countries importantly dependent for energy supplies on the East Bloc, at least that was the concern. The Reagan Administration had sought to use our export control laws and policies to block the construction of the pipeline including forbidding subsidiaries of American companies operating in Europe from participating in the pipeline project. This led European countries to essentially enact legislation or issue orders forbidding American subsidiaries operating in their territory from complying with U.S. law, insisting their own sovereign law was governing.

Shultz arrived and he needed to sort this out. It's pretty plain that in doing so he faced major opposition from the Pentagon to just wind down the level of conflict and rhetoric and do away with the temporary denial orders that had been issued against U.S. companies. Try to get behind the campaign that certain firms had launched against the U.S. government, Dresser Industries was such a firm I remember. I am sure there was a clash with the Pentagon. From what I recall, it was my boss's, Don Gregg's view and I think therefore probably also Mr. Bush's view that we had gone too far in trying to, in a very muscular way, stop the Buringori pipeline almost unilaterally. I think it was an occasion on which probably in substance he sided with what Shultz was trying to do but I don't recall seeing any evidence of him therefore clashing with Weinberger or maneuvering in conjunction with Shultz to outflank Weinberger or anything of that sort. That is not really his style.

GEOFFREY W. CHAPMAN
Political Officer
Moscow (1982-1985)

Geoffrey Chapman was born in England and raised in England and Boston. He became a naturalized American citizen in 1957 and attended Bowdoin College and Princeton. He later entered the Foreign Service in 1971 and served in Germany, the USSR, and England. He also held several positions within the State Department. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: And then you went where? To Moscow?

CHAPMAN: To Moscow, yes.

Q: How would you describe the state of our relations with the Soviets the summer of '82 when you got there?

CHAPMAN: Relations were not as bad as they became a little later on. We were engaged with the Soviet bilaterally, and various arms control negotiations were in progress. Still, there was obviously a lot of tension. Afghanistan was still a major sticking point so it was not a very easy relationship. It was a difficult time for an American diplomat working in Moscow. We were dealing a closed society, and our ability to make professional contacts and to produce useful information were necessarily limited. During my first year in Moscow I served as the publications procurement officer, which was a great job in many ways because it got me to travel throughout the Soviet Union. There were of course extensive travel restrictions imposed by the Soviets, but we could travel to fairly large areas of the Russian Republic and Ukraine and to the capitals of the other constituent republics of the Soviet Union. In my three years in Moscow I traveled to all 15 republics at least once -- in Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Baltics -- as well as fairly extensively in Russia itself. Basically the job involved working for the agency in Langley trying to come up with all kinds of publications that are not normally available outside of the Soviet Union that might give them a better picture on what's going on there.

Q: Well how did you find Comrade Ivanof who ran the local bookstore in Bishkek or something when you arrived there? I mean, you must have- everybody knew what you were doing. I mean, how were you received and how about buying these books?

CHAPMAN: It varied tremendously. I don't think the center issued orders to the republics not to allow me in the bookstores. I remember encountering no problems in initial trips to the Baltics -- I was free to wander through the bookstores and buy what I wanted. Sometimes there was virtually nothing worth buying; other times I would come out with stacks of books. The I went down to Kiev and started shopping in a large bookstore very near to the hotel I was staying at. I was there all of ten minutes when an assistant came by and told me that the store was closing to take inventory. And this ten minutes after the store opened. Obviously it was a ruse to get me and the colleague I was traveling with out of the store. I went to other stores in the Soviet Union where they would have most of the store cordoned off, so I could only go to the children's book section for example. I'd find other stores closed down, doubtless timed to my arrival, with a sign on the door announcing that an inventory was in progress but obviously nothing of the sort going on. In one particular store in Akhshabad in Turkmenistan I plunked a stack of books on the counter only for the clerk to tell me that all except three or four were reserved for specialists and that she would not sell them to me. So it wasn't exactly a free and open buying experience.

Q: I remember I was in Yugoslavia in the '60s and one of my local employees came up and said you should go down to the Yuga Salenska Kenega, which was the main bookstore in the main square there and they said go look in animal husbandry. And there was the book Animal Farm. Those in the know were having George Orwell's book, you know, satire on communism and having-

CHAPMAN: In translation or in English?

Q: It was actually in English.

CHAPMAN: Okay.

Q: But it was being sold in the animal husbandry side. Were you able to pick up any, on these trips- In the first place, were you harassed by the KGB or did blonde provocateurs come at you?

CHAPMAN: To some extent. There was an embassy rule that employees could not travel alone in the Soviet Union, and often I would travel with an agency representative who was on paper assigned as my deputy. Since the Soviets were on to his affiliation, we were shadowed by the KGB everywhere, most of the time very blatantly and obviously. They were there at the airport when we arrived, and would practically wave to us in greeting. One always felt very safe because there was very little street crime at that time and in any event you could be sure that these goons would step in to protect you if something did happen. As to provocation, my colleague and I were having dinner together in a hotel restaurant in Kiev and all of a sudden these two young blondes showed up and sat down at our table and started engaging us in conversation. But that was all; I was somewhat disappointed in fact that they didn't try anything further. In several out-of-the-way places, where foreigners were a rarity, I was asked by policemen to show them my papers; normally they were satisfied after a glance at my diplomatic ID card. But that wasn't really harassment. There were other instances where I was in a restaurant and would be befriended by other diners, who would invite me to their homes for a drink a drink. I took up these invitations a couple of times and nothing came of them. The security people would doubtless have been outraged at such visits, but I saw them as opportunities to learn more about local conditions and get ordinary Russians to express their views. I'm not sure whether these were intended provocations; many of these encounters took place in provincial towns far from the center where foreigners rarely ventured, and the authorities might simply not have warned citizens to stay away from foreigners. Who knows? I get the impression that the society at that time was not as closed and as regimented as we might have thought. The police state was not as thoroughgoing in those days as it had been during the days of Stalin.

Q: What about, were you there during the period of demise?

CHAPMAN: Yes.

Q: With Brezhnev?

CHAPMAN: Well, Brezhnev died-

Q: Chernenko and then Andropov.

CHAPMAN: The other way around, Andropov and then Chernenko. Brezhnev died in November of '82, just shortly after I arrived in Moscow. This was the first time since Stalin that a Soviet leader had died in office, so no one really knew what was going to happen and ostensibly there was no succession arranged beforehand. During my second and third years in Moscow I was the head of the internal political unit in the embassy so I got directly involved in leadership issues. Both Andropov and Chernenko were sick men when they came into office, and we spent a lot of time trying to track their medical condition over the less than a year and a half that Andropov was in office and barely a year that Chernenko was in office. One thing that I started doing was to try to track leadership motorcades, trying to determine who was coming to work and who was staying ill in the dacha. Police would close down the main streets when the General Secretary's

motorcade came along and everybody would scatter from the sidewalks. And I remember the first time I did this, trying to check whether Andropov who was coming to work, I stationed myself near the Central Committee building and then noticed that the crowds had suddenly disappeared from the streets. I was the only person standing there. And afterwards I thought that probably there were marksmen with their rifles trained on me in case I was some security threat. The motorcade rumbled by, I actually got a glimpse of Andropov in the back seat so I reported back that he was at least going to work. But it was things like that we had to resort to to try and determine what was going on and who was still in charge.

It was a time where our sources of information were few and far between. We had fairly ready access during the Andropov years to Roy Medvedev, the historian who was an authority on Stalin, and who considered himself to be a true Leninist. He was harassed during the Chernenko years so access to him was a little more difficult. We could not go to his apartment but he could come to ours without hindrance, which leaves you wondering about the efficiency of the system if indeed the Chernenko people were out to silence him. He still had a good range of contacts and provided us with some solid information. We had periodic access to the editor of a journal called Kommunist, which was an official party organ. This editor was a member of the Central Committee and very circumspect. He would not come out and say things in a direct and clear cut manner. It was all hints, suggestions, nuances here and there; and you had to learn how to interpret and make use of these. We also had a useful KGB contact that my predecessor and I had been introduced to, part of, as we subsequently learned, a KGB effort to have a direct channel to the embassy should they at some point need one. I would generally meet with him once a month over lunch. He never spoke a word of English in my presence, although he claimed to read Time magazine faithfully every week. He maintained that he worked for the State Committee on Science and Technology, which was obviously not true given his openness in discussing Soviet internal politics with a foreign diplomat, his dress, his demeanor, and the fact that he read Time regularly. Later on, he was tied up with an espionage scandal involving some Marines at the embassy in Moscow.

Q: This was Sergeant Lonetree.

CHAPMAN: Yes. The man who was known to the Marines as Uncle Sasha I knew as Alexei Yefimov. During the time I knew him he never sought any information from me about the embassy. He rarely asked questions about U.S. policy that I couldn't answer quite openly and he would provide a few indispensable nuggets of information here and there. He gave me a tip-off on Chernenko's death before it was announced, calling me at my apartment over a weekend, which was highly unusual. It was very strange to learn afterwards that sometime after I left he was given the added task of trying to suborn some Marines in order to get access to classified premises in the embassy. It was hard to believe that the KGB would have a single agent performing two very different roles.

Q: Well, was there the feeling or concern that with, you know, Brezhnev going basically senile in office and then Chernenko practically had to be propped up right from the beginning, I mean, you know, you felt sorry when you see the man there, when he was talking, I mean, obviously he had a hard time, even at death's door.

CHAPMAN: Yes.

Q: And then Andropov seemed almost, although the KGB connections seemed like a breath of fresh air until you found out he was on dialysis most of the time. But was there a concern that the leadership at the top was, well terribly weak because of this and this meant it was unpredictable and you know, and when you have something like this it can get scary?

CHAPMAN: I think in the case of Brezhnev, yes, we all recognized that he wasn't any longer capable of exercising the functions of his office. Like Chernenko later on he was trotted out and propped up as a symbol of the regime to make the case that it was still in existence and still functioning. This was a time when as people recognized even of stagnation in the country. The Soviet economy was stagnating, there was little effective leadership, and everybody recognized the need for change. Andropov, who succeeded Brezhnev, was considered a breath of fresh air.

Q: Chernenko, I mean Andropov who succeeded Chernenko..

CHAPMAN: No, Andropov succeeded Brezhnev.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry, okay.

CHAPMAN: Andropov was not a career KGB officer, but had worked his way up through the ranks of the communist party and was a party leader. In the spring of '82 he moved from the KGB to the Central Committee as one of the senior party secretaries. Andropov when he came into power recognized full well that the economy needed some kind of a push, some kind of a boost; but rather than actually reform the system, he sought to give it this boost by introducing greater discipline, insisting that people work harder and cut back on drinking, which obviously was a major problem causing economic losses as well as health problems. So there was a huge campaign to cut back on drinking and a huge campaign for more discipline at the workplace. There was nothing as I recall in the way of real incentives; just a focus on getting people to work on time, sober, and have them do their job. Andropov also sought to reduce the so-called gray economy that existed alongside the official state-run economy. People would work in their off-duty hours and on weekends on what were essentially private projects, earning real wages, but they would steal materials from their workplace. So there was an attempt to crackdown on this theft. This petered out as Andropov got progressively more and more sick and by the time he died then in early '84, the program had pretty much ground to a halt.

Chernenko was the last gasp of the old guard. It was well known at the time that Gorbachev was Andropov's favorite to succeed him, but the old guard asserted itself one more time. Gorbachev was recognized effectively as the second secretary behind the general secretary, and for much of Chernenko's tenure in fact Gorbachev chaired the Politburo and ran the Central Committee apparatus because Chernenko was in no condition to do that. The old guard did not yield easily, however. Viktor Grishin, who headed the Moscow city party apparatus, engineered several of these Chernenko appearances on television where the General Secretary was literally propped up and obliged to mumble through some remarks. This only served to emphasize how frail Chernenko was, but Grishin's purpose was by association to get across the point that he was the legitimate successor to Chernenko's mantle.

When Chernenko finally expired all the cards were essentially in place for Gorbachev. During Chernenko's final months we in the Moscow embassy had an interesting dialogue -- perhaps a euphemistic word for it -- with analysts back here in INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) and in the CIA because my conviction and that of my colleagues was that Gorbachev would be the successor; all the indications that we saw and all the information we were picking up from the few sources we had was that this was going to be the case. Some of the old Soviet hands in INR and in the agency disagreed with that and somehow stories were circulating that Gromyko wanted to make himself general secretary on Chernenko's death. As it turned out Gromyko was the man who in fact pushed Gorbachev forward, who formally endorsed Gorbachev as the successor at the crucial Politburo and Central Committee meetings upon Chernenko's death. People had limited expectations of Gorbachev back then. Early on he shook up the Politburo, brought in his allies, some of whom later turned against him, such as Ligachev. He made clear that he intended to take charge, but there were no indications back then that we would soon see the flowering of Glasnost and Perestroika. Those terms weren't around back then when Gorbachev took charge in March of 1985. It was clear that he intended to pick up sort of where Andropov had left off and try to revitalize the Soviet economy; but it was equally clear that he had no intent at the start to change the structure of the economy or end the dominance of the communist party. There would be efforts to make the economy more productive, to get more work out of the average working man. In addition there might be some loosening of controls, perhaps allowing elements of a market economy to come into existence. But I left in July of 1985 and very little of that had come to the fore by the time I left.

Q: Well you were dealing with internal matters during this time of, I won't say troubles but-

CHAPMAN: Uncertainty.

Q: Of people dying, leadership dying and all which upsets. But were you seeing the Soviet system internally, with all the weaknesses that apparently Gorbachev at a certain point saw but I mean, but also 10 years later or less than that come out, the terrible state of the economy and the nationality problem and all that. I mean, was that as apparent to us at that time while you were there?

CHAPMAN: Well certainly the state of the economy was. Just by living there and traveling around the country and talking to people, you could see that this was an economy that was not producing.

Q: Would you just repeat that last part?

CHAPMAN: The Soviet economy was clearly in very poor condition just by all the evidence you could see in Moscow, visiting other parts of the Soviet Union, and talking to people; it was simply not producing the goods that people wanted and needed. By this time, Soviet citizens were becoming more aware of what was happening in the outside world. Russians were able to travel to parts of Eastern Europe, not everybody but a sizeable number, and they could see that things were so much better in Hungary and the German Democratic Republic and Poland than they were in the Soviet Union. I think people were starting to question why this was happening

and whether a totally managed economy was in fact best for the USSR.

On the nationalities issue, there had been periodic sort of uprisings which had been kept secret to a large extent by the Soviet leadership, happening in parts of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Obviously you couldn't get people in these areas to talk openly about how much they opposed the Soviet regime or the communist party, but it was clear they didn't like the Russians and the Russians were everywhere. The intent of the Soviet leadership was to push Russians out into the periphery of the Soviet Union so they would in effect submerge the other nationalities and would be able to run the other republics. Typically the general secretaries of the republic parties were of the local nationality, but the second secretary would invariably be a Russian who was essentially in control of the ruling party apparatus. Some of the other republics were very different from Russia. Outwardly there were similarities such as the same ugly apartment blocks that were built in Tashkent or Tbilisi as in Moscow, but the peoples and the cultures were so different. Georgia was in many respects almost a Mediterranean country, not only with regard to the climate but the way people behaved and their general openness. I remember having a wonderful five-hour-long evening conversation with a Georgian philosopher in his home in Tbilisi. I had been given his name by a colleague, and I just picked up the phone and called him and he invited me over for supper right away. So we chatted, quite openly, for about five hours. That couldn't have happened in Moscow I don't think.

Q: Well was there any thought at the time among you or your colleagues about the ability of this empire to hold together? I mean, were we seeing this as, you know, stretching on into the far future?

CHAPMAN: I think that really nobody foresaw in 1985 that within five or six years the Soviet Union would be gone. I think we saw it mellowing, modifying itself, perhaps introducing elements of a free market economy. I don't think we foresaw any sort of change in political structure, any change in the role of or dominance of the communist party. And I don't think we foresaw any breakup of the country.

Q: What about with the Reagan administration there and Ronald Reagan had come in from the right wing of the Republican party and was making remarks, you know, sort of off the campaign trail and all, you know, about confrontation with the Soviet Union, was this a difficult period to sort of explain to Soviet types or among ourselves at the embassy that, you know, I mean, did we feel we were on an overly confrontational course with the Soviet Union or what?

CHAPMAN: Well the phrase that really raised Soviet hackles was the term evil empire. To my recollection Reagan had uttered the phrase before I got to the Soviet Union so I wasn't in a position to gauge the immediate impact of it. Certainly amongst Soviet officialdom and the contacts we had there was strong opposition to what was seen as an effort by the Reagan administration simply to build up American military might and to ignore any dialogue with the Soviet Union aimed at reducing mutual threats and tensions. When I was out in the provinces people would ask me about this or that Reagan administration policy and challenge me to justify it. But it was not unusual to come across people who had a certain admiration for the United States. There was a dichotomy in many ordinary Soviets' minds between the American people and the American government: an admiration of and respect for Americans, for our way of life,

for our entertainment industry, for the resilience and output of our economy, but a lack of understanding of – indeed outright opposition to -- what the Reagan administration was up to. Relations were by no means smooth during my first year in Moscow, but they turned considerably worse after the shutdown of Korean Airlines Flight 007 in September 1983.

The shutdown brought about a real freeze that didn't start to thaw until March of 1985 when we resumed arms control negotiations in Geneva. But during those eighteen months contacts were even more difficult than they had been before, and it was very difficult to get any sense of what was going on behind the scenes in the society and the party and the government. Although preparations for the resumption of arms control negotiations were in progress during Chernenko's watch, the coming of Gorbachev brought a sense of greater hope for U.S.-Soviet relations. There was a feeling that things were getting back onto a more even keel. But still I heard plenty of criticism of Reagan administration policies during the spring of 1985 -- the military build-up, the strategic defense initiative, the deployment of intermediate range missiles in Europe where they could reach Soviet soil.

Q: Dissidents. Did you have, was that part of your thing or did somebody else have it?

CHAPMAN: An officer in my section was responsible for contacts with dissidents.

Q: Who was that?

CHAPMAN: Jon Purnell and the George Glass. A lot of their contacts were with what were called refuseniks, most of them Jewish, who had applied for emigration and had been denied. Typically there were gatherings outside the main synagogue in Moscow on Friday evenings, and Jon or George would go down there to pick up information on individual refusenik and dissident cases. That is where we got the information for our representations to the Soviet government on human rights cases. We had indirect contact with Sakharov through his wife, Yelena Bonner, whom we would visit at her Moscow apartment from time to time.

There were other people on the dissident fringe whom we got to know, some quite closely. It was impossible to have any real social relationship a foreign ministry bureaucrat or anybody else in the Soviet apparatus. But people who were on the dissident fringe, who were not labeled as enemies of the Soviet regime as such but who had run afoul of the regime in some form or fashion and who had lost their jobs, we quite amenable to friendship with foreigners. Some of these people were strong religious believers. One particular individual that I got to know was a strong Russian nationalist as well as a devout believer, a mathematician who had been fired from his job and did manual labor helping restore the Danilovsky Monastery, now the seat of the Russian Patriarchate, while his wife held down a paying job. We would get to meet a lot of unofficial artists. A lot of these people suspected, probably correctly, that the regime was following what they were doing; but they figured that there was nothing for them to lose.

I got to know a Georgian sculptor through Alexei Yefimov, my KGB contact, and spent many pleasant social hours with him and his wife. One evening I called on the sculptor alone to find Yefimov also at the studio, and we spent several hours over some excellent Georgian dishes discussing all manner of issues in a way that was totally out of character for a Soviet official. I

was openly challenging the basis of communism and the Soviet regime, and he was quite forthright and realistic in his replies. This was the one occasion I can remember of having a genuine no-holds-barred intellectual discussion with a Soviet official in which I was not simply fed the party line.

Q: Well, who was the ambassador while you were there?

CHAPMAN: Arthur Hartman. You may have seen he was recently in the news with this open letter opposing the Bolton nomination.

Q: Yes, I know. How did you work with him? I mean, was he a consumer of what you were producing?

CHAPMAN: Art Hartman was not a career Sovietologist and did not have fluent Russian, in contrast to practically every other Foreign Service ambassador we've had there. Largely because of the state of relations, he did not have easy access to senior Soviet officials. But he built up close ties within the diplomatic corps, both among western and eastern European ambassadors, and the latter in particular were good sources of information. There was generally quite a sense of camaraderie in the diplomatic corps in Moscow, extending to the Chinese among others. My internal political unit would meet periodically with our Chinese counterparts to exchange information; they were quite open and had some useful insights to share. They would regale us with magnificent banquets at the enormous Chinese embassy; we could reciprocate only with lasagna and salad at the Embassy cafeteria or at an ordinary Russian restaurant.

Hartman excelled in running the embassy and attracted some very good people. Warren Zimmerman was DCM (deputy chief of mission) for the first couple of years I was there, and then Curt Kamman, who had been the political counselor, moved up to that slot.

THOMAS MACKLIN, JR.
Russian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Washington, DC (1982-1983)

General Services Officer
Moscow (1983-1985)

Thomas Macklin Jr. was born in Fort Worth, Texas in October of 1935. He attended San Diego State University and majored in political science, later receiving a masters degree in history. He entered the Foreign Service in 1965 and took his first post as a Consular Officer in Amsterdam. His career took him to The Hague, Vietnam, Barbados, Israel, Russia, and Italy as well as several posts within the State Department. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 2000.

Q: In '82, how did you fit in? You weren't a Middle Eastern hand. You weren't administrative.

You weren't political.

MACKLIN: I was fed up with having a separate assignment. I also had developed a real interest in going to Russia. Traditionally, Moscow has been a good place for tandems. I was really kind of interested in going to Russia. Also, I liked the Middle East. Sheldon Kryz was the executive director of NEA at the time. He came out and visited. The guy who was GSO in Tel Aviv left in the summer of '82. I left in the summer of '82. So did Dennis Jett. All three of us. So, NEA suggested to me that maybe if I wanted to move over and be GSO, Adrian could get Dennis' job and we'd still have a tandem. I said, "No." In retrospect, I probably shouldn't have. Lewis really liked me and it was an interesting place. But I said, "No." We took an assignment to Moscow. But by then, Sheldon had figured out that maybe I was okay. They were prepared to reassign me to post or something. But I really wanted to go to Moscow and I told him that. So, I did.

Q: Did you both take Russian for a year?

MACKLIN: Yes, we took a year of Russian, '82-'83. Then we went to Moscow for two years.

Q: So from '83 to '85?

MACKLIN: Yes.

Q: How did your Russian come along?

MACKLIN: It was difficult. I'm not really good at languages involving intricate grammar changes. Russian, with all of the cases and then the two track verbs and all of that, was difficult. I managed to muddle through with a 2+. But it was a very divisive year. We had a linguist, an Irene Thompson. She was writing a book and had sold the FSI hierarchy on the idea that the way she managed things, she could bring people with no Russian up to a four in the one year, 44-week period. Then she turned to us and said, "Look, we're all trying to do the best we can. The idea is to speak as much Russian as you can. If you're in a class and somebody else is having problems answering something, don't hesitate. Jump right in and answer for them. We want everybody to answer on this. I'm going to reward people who are the most verbal." So, several of the people took the hint and nobody took their turn. You can imagine what that does to the language class in the FSI hierarchy. It was a very nasty year. Then Andy Goodman and a few other people complained about her system and so she gave them really snotty training reports. It was a divisive year.

Q: What jobs did both of you have?

MACKLIN: She spent a year in the Consular Section, which was typical, and then a year as deputy science officer. I went on as GSO. Initially, I was going to go out as admin officer, as number two. Both that and the GSO job were open. Joe Hewins, who went out as the admin counselor, called me up from Belgrade and said, "Look, we had you in mind for admin officer, but Rusty Hughes also wants to go to Moscow and his wife is now an FSO and she's been assigned as an assistant GSO. I was going to make you admin and Rusty GSO, but I can't do that because of his wife. Would you be willing to switch?" Rusty and I were the same grade. I said,

“Well...” He said, “You’ll report directly to me. You won’t report through the admin officer. You’ll report directly to the admin counselor. I’ll make sure you’re taken care of.” You can’t very well say, “Well, fuck you, I don’t care.” So, I said, “Okay, fine.” So, I went out as GSO, which in retrospect I think is probably a better job.

Q: Moscow 1983.

MACKLIN: In 1983, we had a brand new baby, so that complicated things a little bit, but I remember we went out there, got there in August, and then about a month later, the system was that they tried to get you out as often as they could because Moscow tended to get to people. Actually, I always liked it. I was very much at home there. One of the things they would do to get people out was, when your car, which you had shipped in, arrives in Helsinki, it was actually cheaper for the government to send you down on the train, let you spend the night or two in Helsinki, and then drive the car back to Moscow, overnighing in Leningrad along the way. That was cheaper than having the car shipped in. So, they would send people down there to drive their car back. So, we were at the Intercontinental Hotel in Helsinki and the TV was full of something about some plane crash. We could never quite figure out what it was because the Finnish is so convoluted. It was when the Russians shot down the Korean flight. The relationship turned so sour after that. Gromyko and Shultz wouldn’t even talk to each other. They just spit at each other. For at least a year until Andropov died, it was a frozen relationship. It was also at a time when the medium range missiles were being put into Western Europe-

Q: This was the SS-20 and we responded with a Pershing and Cruise missiles.

MACKLIN: Yes. So, there was a lot of acid in the system in those days. So, for the first year that we were there, we didn’t have any CODELS, we didn’t have a SecState visit, we didn’t have anything. We could just do our jobs. The Russians were very cold. There was an organization set up to deal with all the diplomats, UPDK. They were actually quite friendly to us, but very correct on anything they gave us. We needed additional housing and OFM was just getting on the ground in those days. So, we couldn’t really be reciprocal on everything. It was only partial reciprocity. But we had a major problem trying to get additional housing and trying to get them to do things. So, the relationship was really kind of tense. They never hassled us. But they hassled a lot of people at post, the KGB. Art Hartman was the ambassador. He was very good. He actually had awfully good access considering the constraints. It was a good embassy. The DCM was Warren Zimmerman. The political counselor was Curt Cameron. His deputy was Mark Paris. It was a very small embassy but very good.

Q: How did you find the embassy building?

MACKLIN: The embassy building was old and creaky. The offices were inadequate. But in those days, there was a pretty good balance between space and people, much better than there was in ‘89-’91 when we went back. Then we had real problems. But because we had a small staff, it was a pretty good balance. GSO was in the courtyard behind the embassy. The embassy building itself on the ring road was built sometime just after the war, about ‘47, and was a strong building and it had to be to withstand all those fires. There were four or five apartments in the building. There was a good snack bar in the courtyard, which turned into a nightclub at night,

which was a really popular place. There were very few places to go in Moscow then and so Uncle Sam's, as the nightclub was called, was pretty popular. It was concessioned out, usually to a SEABEE who would buy the liquor and run the bar and make the profit. The concessions were re-bid every year. There were a lot of people who came to Uncle Sam's and it was the nearest thing there was to an international gathering spot.

Q: Did you show movies there, too?

MACKLIN: We had movies, but not at Uncle Sam's, which was too small. But people would do it in their apartments.

Q: Were other diplomats going to Uncle Sam's?

MACKLIN: Yes. It was mostly a young crowd, but a lot of diplomats from other missions, and the Marines... There were a couple of communicators who hated it. They hated the Russians. They hated Moscow. I found the culture fascinating because it was kind of a forbidden civilization. You couldn't just go there. I found it really fascinating, but there were people who didn't, who were xenophobic. Two of the communicators made a bet as to who could stay on the compound the longest. They lived in an apartment on the compound because you always had to have a communicator on call. They ate in the snack bar, bought food from the commissary in the basement of the building, and so they went for three or four months without ever leaving the embassy compound. When one of them finally lost, it was because Joe Hulings invited him to dinner and he couldn't get out of it. So, he lost his bet. But there was that spirit among some of the people at the mission.

Q: I can't remember... There had been a major fire there. Was that before or after you?

MACKLIN: That was before. There had been two fires before us and then a major fire... The worst fire was the second tour. We were there for that.

Q: I'm interviewing a Mr. Skoug, who was there during a big fire that took the roof off the embassy.

MACKLIN: What did he do?

Q: Was there a concern about security? You had the Sergeant Lonetree case. Did that happen while you were there?

MACKLIN: Yes. I hired the femme fatale, so I know the case quite well. One of our biggest problems in the administrative area was lack of personnel. We had a terrible lack of personnel. When I arrived, there was only one guy who cleared shipments for us. We had shipments that came into the airport. We had a biweekly train run from Helsinki, a big department store in Helsinki called Stockmans would come in with milk and perishables which we could buy at exorbitant costs and then there were land shipments that would come into the big customs house outside. There was only one guy, Anatoli, who cleared all of these shipments. There was no controlling Anatoli. He was very devious. He was extremely smart. He was always one jump

ahead. He always had a valid reason for clearing the shipment that he wanted to clear. No matter how bad you wanted him to be outside of the customs house outside of town, he had a better reason for being at the airport. There was no controlling Anatoli. There was the same kind of problem with a couple of other areas in GSO. I said, "Anatoli, the problem is, we need three Anatolis so we could send one to the airport and one to the train station and one out to customs. Then everything would be covered." He said, "What we really need is a woman back here as a clerk and then an assistant for me and maybe it would be more manageable. But forget about it, because there is no office space. We tried this before. UPDK won't let us have it because there is no office space." We also needed a couple of other things – somebody to do the clerical work on customs shipments. There were two FSNs there who were known to be intelligence operatives. One was Galia, who worked for me in GSO, who had a sort of Lotte Lenya personality, very well organized, very connected, very decisive, and didn't work any bullshit with somebody she didn't like. Then Riya, who worked in Personnel, who was a tall, blond woman about 6'4". Everybody called her "Ilsa Shewolf of the SS." She was very tough. Everybody knew that they were intelligence operatives. Galia controlled the keyboard, amongst other things, and there was really no better way to do it. You had to have keys for all parts of the embassy. So, somebody would come in and say, "I need a key to the upper room in the upper annex" and she'd kind of file away who it was that asked for the key for that part of the building. Those thoughts were shared with her colleagues across the river, but I don't think...

Q: The KGB.

MACKLIN: Well, she would share it with the KGB, but I mentioned it to our Langley friends and to the NSA guy a couple of times, but they didn't seem to be bothered by it. But in any event, there were those concerns. So, it went to Hulings and said, "Look, if the problem is office space, we've got two huge containers sitting next to the GSO office that are just taking up space. They're filled with some stuff from an Austrian contractor that we used to redo kitchens and bathrooms, a guy named Golofer, and let's take those containers and get them the hell out of here and have the FSNs build their own office building. If we build a small room, you can house about four people in there and then I could hire two assistants for Anatoli and a couple of other people." I worked all of this out. He liked the idea. We went to the UPDK. They agreed to it. I had the FSNs remove... It was a project. "This is your office building. You guys build it." It was beautiful. They removed the containers. They designed the buildings, the carpenters, plumbers, they all came in. Beautiful pine floors and gingerbread outside. Lovely place. Then I was able to hire additional people and we could begin to control Anatoli. But we still needed a couple more people. I talked to Riya and Riya said, "Well, the problem now is, even though we have space, there aren't people available through the UPDK." Well, there was this one very pretty Russian girl that they had brought onboard at Spaso House. She was very cute. She worked three for about three months and we had a clerical job we had to fill. One of the clerks had quit because of something. I talked to Riya and said, "Look, we really need a clerk. We need somebody to fill that clerical vacuum. I would like to get it done before I leave." She said, "Well, I've got somebody good for you, this woman over at Spaso House. They just wanted her there for a short time and she speaks English and would be perfect." I said, "Well, let me check her out." I talked to Mrs. Hartman and she said, "Oh, she's dumb as a goddamn wall. Don't touch her with a ten foot pole." So, I went back to Riya and said, "No, I don't want her. She's no good." So, Riya said, "Well, I'll go talk to the UPDK." She came back and said, "They said there's nobody." So,

it stayed that way for a couple of months. Just before I was leaving, I said to Riya, "Look, I really want to fill that job. We've got a window of opportunity." She said, "Why don't we do this? Why don't you just bring her on for three months. That establishes the position with UPDK. They recognize they've got to fill it. Then during this probationary period, we'll fire her and then we'll fill in behind." So, I talked to the personnel officer and a couple of other people. They said, "Okay," so I told Riya, "Okay." Then I was replaced by Jane Becker, who was an old friend. Jane and I agreed to meet in Frankfurt on the way out. She couldn't arrive before I left, but I met her en route. We spent a day together kind of going through everything. I told her about this babe and said, "First thing you've got to do is fire her because she is dumb as dishwater and all we wanted to do was get the position established and watch out for Riya." That was enough time. She had already made her contact with Lonetree.

Q: He was a sergeant in the Marines.

MACKLIN: Yes. The gunny sergeant's wife worked for me in GSO. I employed a lot of spouses. When I arrived, it had been a Gunny Sandabol who was a mean, nasty piece of business who was mean to everybody. To the best of my knowledge, he beat his wife, probably beat the shit out of his kids. He had a cute little kid who must have been around seven or eight and his favorite expression was, "I'll rip your lips off." All the Marines hated Gunny Sandabol because he was so hard on them. But they didn't dare step out of line because he was kind of unpredictable. He was really mean. He was replaced by a guy who was a far better manager, whose wife also worked for me in GSO. He eased up on the Marines a bit. We had the second year there a British nanny who was going with one of the Marines. Then the Marine was transferred out to Barbados. So, she started dating one of the other Marines and would occasionally spend the night at the Marine house. She said, "I wasn't the only one spending the night at the Marine house (which was located in the chancery). There are a lot of girls, Yugoslavs and other nationalities, who shack up with the Marines there." I think that's also part of the atmosphere of what happened.

Lonetree was stupid. They picked somebody who considered himself a loner. But in a way the gunny sergeant was unfairly victimized, but I don't think it would have happened under Sandabol. He'd have killed the guy. But all of that was going on at the time.

Q: Ambassador Hartman was sort of like the captain of the ship who is held responsible for this. Talking about the Marine Corps situation and having overnights staying there, that gets, particularly in an embassy, a little bit out of line, quite a bit out of line, isn't it?

MACKLIN: I think it is in the Soviet Union. The RSO was at that time a guy named Rich. He was very easygoing, not anything like the guys that we had in later tours there. If you had a British girl spend the night with one of the Marines, frankly, we knew the British girl, there was no risk there. I don't know if you get into Eastern Europeans like Yugoslavs... I think basically, it was a laxer atmosphere than was probably healthy considering the angst back here over the Soviet threat.

Hartman was a good ambassador. He took the long view. He was very bright. Matlock, who followed him, whom I also worked for, was also very good, but they were as different as salt and

pepper. Matlock felt there was no detail too irrelevant to report and Hartman said, “We’re out here to provide our judgment over big issues and not to try to scoop CNN. I want quality reporting. I’m not so concerned with the volume. I want to be right.” And he was. I think he turned out a good product. There were good people there.

Q: Were you able to partake in the cultural life of Moscow?

MACKLIN: It was impossible to get to know Russians. They were just scared stiff of us. We had a baby and Russians love babies more than anybody I’ve ever met. So, you’re in a park and you’re all bundled up because it’s cold nine months of the year and you’re pushing this little kid who’s all bundled up so you just see a nose, eyes, and a bit of a mouth. But that is still enough for Russians to [notice]. So, you run across other couples with babies. When they’d get a little bit older, a year and a half, or when David was almost two, take him to a little playground which was a place full of topsoil, full of glass... incredible. They used this filled dirt from God knows where. Glass all over the ground. They put up a couple of swings and that’s a playground. David would play there and other kids would play there. As happens the world over, you strike up a conversation with the parents. Well, the minute they hear you talk, they know you’re a westerner and close up like a clam and scoot back. They’re just terrified. It was very tense.

The militia men everywhere. The police. I remember one of the communicators’ wives who worked for me, they had a car and she had done something that pissed off somebody and so they took her car. She came out one day and couldn’t find her car. She got on really well with the militia men who guarded that particular compound. So, she went up and said, “Look, do you have any idea where my car is?” He said, “Yes, go up about four blocks and over on the street and it’s just around the corner.” So, she did and it was. The single people, sometimes the KGB would come in their apartments when they weren’t there and do things like leave a cigar someplace so you’d know they’d been there. If they didn’t like you, when you took an R&R out of the country, they’d unplug your freezer. Pour Coca-cola into the open vents on a hi-fi system. Not a lot of it, but some.

Andropov died. Chernenko became Party Secretary. Chernenko died. Gorbachev became Party Secretary. That kind of breathed a bit of fresh air into the place. When they started having funerals, we started having people come out. George Bush came two or three times, was very amiable, spoke with the mission, was very decent. So was Shultz.

Food was uniformly terrible. You’d go to a restaurant to hear the music, so if they liked you they’d put you at a table up close to the band so you can’t talk. The food takes forever to be presented. After a while, we figured out that if you really want to go out to eat, you go there ahead of time and give them some cigarettes or something and get a table way away from the band and maybe you’d get some food that was moderately edible. There were beginning to be some more liberal restaurants just as we left in ‘85. Nothing to write home about.

We traveled a bit. We went to Volgograd. I can tell you anecdotes about the trips, but I don’t know if that’s really-

Q: Just give a little flavor.

MACKLIN: Ostrahan had not been reached by the German army. They were stopped about 75 miles north. We flew up. Marty McLain and Ed McWilliams and I flew into Stalingrad, Volgograd. We saw the usual stuff. Very impressive. Then we flew down to Ostrahan, which is on the inlet on the Caspian. It's where a lot of the ships start the tour of the Volga. It's a lovely old city. The Russians used to do a lot of movies there because they had a lot of these old wooden houses like "Dr. Zhivago." It was really fascinating. We flew in there in a small jet. Off to the left of the airfield was this huge field of biplanes. There must have been 200 biplanes, the kind we might use for crop dusting, just sitting there like they hadn't moved since 1914. It was a beautiful old city with old trolley tracks wandering around. They hadn't had any diplomat visit there in ages, so they didn't even have an Intourist hotel. They had a hotel. They put us up. But there was no food in it. In fact, there was not much food in the town at the time. It was late spring. They did have some chicken and some jarred pickles and stuff from Bulgaria. That was about all they could serve in the hotel. But there was a yarmaka, a fair, going on in the town. These yarmakas are places where people who have their own individual gardens come in and sell stuff. So, it was kind of fun. Marty and I bundled up. I took a lot of pictures. Somebody got the idea that I was from- (end of tape)

Somebody got the idea that I was from Russian _____, whereas normally Russians don't want to be photographed, especially by a foreign diplomat, they were all teeth (or broken teeth as the case may be). So, I got some great pictures of these people down there. It was wonderful. They had their own Kremlin down there and there was a parade going on. We went to this yarmaka and they had all kinds of nice bread, so we bought four or five little loafs and that's what we lived on for two or three days. It was really funny. It was a little bit cold. We wandered down by this Kremlin. Against the wall, there was this little Russian kid who must have been about eight years old who had a ratty soccer ball and he was kicking it against the wall just for practice. There was this very tired looking dad standing there while the kid played. I talked to him for a minute. Down there, they weren't as afraid of us. It was kind of poignant. It was really interesting. There is something universal about a dad standing there while his kid bangs the soccer ball against the wall.

So, Marty and I stayed there two or three days and had a good time and took a lot of pictures. Then the day out, we went to the airport and they lined us up. This very broad shouldered, fat old gal, about 55, when it was time to board the flight, said, "Okay, everybody on board the flight to Moscow, come with me." She had a flag and started marching across the tarmac. It's a tarmac littered with about 25 planes. When we got about half way over, the crew sees us coming and they come running down the walkway and said, "No, you can't take this plane. This plane is no good." So, the woman said, "Yes, they're assigned this plane. They've got to fly on the plane whether you like it or not." So, they get in an argument there. He said, "No, no, no, take that plane over there" about seven planes across the tarmac. So, she said, "Okay." Off we go, this line of people getting more trepidatious by the step. The same thing happens. The pilot and the stewardess see us coming and come running out, "No, no, no, this plane won't fly." So, they have an argument. So, the woman says, "Okay, follow me." So, we do an about march and she goes back to the tower, which is about two stories up. There she is with her flag shaking her fist at this tower saying, "We've got to get these people on a plane. I don't care which plane you put them on, but you've got to fly these people to Moscow." They were saying, "Well, I don't know

about this plane and I don't know about that plane." So, they took us back into the waiting room and about two hours later they took us out and we went to the second plane just as if nothing had ever happened. We boarded the plane not feeling great about this. We took off and it was a wonderful, uneventful flight. Everything was fine.

Q: It sounds like the crews didn't want to fly.

MACKLIN: Yes. But whatever it was, I didn't feel great about taking that flight. This was very typical of travel in the Soviet Union.

Q: In '85, where did you and your wife go?

MACKLIN: We came back to Washington. We wanted to stay overseas, wanted another tandem assignment. As it turned out, the whole crew who had been in Moscow before us almost to the person were assigned to embassies in Western Europe. But they went there for four year assignments. So, there was no admin job, no science job, no nothing. It was really pretty dismal. So, they offered me a bunch of things. Finally I agreed to be the executive director of the Medical Division, which was a big mistake. Adrian was offered a job in OES and went to OES and did okay. We left in '85, came back to Washington. I was actually offered Nicosia, which in retrospect, I should have taken, but I didn't. There was no job for her. But it was probably a mistake on my side, but not on her side.

RICHARD T. MCCORMACK
Assistant Secretary for Economics and Business Affairs/Under Secretary
Washington, DC (1982-1985)

After attending Georgetown University, Mr. Richard T. McCormack assumed a multitude of administrative roles for the Nixon Administration in addition to serving under Governor William Scranton of Pennsylvania and Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. Mr. McCormack's career also included positions as the US Ambassador to the Organization of American States as well as Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. Ambassador McCormack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Could you explain the relationship shifts during this time, from 1982 on. I mean here you have Assistant Secretary for Economics attached to your name, then you have an Under Secretary of Economics attached to it. Who did what and why?

MCCORMACK: The Under Secretary tended to concentrate on a few key issues and on broad supervision. Both of us reported to the Secretary of State.

Q: You both did?

MCCORMACK: We both did. We had a regular separate meeting with the Secretary of State.

Q: Was this how George Shultz ran things? Was this true of Bureau Affairs and Central American Affairs?

McCORMACK: We had a regular staff meeting at the Assistant Secretary-level with George Shultz every morning. Wallace was not present at that meeting. Then he would have a meeting with Wallace and some of the Under Secretaries. But as you well know, the Assistant Secretary has hundreds of people who report to him. The Under Secretary has a staff of five or six people. So one is a big operating job where you have to keep track of everything from airline negotiations to oil prices to all these other microeconomic problems, while the Under Secretary tends to concentrate on a few major issues. Now in the case of Wallace, we worked well together on 90% of the issues that we dealt with. I attended his staff meetings from time to time. I would go to his office, and we would sit and chew the fat for an hour and a half every few weeks so he would get some sense of what I was trying to do, what my problems were, and what was happening with the Treasury Department. Then we would have regular meetings with our peers from the Treasury Department: the Under Secretary and the Assistant Secretary. The State Department and the Treasury Department totally coordinated every issue. This interdepartmental cooperation was unique in the time I have served in Washington. There was absolutely no space between state and treasury. We sat together; we planned the issues together. We addressed problems together. They had no secrets from us, and we had no secrets from them.

Q: Who was the Secretary of the Treasury?

McCORMACK: Don Regan was the Treasury Secretary, Beryl Sprinkel was the Under Secretary, and Marc Leland was the Assistant Secretary. We met regularly, the four of us over lunch, to work through our issues.

Q: Of the top bodies, you have state, defense, and treasury. You didn't have that relationship if you want to call it that, between Shultz and Weinberger.

McCORMACK: That involved the Pentagon. There is inherent tension between defense and state on some issues. They have different portfolios and different perspectives. Both Shultz and Weinberger were strong able men who viewed things somewhat differently. I had one slice of the Pentagon issue, which was East-West trade. This was at a time when we were trying to squeeze the Soviets in a variety of ways. In this case, we were trying to deprive them of as much high technology as we could. This was a controversial policy. The whole area of tighter export controls was a controversial policy.

When I became the Assistant Secretary, I had a person who was in charge of the East-West trade area who lost my confidence when he strongly supported a computer sale to China, claiming it was associated with weather research. I eventually had my special assistant check this issue out carefully, and it turned out that this was the computer that was used in one of the major nuclear arsenals in the United States to develop nuclear warhead design. The building in China where they design nuclear warheads was right next to the building where this computer, the High Share 700, was to be located. It was very clear that this computer was ordered to help the Chinese develop their nuclear warheads. My special assistant, a former sugar broker, was able to dig this

information out. When the office director in charge of this issue missed all this, I lost confidence in him and brought in someone from the outside to handle these complex issues. Thereafter we worked more effectively with the Pentagon.

Q: All right, 1982, you are Assistant Secretary for Economics and Business Affairs. In the first place how did you divide business and economics? What is the difference?

McCORMACK: It is a seamless web. You make your business decision within the context of sound economic policies. If you don't have some sense of macroeconomics, you will not be in a position to make intelligent recommendations on some other matters. So economics and business come together. You recall that during the previous Carter administration, there was a wheat embargo against the Soviet Union, which caused tremendous devastation in American agriculture.

Q: That was Carter in reaction to the Afghan invasion.

McCORMACK: Yes. We lost markets; other people moved into those markets. It was viewed in the U.S. farm community as a tremendous fiasco, and it did cause major damage in the American farm economy. The farm economy had expanded to serve what they thought was going to be permanent markets in the Soviet Union. Many farmers bought large farms and expensive machinery. Suddenly that market was eliminated. Grain prices fell. It caused a crisis in large parts of the farm community. So I made it my business to try to improve the relationship of the State Department with the American agricultural community. They had blamed the State Department for the decision on these earlier actions. So I traveled extensively with Jack Block, the Secretary of Agriculture, around the world to increase the sales of American agricultural products in all kinds of areas. But I also went with the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Commerce for other reasons. Whenever a Secretary travels, he interacts with senior Ministers in foreign governments. If I knew the Secretary of Commerce was making a trip to certain places, I would sometimes arrange to go on that trip. Then I would also get in to see key Ministers. The Secretary of Commerce would do his business, and I could do mine on behalf of the State Department or White House. Some of these visits turned out to be of immense importance.

Q: How so?

McCORMACK: Well let me give you an example. You will recall there was a time when we had a foreign policy catastrophe in Iran when Khomeini took power. Our Embassy was seized.

Q: 1979 through 1980, just around the corner.

McCORMACK: Yes, but a very large underground Tudeh Party, the communist party in Iran, was still lurking. In the intel material was some suggestion that, just as the Soviets had come into Afghanistan to consolidate a friendly communist government, there was some concern that there were elements of the Tudeh Party that might also be contemplating a coup if conditions ripened. Then the Soviets could potentially come in and consolidate that operation. Iran was an important country, much more so than Afghanistan. The reverses then being suffered by Iran in the war

with Iraq potentially increased the regime's vulnerabilities in Tehran. The Russians also had historical territorial ambitions in the upper part of Iran. There was also some concern about that. Thus when Secretary Block was planning a trip to the Middle East, I arranged to accompany him.

Q: Secretary Block being...

McCORMACK: Secretary of Agriculture, Jack Block. We went to see Mubarak in Egypt, Crown Prince Abdullah in Saudi Arabia, and the Prime Minister of Turkey.

Abdullah was the Saudi Crown Prince, and would later become King when Fahd died. He was the chief operating officer at the time, similar to a Prime Minister. At each one of these stops I said that I was having concerns about what might happen eventually in Tehran with the Tudeh Party. I mentioned this to Mubarak and Abdullah. When we arrived in Turkey, I also raised the Tudeh concern. The Prime Minister banged his fist on the table and said, "I am picking up exactly the same things. Furthermore, one quarter of the people in Iran are of Turkish origin. We have contacts all through their system. I am hearing this from our people. It is time to do something about this. It is potentially very dangerous." So I flew back to Washington. Well about a month after that, there was a huge purge of the Tudeh Party by Khomeini's people. All the top leadership was arrested, and we ceased to hear any more about the Tudeh Party.

Q: You kicked off a night of long knives.

McCORMACK: In fact we no longer heard plans by anyone to stage a coup in Tehran. I am sure that the fact that the Prime Minister of Turkey also had independently confirmed our suspicions was the important factor. They went ahead independently and dealt with the problem. Possibly Khomeini's people themselves picked up some of the Tudeh people, questioned them, and confirmed it themselves. They went after the whole bunch. Who knows what all happened? I moved on to other issues. But you asked why some of these trips were valuable, that was an example.

Another valuable trip that I took was a trip to China with Secretary of Commerce Baldrige. As part of our global strategy to deal with the Soviet Union, we were trying in every way possible way to put pressure on the Soviets to force them to spend, spend, spend and spend. This was, of course, one of the reasons behind the Reagan idea for Star Wars. We knew they were struggling financially. The President felt because we were in a position to spend more, and if it got into a spending contest, the U.S. could crack the USSR economy. That was the core strategy of President Reagan.

Q: Was that pronounced at the time, or was it ex post facto?

McCORMACK: It was pronounced at the time. Ambassador Vernon Walters' book and papers confirm that in great detail. Dick Walters was present at early meetings with Reagan when this was discussed. It is a matter of record. There are, of course, those who will deny this happened because they don't really want to recognize the fact that there was some relationship between the Reagan strategy and what happened in the USSR. But the truth is Reagan set out with this strategy in mind. I know that as an absolute fact.

The question was what role might China play in this strategy. When Reagan came into power, he had a very close relationship with the Taiwanese both for ideological reasons and for other reasons. The mainland Chinese were wondering whether the old Nixon policy was dead. However, some of us felt that China could play a role and that there was some advantage in pursuing the Nixon opening. I certainly felt that way. I went to see former President Nixon with whom I had a personal relationship from years past to talk about China strategy. We both believed the U.S. needed to increase export of dual use technologies to China. This later became U.S. policy. But the policy change required a trip to China. We proposed to sell dual use technology to China with the exception of three critical mission areas, one of them having to do with the development of nuclear weapons, one associated with sensitive communications technologies, and another with submarines. Those were the three mission areas where we would not let any relevant dual use technology go to China.

Q: What about the White House? This was the time when you had Ollie North and others. I mean later the White House became the NSC, and other parts of the White House became a real problem. One had the feeling that sometimes the President was being treated as almost a figurehead, and there were battles within the White House staff. How did you find that?

McCORMACK: It is important to understand that the President provided the strategic direction. The major policy execution was directed by presidential decision memos. Of course, I was at the State Department. I would be invited to White House meetings. The arrangement in those days was that only political appointees could participate in cabinet council meetings at the White House. That was done so that the President's agenda would be formed and executed. If there were no political appointees available for a meeting, then there was no State Department representation. There was a divergence of view between the Reagan White House and the earlier State Department view from the Cy Vance period on handling East-West issues. That division was mirrored in parts of the career ranks.

Q: You say Cy Vance?

McCORMACK: Former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance under President Carter. As you probably know, there were some people in the State Department from the Vance period who believed that the convergence theory was the way to deal with tension with the Soviet Union. Our policies would become more like theirs, their policies would become more like ours, and then we would eventually ride off into the sunset together. This is an oversimplification, but that was basically what was called the convergence theory.

Some of us thought this theory was complete rubbish. That was certainly the White House view. We believed that the only way to deal with the Soviet Union was to go back to the programs we used successfully in the 1950s, which worked to contain Soviet aggression when they were moving aggressively at that time: rebuild the CIA, rebuild USIA, and rebuild the ability to operate with muscle and money in the third world. There would not be any more cheap Soviet third world victories. This policy clash obviously resulted in a lot of broken crockery.

When Al Haig came to the Department, the career people who had been working hard to carry out Secretary Vance's general perspective on the Soviet Union were still in position. During the transition period, some opposed the shifting of policy. There was some White House uncertainty over whether State Department career ranks would in fact support a muscular U.S. strategy or attempt to sabotage it. Everybody knew this was going to be a difficult and risky business. We had lost one country after another to communism during the 1970's: Nicaragua, Cambodia, Laos, South Vietnam, Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan.

The Soviets and their communist allies were on the march in the third world and elsewhere. President Reagan felt that they needed to be contained and driven back. People remembered that Lenin had earlier said the way to undermine the U.S. was to destabilize Mexico and then work with leftist Mexicans to destabilize the U.S. That was Lenin's comments in 1921. There was now concern that Nicaragua would then be used to subvert El Salvador. Then Guatemala would fall and be used to destabilize Mexico. Wars were raging in all three Central American countries, supported by Moscow and Cuba.

Shultz was an outstanding economist and a person of immense integrity and decency. Some in the White House didn't believe that Shultz was as convinced as the President that a muscular approach to all this was the correct path. There was some tension between the Secretary of State and the President at that time, and between the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the CIA Director William Casey. When there is a little tension at the top, it sometimes resonates in exaggerated form down in the lower ranks. I was perceived in the Department, and I was, in fact, a White House person. I had been one of the original authors of the President's strategy to deal with the Soviets' 1970s expansion program in the article that I cited earlier. Obviously since I was one of the policy authors, I was supportive of the strategy. I was also a friend of the National Security Advisor, Bill Clark, as well as the Deputy National Security Advisor, Admiral Nance, the chief economic advisor in the National Security Council, Norman Bailey, and others. I had very little to do with Ollie North. My chief relations were with those three key men and their immediate staffs. But it was a time of turmoil.

Q: Let's talk about trade with the Soviet Union or their satellites. Let's say you want to sell a powerful computer. Some in Congress are all for it; the Pentagon is all against it, and the State Department ends up in the middle trying to figure out what to do. Did you find yourself running into that?

McCORMACK: Yes, occasionally. You just have to try to make the decisions based on the criteria I mentioned before. What is in the broad interest of the United States? Is this, in fact, a piece of technology that is unique and militarily relevant? Is it something that you can buy off the shelf somewhere else? Are you just gratuitously denying an American company the opportunity to export something that can and will be bought from somebody else? Is COCOM still a meaningful operation and if not how can we make it meaningful? (We, in fact, strengthened COCOM in the course of the time I was there, and it contributed to the growing strains on the Soviet economy.)

Q: Were you there during the Toshiba business, the super quiet submarine propellers sold to Russia?

McCORMACK: Yes. Very often Japanese business interests were trying to make a buck, just like Austrian, Swiss, German, French and everybody else. If they thought they could sneak a piece of valuable technology through the system without getting picked up by the COCOM enforcers, sometimes they would do that. Sometimes one had to deal with violators in a firm way. There was one time before I came into office, during the Carter administration, where one particular company abroad wanted to sell a highly advanced submersible illegally to the Soviet Union. There was difficulty in stopping the sale in time. A covert operation was therefore mounted to puncture and weaken the vehicle on the shipping dock so that when it was eventually delivered and used, it was only used once. That was all Cold War stuff.

Q: How was our relationship with the growing European Union during this time? In many ways, talking about how we developed Japan after the war, the European Union was considered a bright star of our policy. But were we beginning to get worried about this?

McCORMACK: No. We had our innumerable little commercial competitions such as the one between Airbus and Boeing. We didn't like the fact that they were subsidizing Airbus, and they didn't like the fact that our defense contracts, they thought, were subsidizing Boeing. So we hacked away at each other a bit on those issues. The issue that caused the main strain with the Europeans was an issue that I was not involved with: the deployment of nuclear armed missiles, Pershing missiles and things like that, to counter the growing Soviet nuclear buildup aimed at neutralizing Western Europe.

Q: It was the SS-20.

McCORMACK: That's right.

Q: You weren't at that time seeing the growing European Economic Community as an economic competitor, we had better watch out for them, or something like that?

McCORMACK: Hell no. Bear in mind our policy was aimed at generating economic growth worldwide. We wanted to see prosperity worldwide. We didn't like the idea of starving children. We didn't like the idea of countries in such destitution that they were potential victims of communism. At the end of WWII, we set out to spread prosperity around the world, and we achieved prosperity around the world. That is our post-war crowning glory, my friend, our crowning glory. Was I happy that I could see Europe becoming more prosperous? Yes. Did we have trade disputes? Of course we had trade disputes, but in the context of a strong and positive relationship across the Atlantic. One of the reasons why I am so troubled now is that we have serious Mideast-related problems with our European friends. We are going to have to work to rebuild these relationships.

ROBERT E. MCCARTHY

**Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Leningrad (1983-1984)**

Mr. McCarthy was born in Canada and raised in New York City. He was educated at Fordham University, City College of New York and American University. After service in the US Army and studies in Paris, he joined the Foreign Service in 1973. His assignment in the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs was the beginning of a career dealing primarily with Public and Cultural Affairs with USIA. His overseas assignments as Public Affairs and/or Cultural Affairs Officer were in Belgrade, Moscow (twice), Montenegro, Leningrad and Budapest. His Washington assignments also concerned USIA programs. Mr. McCarthy served as Diplomat in Residence at Georgetown University 1995-1996. Mr. McCarthy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: When you left Moscow, you went to, well we're talking about Leningrad in those days...

McCARTHY: Right.

Q: What was the difference from your feeling between the two cities?

McCARTHY: On the one hand, St. Petersburg, Leningrad was more open, slightly more cosmopolitan... not more cosmopolitan, I'll take that back... more open to the West in a sense. But the authorities there wanted to show that they were more Catholic than the Pope. So they would harass the scholars and exchangees, and one of your responsibilities was counseling them, having them over, intervening on their behalf. I remember a consular officer meeting with a dissident lawyer, and when he came out of the meeting, the consular officer was assaulted, I mean physically assaulted. Again the administration was making a point.

It was a smaller operation as well. The real creative juices were flowing in Moscow in terms of theater productions and things like that. But you could do things. Our approach in St. Petersburg was similar to what we did in Moscow. We had the consul general's residence as a culture center of sorts. So, for example, we had a graphics art exhibit, curated by the State University of New York, in Albany. We brought it into Leningrad, professionally curated, labeled the works and hung them in the residence. This was Ray Benson's brainchild, by the way. We had special showings, and at any event in the residence - say Pearl Bailey - guests could also see the art. We had access to institutions there. Dick Callner, the curator of the SUNY exhibit, came and had a discussion/slide show for professional staff at the Hermitage on current trends in American art. As long as it didn't attract a whole lot of attention, you could do things. We had programs at the conservatory. We had what we used to call Cultural Ambassadors, Nancy Weems, for example, was resident there for some weeks and gave master classes. We brought in a judge to talk to law students. We could arrange all those things through the right contacts.

I would say it might be a little harder there than Moscow, and you didn't have quite the same support. It was a smaller staff, you know, one American officer, an American secretary, and several local employees to do the public diplomacy work, whereas in Moscow you would had a public affairs officer, a cultural affairs officer, an executive officer, assistant information

officers, and assistant cultural affairs officers. A big operation. And the Leningrad consular district was responsible for the Baltic states, of course. And there the difference was profound. When I traveled out to Lithuania, I visited a teacher-training institute and they with me normally, served coffee, and just chatted. By contrast, when I went to a similar institute in Leningrad, they were deathly afraid, as though I was going to reach across the table and steal their souls somehow. By this time, when I was in Leningrad, this whole intermediate nuclear range issue in Europe...

Q: The SS-20...

McCARTHY: Exactly. The SS-20 and the Pershing/cruise missile response. Absent an agreement, NATO was going to install those missiles. So the Soviets were intentionally feeding the rumor mill that this was putting us on the brink of war, this was exceptionally dangerous, the Americans were crazy, Reagan was a war monger, etc., etc. So this complicated things.

Q: Who was your consul general in Leningrad?

McCARTHY: First of all, it was Bill Shin. And then Charlie McGee.

Q: Did we have much contact with students and faculties in either place?

McCARTHY: Yes, we had. And there was a tradition of that. Let me just back up a second. The exchange of students and young faculty members, Ph.D. students, began around 1959 or so with the er-university Committee on Travel Grants based at Indiana University. Soon the responsibility passed to another organization, the International Research and Exchanges Board, IREX, a non-profit organization. They administered this program that was funded through the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. There was an overarching U.S.-U.S.S.R. bilateral agreement that covered these exchanges, and every two years you'd sit down and negotiate a more specific two-year protocol. I participated in several of these, and it's very detailed and a bit tedious - how many visitors will we have, and how many performing arts groups, and what are the provisions for having somebody lecture?, etc., etc. All during that time we had contact with students and faculty, partly by virtue of the exchange program. When the bilateral exchanges agreement lapsed after Afghanistan, you would think, "Well, probably these educational/cultural exchanges will end, too." But they didn't. Everybody just looked the other way, and IREX continued to manage these exchanges of scholars and students, and in the Soviet Union we continued to be involved. Those scholars and students were in St. Petersburg/Leningrad, and they were in Moscow. Particularly in Leningrad, we had quite a bit of contact with them. We were trying to help them with their access to archives. We tried to cheer them up, invite them over, and give them advice. One of them may still be wearing my old U.S. army overcoat.

Q: At the time... this was a time of sort of almost the last gasp of the Soviet Union. Correct me if I'm wrong, but as I see it, the last gasp of the Soviet Union trying to make a major push toward the West with these intermediate-range rockets and all, trying to split essentially Europe off from the United States. In the Soviet Union, was there concern that this thing might get out of hand, or was this just another part of the old game that had been played for years?

McCARTHY: You mean concern on the part of the...

Q: Yourself, and also was this affecting, were you reading this into the Soviet populace?

McCARTHY: They certainly were more worried. The people who you associated with before were worried about conflict. Yes. So it did have an impact. And then every American visitor got a dose of this to bring back... People were genuinely nervous. This was a time of last gasps. You know, Brezhnev died, and the city closed down. There were lines of people going through the street. An army division was mobilized. And then you had Andropov for a while, and he died, and then you had Chernenko. I left before he died, but he was already, as you said in the "last gasp" phase. Last gasp is an appropriate term, since he had emphysema and he could hardly breathe when he speaking in public.

Q: I think it was Ronald Reagan who made the remark saying, "Why don't you have better contact with the Soviets?" "Well, they keep dying on us." [laughter]

McCARTHY: [laughter] The time of funerals.

Q: When Brezhnev went, was there concern? He'd been around a long time.

McCARTHY: It wasn't like the accounts you read of Stalin's death - despair, panic. When Brezhnev died, there were long lines of people to go into that trade union hall and observe the body lying in state. It was a major production. I was there for quite some time, since there was press coverage and we were working with the American press. There was also extensive television coverage...speeches...the actual burial.. But I don't recall any real concern.

Q: Well, you spent, what, three years in the Soviet Union?

McCARTHY: Right.

NADIA TONGOUR
Soviet Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1983-1985)

Nadia Tongour was born in Turkey and raised in South Carolina. She was educated at William and Mary and Stanford Universities and taught at several colleges before joining the Foreign Service in 1980. Primarily a Political Officer, her Washington assignments were in the fields of Soviet and Soviet bloc Affairs as well as Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Her foreign assignments include Brazil, Barbados and St. George's Grenada, where she was Principal Officer. Ms. Tongour was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: So you were on the Soviet desk from '83 to when?

TONGOUR: To mid '85.

Q: Well do you want to talk about in the first place, how the Soviet desk was constituted and then we will talk about what you were covering, the developments.

TONGOUR: Actually, I served on the so-called Soviet desk twice, and each tour was quite different. In my first assignment, there were at least four distinct offices under the umbrella of the Soviet Desk. One of these dealt with bilateral relations, which was the office I worked in; another focused on multilateral affairs. A third covered scientific issues, and the fourth, I think, focused on educational and exchange programs. And, of course, there was a small Front Office, then headed by an outstanding Director, named Tom Simons.

He had an excellent career in the Soviet/East European area, including a stint as Ambassador to Poland. I've lost track of him but initially after retiring, he spent some time at Stanford. I had a lot of respect for him, but he definitely came from the traditional Foreign Service background. I think his father had been a diplomat as well, and Tom himself had gone to ivy league schools -- Princeton and Harvard I think. So he could be described as being of the old guard. Yet, that said, there was no chore beneath him. If someone needed to dump ashtrays, make copies, or bring in additional chairs for a meeting, he was perfectly willing to help out. So, he represented a super intelligent, big picture thinker who at the same time was able to do whatever needed to be done. In short an excellent boss. Fortunately, my section chief was outstanding as well. As for my own responsibilities, they were somewhat mixed. I had to deal both with security issues, particularly as related to the New Office Building (NOB) being built in Moscow and with questions involving dissidents, particularly religious dissidents. It was an odd mesh.

Q: But both very important at the time.

TONGOUR: That they were. My work also often included many things that did not fall neatly into any one category but were fascinating all the same. But in the case of security, the issue of most critical importance then and subsequently had to do with listening devices and bugs planted in our new compound in Moscow; we were both conscious of these and very concerned about what needed to be do. Obviously, this is a sensitive topic about which I really can't say very much.

Q: Well, at that time, I mean, we were building a new embassy.

TONGOUR: That is right.

Q: And the place was just riddled with listening devices. Was this public knowledge at the time?

TONGOUR: This was a key. It was not public knowledge at that time but became so two or three years later and various congressmen were outraged. Unfortunately, they were under the mistaken impression that the State Department had been in the dark about this. We were well aware of the problem. However, there were differing views within the interagency community as to the best course of action. Does one wait until the building is completed and then take them out or do so piece meal, etc ?. There were various schools of thought on the matter and on policy

implications vis-a-vis our relationship with the Soviets. .

There were other issues as well, including the treatment of dissident minority groups. And there was a case I personally got involved with concerning a young would-be defector. The young man was the teen-age son of a high ranking diplomat who was due to return to Moscow. The kid did not want to return to the Soviet Union with his parents..

Q: He was quite young, was he not?

TONGOUR: Yes, he was about 14 or 15 -- I no longer remember his exact age. In any case, he ran away -- to an American friend's home as I recall -- but eventually Soviet Embassy officials "nabbed" with the intention of sending him swiftly back to Moscow. For our part, we tried to submit demarches advising the Soviets not to put the boy on a plane before we had had a chance to ascertain his intentions. Otherwise, we knew that there could be horrible repercussions, not only with regard to human rights concerns but also in terms of our bilateral relationship. But, the Embassy officially refused to accept our demarches. We seemed to be in a stalemate. My supervisor at the time, the Deputy Office Director Lynn Pascoe asked me whether my Russian was good enough to talk to the guard at the Soviet Embassy. After I indicated that it was probably adequate, he asked me to go to the Embassy that evening with a document in hand and essentially insist on giving it to the guard. This, obviously, is not the way demarches are normally delivered. However, I was told that since it was critical that we deliver our message, if it required sliding it under the door, I should do so. I'm sure I was on camera at the old Russian Embassy on 16th Street, where a car dropped me off. After ringing the bell, I spoke with the night guard, telling him I had to leave a document. He clearly did not know what to do with it but eventually took the paper which basically outlined our position -- our insistence on interviewing the boy. In the end, they did grant us permission to talk to him at Dulles Airport to ensure that he was returning to the Soviet Union voluntarily. Who knows what he really wanted, but when our then Assistant Secretary for European Affairs -- the case had reached that level --Richard Burt interviewed him, he said he wanted to go home.

Q: Well, you know, when you are talking about a 14 of 15 year old kid who is having disputes with his family, you know, it is sort of without question, of course you are going to let him, I mean, you know, you just cannot turn this into something but how do-

TONGOUR: How to avoid the adverse publicity and the problem of public perception that the U.S. Government was sending a kid back to "those commies". It was still the Cold War era after all, and official relations remained somewhat chilly. There is a problem of the public at large saying by God, you are sending a kid back to those communists. It was still a Cold War era.

Q: We had this with, Elian Gonzalez.

TONGOUR: The Cuban kid.

Q: The Cuban kid, where his father was in Cuba and wanted him back and the kid was eight or nine years old and the Cuban American community tried to turn him into a saint or something like that. At a certain point you just realize this humanity and all this; unless you can talk about

being really an abusive thing and then you turn it over to the authorities of the country. But it was tricky.

TONGOUR: It really was tricky. And, we were of more than two minds about what was the best approach. From the standpoint of the family, it was best that the son return to the Soviet Union with the family; moreover, as the son of a high-ranking diplomat, he would probably not confront serious repercussions. Undoubtedly, this whole episode had a negative impact on the father's subsequent career. I don't think he secured any other high level postings abroad. Plus, based on later reports, it seems the son had a difficult time readjusting to life in his homeland. In the end, we were all of two or three minds as we watched the kid board the plane and fly off to Moscow.

But it was an interesting, albeit tense, . I stress this now because years later, when I had a second stint on the Soviet Desk, the atmosphere was very different, and the relationship had clearly improved between my first and second tours on the Desk. One final aspect of my first such tour warrant mention, namely that I somehow also had the role of "logistics" person in the office, and as such wound up putting together a lot of the preparatory materials for a visit by Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to Washington. Because of the heretofore icy relations combined with factors such as the Soviets shooting down a KAL flight, there had not been an "official" visit by the Soviet Foreign Minister to Washington in years. So we had not "SOP" (standard operating procedures) for the Desk/European Bureau should deal with the visit. So it fell to me to prepare a step-by-step manual concerning who did what -- who went to the airport, took part in events, etc. Obviously, the Protocol Office had its own materials but this was in-house for us. It turns out that my handiwork, this manual, was used by the Soviet Desk for a number of subsequent high-ranking visits.

Q: Let us talk about the religious dissidents and all. Were the Pentecostals still in the embassy at the time?

TONGOUR: Yes. There were still one or two Pentecostals living in the Embassy. This had been a very hot issue for some time, but was starting to be less of a point of contention by this time. Yet, the question of "what is to be done" remained. The real issue then was how to assist genuine religious dissidents while simultaneously preventing a horde of people from seeking refuge or camping out in the Embassy basement.

Q: Well what- this '85, it was '83 to '85 period?

TONGOUR: Yes.

Q: What was the situation in the Soviet Union? I mean, how would you describe relations at that time?

TONGOUR: Relations were cool (even icy at times) and references such as the "Evil Empire" didn't help. At the same time, it was a period of flux, even opportunity, wherein Foreign Service Officer, such as our Office Director Tom Simons and the staff as a whole, looked for ways to melt the ice, if you will. This set the stage for the "that" that would occur a

few years late, with Reagan-Gorbachev.

Q: But Gorbachev- we were still going through the Andropov, Chernenko; I mean, leaders were dying.

TONGOUR: That is right. What I mean by setting the stage is that there were people in the U.G. Government focusing on how and when to get beyond the horrible time when I said set the stage, there were people already thinking, in the U.S. Government, about how and when and how to get beyond the seemingly horrible relations of the day. And of course, arms control issues that were very much uppermost in the minds of our leadership, as I am sure they were Soviet priorities as well. Other hot button issues included the broad range of human rights and dissident concerns, including a variety of non-religious dissident cases, which I personally did not handle.

Q: Well, did you get involved, I mean, was there sort of a dissidence of religious- was there a Jewish cast to it or was this almost separate?

TONGOUR: That was basically separate. There was certainly a Jewish orientation in the work of the office related to emigrants from the former Soviet union, especially in the late 70s when many of the so-called Refuseniks were starting to leave, but I was there only at the tail end of that migration. By the early-to-mid 80s, we were focusing on more esoteric groups, whereas the Jewish groups were already being cared for by a number of different Offices at State as well as nongovernmental organizations. .

Q: Did you get any feel for the White House, the National Security Council dealing with this? I mean, was there- was this still the period where sort of President Reagan and his group, he came out of the pretty far right of the Republican Party and obviously extremely suspicious of the Soviet Union; was that still prevailing or were things beginning to change? Did you get any feel for this?

TONGOUR: I definitely got the feeling that they were still very, very conservative. But at the same time, folks on the Soviet Desk and elsewhere in the bureaucracy were furiously writing all sorts of briefing papers and memos aimed at chipping away at the ice and looking for ways to open up the dialog and the minds of those in charge.

Q: Well, when you are dealing with religion, did Islam, _____ of the Central Asian area and all, did that play any role in what you were thinking at the time or was it pretty much-

TONGOUR: To start with, there were several of us working on various aspects of the dissidents issue. In general, we gave little thought at that point to questions related to Islam. Later when I returned for a second tour on the Soviet Desk, this was a much more significant variable. But that was later, and while during this period there was an officer in our section that focused more on regional minorities, I concentrated more on the Pentecostals and other minority religious sects out in Siberia and the Far East. .

Q: Did you feel a bit like the new kid on the block, being at the Soviet- I mean, obviously you had had this background but at the same time you would have had people who had been dealing with

this their entire careers and then all of a sudden you are plucked in there; how did you feel about it?

TONGOUR: No, I never felt that on the Soviet Desk (SOV). SOV behaved very much as a family and you really weren't included unless you more or less arrived with a certain predisposition or educational background. Not that it was overly tight or exclusive, but rather it tended to be self-selecting with most of the people in the office having advanced degrees in either Russian history or politics, and they all knew Russia. My background certainly fit the mold. There were definitely people that had been working these issues for years but they did not make one feel inadequate or inferior. That said, I recall early on attending a Foreign Buildings Office (FBO) meeting where a big hulking guy briefed me about building security in Moscow. I saw a look on his face that seemed to signify "what is this young thing going to understand about building security, and why on earth did they send her to me?" In turn, I became very determined to prove to him that I could climb the scaffolding, if need be, when I visited the NOB and that I could learn the vocabulary of the building trade.

Q: Did you have, I mean, the fact that you came out of the visa line into the Soviet- did you have a mentor or somebody who was, that you felt was kind of, you know, plucked you out and looking after you?

TONGOUR: Yes, actually several people, one of which was someone who eventually became my supervisor on the Soviet desk who has worked in this field and has a fascinating story of how the Foreign Service works by the name of Jim Schumaker.

TONGOUR: Jim is roughly my age. He entered the Foreign Service after college and rose rapidly in the system. And after having served for twenty-something years and reaches the senior rank of OC quite early confronts the situation of being 47 or 48 and not yet promoted from OC to MC in the requisite amount of time. Having spent most of his career working on the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, plus a tour in Afghanistan, he was clearly passionately committed to working in the region. Yet, suddenly he was faced with being "ticked out", meaning too much time spent in a particular "grade", before he was even 50. Ironically, he was essentially willing to work for next to nothing, so committed was he to the Foreign Service. But the Department really couldn't allow that. Well, Jim demonstrated incredible ingenuity by simply re-taking the Foreign Service Exam. He had already held a number of senior positions, including Deputy Chief of Mission. Needless to say, he passed. When time came for his oral, half the panel had to recuse themselves because they knew him. He passed the oral as well. This created serious issues for the Department's personnel officers, raising questions about what to do with him and whether to re-admit him into the Foreign Service and at what rank. Eventually, they found a diplomatic solution, allowing him to fill in as needed in the former Soviet world. For example, he served as Acting Consul General in Vladivostok for some months during a staffing gap. He filled in elsewhere -- Moscow and Kiev -- as well. Basically, he served as a WAE without exactly being retired. .

Q: WAE is-

TONGOUR: I am sorry. It means "when actually employed".

Q: Which is what we use retirees for to put them on part-time work.

TONGOUR: That is right. I do not know what category they put him in but they used his services for several years. Most recently he went to work for the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) back in Kiev, once again working in the same general area. I go into all that because he is someone who had been totally committed to first, the Foreign Service, and secondly to serving in the area of the former Soviet Union. And he was the Section Chief for the unit I worked in during my first tour in SOV. When a year into my tour there was an announcement that Roz Ridgeway, who was to be the next Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, was looking for a mid-level assistant, Jim, my friend and mentor, recommended me because he thought I had the requisite skills. I interviewed for that position and got it. And that certainly helped me obtain other positions down the road. Tom Simons also was very helpful. In such a close knit group, people were protective of their own and very helpful to them.

Q: Well, how long were you working with Roz Ridgeway?

TONGOUR: Originally, the assignment was supposed to last one year but it turned into an 18-month tour. The standard length for such Special or Executive Assistant positions was one year. But after I had been on the job a few months, Ambassador Ridgeway asked me to stay on a little longer because we had hardly gotten into the swing of working together; so I did stay on, and it was a fascinating experience.

Q: Let's talk about Roz Ridgeway, whom I have interviewed? How did you find her and her way of operating?

TONGOUR: I liked her very much. She would be the first to admit that even having been an ambassador twice and then an Assistant Secretary, she had never had a female Special Assistant until then. And she once admitted to me the difficulty of knowing exactly how to interact because at times, especially when we traveled together, it was easy for her to simply regard me as a friend. At the same time, however, she recognized that I was her staffer, and she was used to having men as staffers, except in purely secretarial roles. So, she had to grapple with the gender issue as well.

I imagine there was a certain ambivalence on her part towards the situation. I remember once during one of our trips to Europe we wound up going to dinner and having a very open and personal conversation. I suspect that she might well have later thought that this wasn't an appropriate interaction with a staffer. She was a bit more distant subsequently. So, there was a bit of "push-pull" that way, but the relationship was certainly amicable and an wonderful learning experience for me.

Q: Okay. What were some of the things you were seeing being done during this period?

TONGOUR: Well, this was the start of the budding Reagan/Gorbachev relationship to be sure, but there were many factors that led to this, including some negative developments, such as the mistreatment of the American journalist Danilov in Moscow and continuing problems related to

the whole arms race. But on the personal front, from the outset we had to figure out exactly what my role in the Front Office was to be. The Assistant Secretary herself was brand new, and initially it was far from clear what I would be doing. Over time, I became essentially a clearinghouse for papers that were passed to the Staff Assistants and intended for her -- the doorkeeper of sorts, but there was also a secretary to do that. Some parts of my work were substantive but much of it was in that gray zone, and I lacked a clearly defined portfolio of my own. I attended many meetings and got to hear the views of both the Assistant Secretary and her interlocutors and in turn acquire a better grasp of our own policies. But, I have to admit, I had lots of questions regarding whether I had a real role or was simply moving papers around. In other words, did I have any significant contribution to make? Not really, but then again, that is the way a Special or Executive Assistant is supposed to function.

Q: But you are the fly on the wall.

TONGOUR: The fly on the wall that hears and learns a lot. And in that period our relationship with the Soviet Union shifted from being one might say fairly dark to considerably lighter. But from my perspective one of the most interesting aspects of the job related to travel because when the Assistant Secretary traveled, I traveled as well. When Secretary Shultz traveled to Europe, so did Ridgway, and therefore, so did I. And when it came time for the G-8, which happened to be in Tokyo that year, Shultz traveled to Japan, and she went along, as did I. There were definitely some fantastic trips and the opportunity to witness the dynamics among the key players. As you well know, George Shultz was very well respected by members of the Foreign Service for many reasons, not the least of which was his manner of dealing with subordinates, especially when compared to some of his predecessors and successors. Several examples come to mind. While I was still on the Soviet Desk, Office Director Tom Simons invited him to our Christmas party, an event that was actually renowned in the building for having caviar. Apparently, none of the working level offices had up to that point ever invited him to such a party; yet he came. Flying on the Secretary's plane was also interesting. On each flight he would make a point of walking down the aisle and talking to everyone at least briefly. There was someone on his staff who seemed to keep track of the birthdays of members of the traveling party and advise him accordingly so that he could acknowledge the person. It happened to me once during a trip to Athens. We were all at some reception and at some point he came over to me and said "I understand you have a big day today." These little touches were endearing and much appreciated particularly in a bureaucratic environment where such gestures tend to be infrequent.

Q: Of all the secretaries of state, both in the substantive and on the personal level, George Shultz really stands preeminent.

TONGOUR: I think that's right.

Q: Colin Powell on the personal level was great, policy level, well, I mean, we got the Iraq War.

TONGOUR: That too. Back to the earlier period. It was very interesting to work closely with the Secretary's staff (the so-called S Staff) and be at least on the periphery of a wide range of important meetings -- some of which were tense or difficult. And there was a period in which Roz Ridgway herself was the center of discussions concerning whether or not a woman might

know anything about "throw weight" and should have any real role in arms control negotiations. And that attitude still exists -- so the gender issue rears its head in many different ways.

Q: It took her a long time but Roz Ridgeway became the world's preeminent in fish, which was very much a man's world but she became so respected she was a fisherman's boy.

TONGOUR: I know. It was something she said she very much enjoyed. I don't recall the specifics but I think she may have met her Coast Guard husband in the "fish world".

Q: Were you there when- did you go on the, when Ronald Reagan went to Berlin and said tear down the wall, Mr. Gorbachev, and all that?

TONGOUR: I was not, for reasons that I can no longer remember -- there were a few trips in which the plane was "too full" and some staffers didn't make it. That may have been one of those times. Frankly, what saddened me is that considering all the trips I did go on, the one that I could not make at the last moment due to space limitations was Reykjavik. And I really wanted to, as did all the staff at that point.

Q: Well, as part of the SOV club, were you finding this a very exciting time? Because things seemed to be melting quite rapidly.

TONGOUR: Yes, it truly was. Your mentioning the SOV Club is an apt description which reminds me that in the EUR Bureau there was another important office called RPM (Regional Political Military Affairs) and there was considerable rivalry or competition between SOV and RPM on policy issues and approaches related to arms control and dealing with the Soviet Union in general. One of the things that struck me most while working for Roz Ridgeway and seeing the papers produced (briefing materials, memos, etc) by these two offices was how in a funny way the two offices resembled two different types of beauties, namely Grace Kelly and Sophia Loren.

Q: We are talking about two mammoth movie stars of an earlier period, Sophia Loren being sort of a very earthy and Grace Kelly being ice princess.

TONGOUR: That is right. Grace Kelly's slip never showed, and RPM was the Grace Kelly of the Bureau. RPM papers were always letter perfect -- never a typo and the format was always correct. The Soviet Desk on the other hand -- and I have to admit to a bit of partiality here -- did not always have its "paper act" all together. Not that Sophia Loren was slovenly, but figuratively speaking her slip sometimes would show, and yet she was quite impressive, and at her best, outstanding. That was what always struck me about the work produced by those two offices; both were excellent but the Soviet desk would come in with a true tour de force production every once in awhile.

Q: Well, did you sort of personally subscribe to Gorbachev as a new look or- there was one of skepticism; how did you feel about that?

TONGOUR: I think there was a very strong desire to want all this -- note the caveats -- and him

to be the genuine article. But at the same time, what did the "genuine article" mean? The genuine article as a Soviet reformer; yes, we thought he really was that. Whether he was going to emerge as our image of an honest-to-God democrat, on that there were widely differing views. After all, he did come up through the Soviet system, and that certainly left its mark, but how much so was unclear. .

Q: Did you pick up on the part of Ridgeway or others or even yourself, you know, a bit of nervousness about Ronald Reagan, that he might get overly enthusiastic about Gorbachev? You know, I mean, you are sort of the handlers and your principle might get too far off the reservation.

TONGOUR: Well, you have to understand that no one wanted to be mistaken for a Pollyanna or jeopardize U.S. interests. But relations had been bad for so long that we were caught up in the hope for real improvements. Things evolve; circumstances and attitudes change but certainly at that moment we hoped for the best. Of course, there was the concern that if we were overly optimistic or enthusiastic, at the first setback, when something went wrong, there might be a tendency for the pendulum to swing to the other extreme. There was that concern; yet, overall, we were cautiously optimistic.

Q: Was RPM a brake on this?

TONGOUR: Probably. You know, it is really hard after all these years to recall exactly who was for what and when but let's say RPM was more focused on the nuts and bolts, the military and nuclear hardware available and what we did or did not need, as were other government agencies. Certainly, they concentrated more on weaponry and broader political-military issues. That said, I don't want to make it sound as though SOV or any other office consisted of misguided optimists, not at all -- simply that their orientations were a bit different. different.

Q: One general question. When dealing with the Soviet Union in both manifestations in your job, were you picking up the people around you- I mean, one of the things that struck me as everybody who went to the Soviet Union for years coming back and saying this damn place does not work.

TONGOUR: We knew that.

Q: The elevators do not work. You know, it does not work and yet we were building up the Soviets as being 10 feet tall in a way. How did you feel about this during this particular period?

TONGOUR: I think, and I was hardly alone in this view, there were many who knew what did and did not work in the Soviet Union and why. They were learning about causes -- some of which pre-dated the Soviet regime, going back to much earlier periods of Russian history, with its two-class society. Fundamentally, there has always been an elite with lots of intelligence, capacity, and creativity, with scientists who could come up with brilliant ways to patch things together with the proverbial band-aid. And we also had a fairly good sense of how the system did not work, which made it possible to suspend disbelief in a way, regarding the point that you made. In other words, recognizing failures in the system, were we, nonetheless, allowing them to

act as a threat. We might be seeing parallels in North Korea with a leader sacrificing his people for specific military-related goals. That, too, was an image many had regarding the Soviet Union, namely that they might starve the masses if necessary to build the perfect rocket. It obviously took some time to grasp that they might not be doing as much as some thought in the sphere of military/nuclear technology development. Similar assumptions came to the fore in assessments about Saddam Hussein and what he was up to, and tended to drive policy.

Q: Was anybody, you know, during this time on the Soviet desk, saying, you know, this place would crack apart as far as the disparate elements, the Stans and all this; was that at all an issue?

TONGOUR: Let me jump ahead a few years. In August 1991, I was returning from a sunshine tour in the Caribbean for my second stint on the Soviet desk and I remember thinking how different was the bilateral relationship I was coming back to and how much better, calmer our relationship with the Soviet Union was the "second time around". And I recall turning on the television in the hotel I where I was temporarily staying, and was shocked to see pictures of tanks in Moscow, with shots of Boris Yeltsin in the thick of it, and everything seemed to be falling apart. That was my first day back. I immediately went to work, and for the next week or so it seemed as though we were working around the clock. What was patently obvious was that other agencies seemingly had not prepared scenarios for this type situation, the "dismemberment" or collapse of the Soviet Union we were witnessing. One would have thought that analysts might in prior years (before 1991) have at least prepared some contingency papers along the lines of what actually transpired, but they provide very little along these lines. We had to come up with our own scenarios for what might happen next. We wound up doing our own analysis, there on the Soviet Desk, with minimal input from other agencies.

Q: Yes, we are talking about the CIA.

TONGOUR: Basically but it is a general observation.

Q: It is far enough back and also, you know, we are not talking about methods or anything else; I mean, we can talk about the analysis of the CIA.

TONGOUR: The analysis was absent, which was quite surprising, even shocking given the large analytical staff devoted to that part of the world. Yet, in that period at least, they really did not come up with much that was coherent or of value to policy makers. So, during the next few weeks we churned out a myriad position papers dealing with the "what ifs": the what if this happened or that occurred --- scenarios one, two, three, etc.

RAYMOND ELLIS BENSON
Press/Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Moscow (1983-1987)

Raymond Benson was born in New York City in 1924. He served in the U.S. Army between WWII and the Korean War. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin and attended the Russian Institute at Columbia University. He joined the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1957. His overseas posts include, Zagreb, Belgrade, Hamburg, Turkey, and Moscow. Mr. Benson was interviewed by Robert Daniels in 2000.

Q: Then in 1982 you left Belgrade and served in Washington with the Atlantic Institute.

BENSON: I went there as a fellow for a year. The question of what I would do after that year was left open. I think it's fair to say that I sort of milled around for the better part of that year, and then one day in early 1983 I got a call saying that Ambassador Hartman had called USIA and inquired whether I would I would accept a Moscow assignment that summer. So I spoke with my wife, who said she couldn't think of anything she'd rather do, and I said yes, and that in fact is what we did.

Now, it was immediately clear that what was going on--I didn't know this at the Atlantic Council--was that there were conversations, informal, between the United States and the Soviet Union about developing the text of a mutually agreeable cultural agreement or cultural and information agreement. The one which had been signed and in which all USIS work in the Soviet Union and all Soviet work in the United States in the cultural area was organized was the so-called Lacy-Zarubin Agreement of 1958. It had lapsed in 1979 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. There were talks to renew the agreement, which was going to expire at the end of 1979, which had been recessed for Christmas to have each side think over some points of dispute. In the meantime the Soviet went into Afghanistan and the talks were never resumed. The agreement lapsed as of December 31 of 1979. We are now talking about 1983. Both the Soviet Union and the United States thought it might be fitting now to try to get an agreed text between the two countries, and what Art Hartman wanted was to have me prepare myself for leading the negotiating team which would do this. So my Atlantic Fellow stint was shortened and I went back to USIA. I sat in the European area, a little cubicle was prepared for me, and I was asked to prepare a draft text which would be the basis for the discussions.

So back I went home and sat in the European area and, reviewing the files which were available of all old agreements and review sessions, which were annual, and evaluations and God knows what else we had, I produced a text. There were three documents: the basic general agreement, then the program document, and then the so-called implementing conditions. If you don't have one, two doesn't exist; and if you don't have one and two, three doesn't exist; but they're negotiated separately and signed separately. The total was quite a few pages. So that's what I did sitting there with all of the files at my disposal. By the time I got to Moscow, the text was there. But that's a separate story, and we'll get into that when we talk about my tour of duty and the negotiations themselves. But that's what I did for I cannot remember now how many months, but there were quite a few that it took me working alone. I was given a typist who would take what I scribbled up and turn it into text. That's what you did then; we didn't have computers. We had a pretty good text by the time I left. It was edited, it was critiqued. I argued my points. We had a good text by the time we were finished.

Q: So you were developing the American text that would then have to be negotiated with the Russians to get an agreed text?

BENSON: Yes, exactly. We had reason to believe that they were doing the same thing, but we'll come to that later. The degree to which they were not doing the same thing was fascinating.

Q: Could you comment on your preparations in early 1983 and what you expected the Russians to be doing?

BENSON: I don't recall, Bill, whether I spoke of Yale Richmond and the saving of the files, the historical files on US-Soviet cultural agreements. Did I speak of that? You're an historian, and you would find this very interesting indeed. The first agreement was signed in 1958. It was called the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement because of the two negotiators, one American, Mr. Lacy, and one Soviet, Mr. Zarubin. Every year it was renewed. Finally the agreements were biannual; finally they were tri-annual. Then every year there would be a review. A group would meet, alternately in Moscow and in Washington, and there would be a bill of particulars, complaints and suggestions on how the agreements could be expanded or do we need this paragraph after all. Thus, the agreement grew very pragmatically over many years.

Separately, the Cultural Unit of the State Department was terminated. It ran exchanges. It ran Fulbright programs. It ran all cultural programs around the world. USIA related to CU--it was the only thing left in the State Department when public affairs issues were removed from the State Department and formed as a separate agency, USIA, in 1953. This bifurcation made for complexities in dealing with a part of the State Department which had a budget that had to be fought through a Congress as a part of the State Department on the one hand and USIA on the other. And we public affairs officers in the field had a very interesting bureaucratic and sort of technical series of problems to face.

Well, anyway, this anomaly was terminated in either 1981 or 1982, at which point Yale Richmond, who was a USIA officer seconded to the State Department in charge of the Soviet and East European geographical area of CU, was, along with other geographical unit heads, given an order, which was to clear out the files. We were moving administratively from the State Department to USIA, and we don't want to move with all these cartons. Yale was surrounded by file cabinets.

Well, Yale, who had served in Moscow, who had served in Poland, understood very, very well the complexities of dealing with East Europe and that these cultural arrangements and cultural programs had enormous political significance in those countries because contacts with the United States were considered under one heading, contacts with the United States. Well, Yale knew all this, and as he sort of tells the story, he sat in his office and he closed the door, and he decided that he simply couldn't be a party to this destroying the entire historical record that he had in the filing cabinets behind him, which went back to 1958, to the Lacy-Zarubin negotiations and so on and so forth. So he packed this material in moving boxes, the whole thing, everything, file cabinets full. Of course, there was no problem to get some sort of official truck, because they were moving certain things over. And he showed up, quite literally, in the European area of the USIA with these dozens of cartons. Well, Len Baldyga was then the head of the European area.

He's an East European hand, and he understood the importance of all this, so filing cabinets were obtained. They were set up along the wall, and dutifully all the files were placed within the file cabinets in simple chronological order, just the way they were in the State Department.

When I got over to the European area of USIA and was asked to write up a new agreement, I was given a little cubicle close to these filing cabinets, and the whole history was there behind me. I found material from Malcolm Toon when he was the head of SOV, or Walt Stoessel, Jack Matlock, during these annual talks, during negotiations on the cultural agreement, the Q&A, you know, faithfully typed, the Soviets complaining of this and the Americans of that and so on. It was an inexhaustible source of, shall I say, intelligence; that is to say, my intelligence was fed this background. Now, as I said before, hope you don't take it condescendingly, but as an historian you understand that it's simply impossible to start *de novo*. I wouldn't have known quite what to do. I would have found the last agreement somewhere, to be sure, the one that lapsed in 1979, but here I had for me an absolutely, totally--I hope they still have it somewhere, bless them--fascinating mosaic of, let me see, 1958 to 1979, 21 years of negotiations. Well, give Yale Richmond a heck of a lot of credit for not doing what he was told to do, because it was insensible to follow that particular order. The European area under Len Baldyga shielded, protected and stored these documents; and there I sat; and with their aid I created the new draft text.

Q: Today is June 12th, 2000, and we are continuing our Foreign Service Oral History interview with Ray Benson, who in 1983 was preparing a new U.S.-Soviet cultural exchange agreement.

BENSON: Right, our drafting of the agreement covered 1983. The negotiations began toward the end of 1984 actually, but as I started on the last tape to say, the draft of the agreement which I was producing in the European area of USIA had to be read by Charles Wick before it would be declared acceptable to USIA. He had the idea that the Soviets were out to trump us every time a card was dealt. Therefore, imperatives and superlatives were written into the agreement at points that both Len, who had never served in the Soviet Union, and I knew, and Yale Richmond to be sure, who was I think by then retired but I spoke to from time to time. We knew it's just impossible to negotiate an agreement with such language in it. So what we decided to do, Len and I, was to qualify the language as sensibly as we could to get Charles Wick's approval, not the points at which there were irritants to Charles Wick, and get on with it, because what we needed was an agreed text at home. The blood on the carpet was being spilled in the USIA building; we hadn't even gotten to the Soviet Union yet. That was a lot of fun, I must say.

Q: Wick, as I recall, was appointed by President Reagan when he took office in 1983, and he did not have a foreign policy background. Was his forte American media experience?

BENSON: No, Charles Wick was a graduate of Michigan University. His name was Zwick; out of that came the name of Charles Z. Wick. He had been a jazz, I think, trumpeter and had some kind of orchestra or played in an orchestra, I'm not sure which--or call them jazz band. How he acquired some wealth I don't know, but some years later he was living in California near the Reagans, he and his wife, and he owned a group of old-age and convalescent homes, which made him wealthy, very wealthy. Mrs. Wick and Mrs. Reagan used to car pool to get their young children to various events like school in the morning and soccer in the afternoon, and they

became very fast friends, these families. The Wicks and the Reagans spent every Thanksgiving and Christmas together.

When Reagan was elected, he appointed Charles Wick the head of the inauguration ceremony committee. Wick, I'm told, did a bang-up job in getting the various auditoria and venues in Washington to be ready to do this, that and the other thing all on time and to get Reagan moving that evening among these various venues. A book was produced, which Charlie gave to me at one time, on this marvelous event. Once all of this was over, lo and behold, Charles Wick was appointed the head of USIA, a man who had been in show biz and was a friend of Reagan. There you are. He had no other relevant experience.

I suppose it's fair to say, however--it should be said--that he was a man of tremendous energy, and USIA in a strange way benefited--I shouldn't say 'in a strange way', very directly benefited--from his closeness to the President. The USIA budget lacked for nothing during those years. Perhaps that's enough at this stage of the game to say on this record.

We'll maybe put in a few things later about Charles Wick, but he was very conservative and very concerned about the Soviet Union. By golly, he was the head of USIA and USIA was going to be in charge of writing this text beginning the negotiations, and not on his watch would we give an inch to them. So by the time Len and I shook hands on an agreed text, it had been agreed with Charlie and it was, I believe, very quickly, not cursorily but promptly, vetted by the Soviet Bureau in the State Department and went off in the pouch to Moscow. When I got there in Moscow, it was waiting for me.

Q: This is all very helpful background for your work on the treaty. Now shall we take up your own move to Moscow and the nature of your assignment?

BENSON: Well, the work I plunged into in the first instance was kind of interesting. There was no substantial program anymore. We didn't have an agreement, so we had no cultural groups, we had no exhibits of the kind that used to move through the country, we didn't have budgets for it, we didn't have a covering agreement. Therefore, we didn't negotiate such things, we didn't have warm relations with concert agencies, museums or anything of the kind. There was just nothing going on.

Q: The chronology here can be very important, because Brezhnev had died in November of 1982 and you arrived under Andropov. Did you arrive before or after the Korean Airline [Flight 007] incident [September 1, 1983]?

BENSON: No, I arrived in June. Andropov was last seen publicly in early August of 1983 when his kidney ailments reached critical stage. He went off to be essentially under dialysis, which kept him alive and apparently functioning quite well as far as you can be functioning well under dialysis. Let me go back a step. When I got to Moscow, Arthur Hartman, of course, greeted me extremely warmly. He had asked for me, and here I was. [Ed: Hartman served as Ambassador from October 1981 to February 1987.]

We had met before, and I'll go into this in the post, editing stage. Arthur Hartman in it must have been 1972 or 1973 was flown into Turkey in a small jet courtesy of the U.S. Air Force with an aide or two. Bill Macomber asked me to be at the meeting, and the two of us agreed that was when we first met. But it was a short meeting. It had to do with the opium poppy substitution program. It had to do with other local crises. This was a run-up to Cyprus, the invasion of 1973. But we had never worked together really.

Anyway, he greeted me warmly. He said that there was one thing he had to tell me, which was that I was by rank the third man in the embassy--himself; Warren Zimmerman, the DCM; and me--and that when he would leave on vacation--he took very few vacations, he took one every year in the summer and it was a long one--Warren would replace him, and I would be acting DCM replace Warren. Would I agree to that? And I said yes, I would agree to that if he wanted to do that. We talked about my security file immediately.

In fact, very much earlier when he called the European office in USIA and said that he would like this fellow, Ray Benson, to replaced [Wallace] "Pic" Littell, my answer was yes, I would like to, but would somebody make sure that he was aware of my personal background. He was getting a public affairs officer with a certain, let's say, unique security file. The answer came back that he was delighted that I would come and, yes, he was aware, and with that I fetched up in Moscow of June of 1983. I then told him that when I arrived in Moscow in 1975 I had told Walt Stoessel--I think we've recorded that on these tapes--that I would not be looking up my half-sister for some time and would certainly check with him before I would want to do that. And I didn't do that until his successor, Mac Toon was firmly in place. Just five, six, seven weeks prior to my departure I said I'd like to do this, and Mac said go ahead and do it, and I did it. I told Art that we all at USIA, talking with the people who were sending me out and who knew the security file, had agreed that I would not be so bound this time and that I would look my half-sister and her mother up and see them as if they were normal Soviet citizens. People at the embassy did see Soviets. And they said, "Just fine. You will keep people informed, won't you?" I said I would, and so I said to Art that's what I'd like to do, and he said, "Fine. If anything comes up of interest to the embassy--you know what that means--you will talk with us, won't you?" I said, "Fine," and that was agreed, and that's the way we proceeded with my contacting my half-sister and seeing her for the rest of my tour. Well, soon after I got there, I started a special section in my own personal file for the American draft of the exchange agreement text, which had been pouched to Moscow and which I now repossessed, and anything relating to it.

It was agreed that, until such time as we went any further with it, it was not a matter for general discussion around the embassy, because there was no agreement with the Soviets about when this thing would be joined, this discussion. Recall I did say earlier, didn't I, that off-line, in fact, the Ambassador himself, actually, had been talking with the Soviets and they with us about, yes, we really should do this. So there were discussions, and they were not widely reported at all. And so that's where that was tucked away. Until further notice, I was not to talk about it among my staff, and we would proceed with the summer's business.

The summer's business was very quickly Arthur's preparation for leave, and off he and Donna went, as they usually did, toward the end of July, as I recall it, and they would be gone for six or seven weeks. An interesting twist on all of this, you know, for me was that Warren Zimmerman

decided he would not move from his office and would I mind being acting DCM sitting in Arthur's office. I said I wouldn't mind at all, and we proceeded in that way. Of interest during this period, the KAL Flight 007 was shot down on the night leading to September first. There are time zone differences and all of that, but the night leading to September first of that year, meaning 1983. It was a time of enormous pressure and tension in the front office. There were many cables, which were received which the front office got and certain other people in the embassy got, which related how events were proceeding, which were not a matter of public record nor widely read in the embassy.

At the same time the State Department was preparing an inspection of the embassy. Had nothing to do obviously with the KAL plane but had everything to do with what a DCM was supposed to do in preparing the embassy for inspection. The USIA inspections are a tedious mess for people on the ground. A State Department inspection is indeed a tedious mess. You go by the book, and the book is very thick, so there I was responsible for it, and Oren--I shouldn't say generously but just per force, I mean he couldn't do it--said, "Prepare the building for inspection." So with the Administrative Counselor, (Joseph S.) Joe Hulings, whose his last tour of duty was as Ambassador to Turkmenistan [Ed: Sept 1992 – September 1995]. I visited him there when I was doing the exchange program, wonderful man, now retired, so, we prepared the building for inspection. It was very, very complicated for me. I mean, I'm not of State Department on that, but we did that.

Relations with the Russians were stiffened by the downing of the KAL plane. Arthur came back. I moved back to my office, thought of negotiating the agreement. It was laid away for now. My recollection was that it was in January or early in 1984 that (Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei) Gromyko at a conference in Spain--just ticks in my memory, doesn't matter where--said certain things about the United States and about Soviet-American relations which seemed absolutely to preclude any sensible discussions on almost anything.

Q: Was that before or after (Konstantin) Chernenko took over?

BENSON: That would have been about the time that Andropov was on his last legs or had already been interred. It's about then, because Andropov died in February 1984. Gromyko spoke either just before then or just after then. It was for all intents and purposes an interregnum period, because Andropov was not terribly active.

Chernenko also was not terribly active and, therefore, was elected by the Politburo. That was an interregnum period in so many ways. Underneath all of that, or along with all of that, there were certain USIA-supported programs which continued. In fact, to go back on what we've been talking about, they continued after the termination of the cultural agreement and despite its termination. For example, our support for IREX...

See, the Soviets didn't want the higher educational exchange, the graduate-level exchange, the research exchange operating under IREX to be terminated, and it wasn't. Money was, such as it was, continued to be granted by USIA to IREX.

Q: There was a bit of a hesitancy on their side, wasn't there? In my own experience, I was supposed to go on IREX in the fall of 1983, and at that point after the KAL matter, the Academy of Sciences did not answer its mail. I didn't go until March or April of 1984.

BENSON: Well, yes, no. Why should they? They were in a state of shock, and it was an interregnum in practical terms in the Soviet Union. The top was in a shambles. Some people moved back and forth but very, very few. But I guess my point here that should be recorded--and we'll edit it into proper shape when we get the typescript--is that despite all of what happened and despite all of what we have been speaking, certain programs continued through agreements or letters exchanged between by the partner organizations. That is to say, Kassoff and Dan Matuszewski on behalf of IREX, would agree when the Academy of Sciences on one hand and the Ministry of Higher Education on the other. You know, IREX has both programs, the special programs which, I think, had 11 categories with the Academy of Sciences in gerontology and history and literature and archeology, what have you, and they had an agreement with the Ministry of Higher Education for people who were going to universities, reciprocally, and the Soviets were interested in continuing that, and IREX was interested, as was USIA and the American Council of Learned Societies. So there was an agreement to do this. At that time IREX did not have an office in Russia, in the Soviet Union, and the action on the ground, except when Allen and Dan would be visiting, was accomplished by my office. It was the USIS office of P&C, Press and Cultural Office, which acted on behalf of IREX and on behalf of the ACTR, the American Council of Teachers of Russian, which was placing people in the Pushkin Institute.

Q: Now, was this different in nature or degree from how you operated with the academic exchanges in the '70s?

BENSON: Really not. Neither IREX nor the ACTR had an office then. It didn't have an office in the 1980s. USIS Foreign Service Officers, my educational officer or cultural officer were doing the liaison work. We had telexes from IREX. That's the way one communicated in those days. We'd get copies of a telex that IREX had sent to the Academy of Sciences or copied back from Allen of one they'd received. It was just an awful lot of, not to-ing and fro-ing, but of back and forth to keep every informed. We had other exchange programs, some of which were recipients of USIA money. There was a program sponsored by Ohio State/Purdue Consortium, Leon Twarog --you must have known him--which had a resident director in Moscow and had a group of students from a Middle West consortium. There was a SUNY program for undergraduates with a resident director.

Q: You worked with these various university programs whether or not they had federal support?

BENSON: Yes. They tended to have a little federal support, but yes, we did, there's absolutely no question. In fact, whenever I arrived at a post--I'm glad you asked the question--I would speak with the staff and I would say that we would operate on behalf of the American academic, intellectual, cultural establishments here on the ground in Yugoslavia, Turkey and so on. In the same way the commercial officer operated on behalf of the American business community. Somebody from Indianapolis could come in to Moscow and say, "I would like to sell widgets in Moscow or in the Soviet Union. Help me." So we were essentially operating as a public service in relation to any American cultural and educational interests? I strongly believe we should be

and should have been, and we were. When the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities (MUCIA), I think it was, when they came in, they had no government money, but they wanted to start an exchange program that would involve the big ten universities. It was a big deal. This consortium, which was set up in, I think, Lansing, Michigan, would deal essentially with AID and the Department of Agriculture, and they had an enormous series of grants because they were land grant universities. They worked in India, they worked in Pakistan, they did land amelioration and cultivation, God knows what all, and we ended up, bring the story to an end here, with an agreement between them and counterparts at the Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Higher Education, in the Soviet Union. Person months, it was a certain number of people for a certain number of months, and it was a very proud day when this was completed.

Rutgers heard of this. They came in, and they wanted, on behalf of the New Jersey system of higher education, to have a similar agreement, and we got one at that time. The person who at the end was doing academic exchange for us was Carol Dorflin, whom you know now. You are dealing with her in the Karilian exchange. She was of inestimable help to the Rutgers people, who had things off sort of halfcocked. To complete the answer to your question, these groups would come in, they'd have a draft reciprocal agreement, and we would critique the draft and say, "This just won't go here. It's not France." They would either accept or not accept our suggestions. They're a private institution. But like as not, they would be very grateful.

Q: So you really played a crucial role for American universities or consortia in breaking the ground for them with their Soviet counterparts to get their programs established?

BENSON: Absolutely. We did it before the negotiation and signing of the agreement. We did it afterward on a different base, because there was an agreement already, you see. The agreement did not set up a necessary juridical basis in the Soviet Union for doing these exchanges. It depended on the political climate, whether you could get things done or not. And the political climate in terms of our work was vitally affected by the fact that there was finally an overarching government-to-government cultural agreement. Suddenly there was an outburst of USIS programs.

Q: When did you conclude the agreement?

BENSON: Well, the agreement was concluded and signed by Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Gromyko at the Geneva Summit on November 21, 1985, which was when Reagan and Gorbachev first met.

Q: What about Hartman as an ambassador [October 1981 – February 1987]?

BENSON: Art Hartman was delightful. He was a very loose, very relaxed, very affable, extremely intelligent, charming man. His wife was all of the above. They had in the best sense of the word 'show biz flair', deeply cultural in certainly music in their tastes. They turned Spaso House, the ambassador's residence, which you've been in, which has great public space, into a site of special concerts, chamber music, dances. They lived that way. We had no America House in Moscow. We had no venue to do anything. There was no library there, no reading room, none

of that. Through all of these tough times. When they came back from vacation in '83, the plane had been shot down, things were in ghastly shape. They repainted the inside of the great ballroom in Spaso. They put frescos on the walls. Donna Hartman had friends from Paris come to do this. They decided--and we were of enormous help here, USIA, my staff, me--that they would intensify their efforts to reach out and to develop contacts, maintain contacts, enhance contacts with whichever of the Soviet Moscow intellectuals, intelligencia, as would come, poets, playwrights, writers, artists, musicians, and so on.

Q: Did Hartman, by the way, have a Foreign Service background? How was his Russian?

BENSON: He didn't have much Russian. He studied valiantly, but his language was French. Arthur Hartman had been in the Foreign Service since Point Four days. He's Harvard educated with an economic twist, and he'd been in Paris then, the Marshall Plan, Point Four and so on as a very young man. Joined the Foreign Service, worked with Kissinger in the European area, and had been, prior to being assigned to Moscow, in Paris for a bunch of years. So I say he struggled valiantly with Russian just because he felt that was what he wanted to do or should do or could do, but he was never able to function at all in Russian. Whether he was able to read much, I don't know, but this is not the man who would have, as Mack Toon and Jack Matlock and Walter Stoessel, four newspapers delivered in the morning so that the morning staff meeting would be illuminated by what they knew had been printed, and *Izvestia* in the evening. No, that was not his background, but still Foreign Service background he certainly had.

Anyway, I would say what distinguished the Hartman tour of duty was this outreach. He would invite to these evenings, which would go on into the wee hours and were not infrequently scheduled once every two months. But you might have two a week. They would invite other ambassadors, of course, and interesting attachés--by attachés I mean cultural or press--in foreign embassies who knew one heck of a lot about the Soviet Union. I must say that our office worked like crazy on these guest lists, on calling people. We didn't have emails then. Putting together an evening of that sort was really a lot of work. And I should say official Soviets were invited too. Some came, most didn't, but groups of them came from the USA Institute; or IMEMO, the Institute of World Economy and International Relations; other special institutes, various people who the embassy was interested in and who were interested in the embassy and could on this kind of occasion get permission to come.

Q: Did those encounters then lead to any softening up of these institutions or the work you had to do with them to promote exchanges, for instance? Was there any benefit that you immediately gained or eventually gained from establishing that kind of acquaintance?

BENSON: The answer is yes. You see, through the agreement between IREX on one hand and the Academy of Science that's 11 different component parts--I think I mentioned economics and history and gerontology and all of that, these separate agreements.... You know, the whole agreement was negotiated during my first tour by Wassily Leontief. He was the one who came over on behalf of IREX and the American Academy...

Q: He was one of my economics teachers.

BENSON: Was he really? He was a great guy, wasn't he?

Q: Oh, yes, way above the students though.

BENSON: Well, he was a Nobel Prize winner in 1973, wasn't he?

Q: That's right, although I didn't appreciate what I was getting at the time.

BENSON: Well, we so often don't. But he did it, he came over. Of course, he didn't negotiate it actually. It had all been hacked out over a period of a year or two. But he came over, and the Soviets were just ga-ga over Leontief. His Russian was still elegant, it was splendid. He was so pleased to be back. I guess he'd been back, I don't know. But anyhow, the people who were at institutes which were involved in these exchanges had more of a "reason" to accept the invitations. There was no other function, no other person, no other way in which contacts were to be developed and maintained with these institutes, with these persons. When IREX came over in the person of Allen Kassoff and Dan Matuszewski, they would visit these contacts we had developed. Of course, there were scholars who would come and spend a day or a week with them, or there were conferences of a certain kind. They would either check in at the embassy or not. And that kind of meeting was not of such interest to the embassy as a functioning source of contacts with Soviet society and a source of reports and reporting on Soviet society. But meeting these people--never mind the American scholars--was of inestimable advantage. This kind of gathering, these gatherings, they went on for years. It was just gorgeous. It was a way of trying to bring them in. As the cultural agreement was being negotiated and then signed, there was just an unleashing of contact possibilities. Most notably the USA Institute, where various of its higher officers, (Georgi) Arbatov, (Radimor) Bogdanov, Milshtane, now became available.

Q: The general?

BENSON: The general, great guy--he was really special--(Eduard) Ivanyan and others. Anyway, an elaborate and mosaic-like answer to your question, and we'll fill in later. The question about Arthur Hartman as ambassador: he was superb.

Q: Let's go back then to the chronology of Soviet events. Chernenko took over in April of 1984 and died in March of 1985. Did the change in the Soviet leadership affect your work?

BENSON: Well, you see, by then we were well into the negotiation on the cultural agreement. The negotiations began in August.

Q: Today is still June 12th, 2000, and we are returning to our conversation with Ray Benson. We are discussing the negotiation of the revived cultural exchange agreement in 1984 in Moscow.

BENSON: The negotiations began, if I recall it correctly, August 8th. They followed a very quick and in a certain sense--to me anyway--surprising burst of meetings, which didn't include me, in Washington and in Moscow in which both sides agreed finally, yes, let's sit down and talk over if we can reach an agreed text. Against a background of some ghastly events in 1983 and

Gromyko's blasts in early 1984, one could be surprised but there it was. We gave the Soviets our text; the one I had worked on a year or two before.

As a matter of fact, it worked this way. Arthur came to me and said that he had the document--he didn't come to me; he invited me to his office—and said he had a document empowering him--it's an official document; there's a name for it [Circular 175]--from the State Department. He would be the designated chief negotiator, he and such staff as he wished to involve in the negotiations on this agreement. He had that document, and he would be off and running. However, he said, he didn't intend to do any of that. He would like me to do it and to pick such members of my staff as I wanted to accompany me on this. Of course, there would be regular telegraphic reporting on progress as we began to meet through State Department channels, and he would see it all. If there was any reason I wanted to burst in and tell him what had happened or what had not happened at any time, I could do that, but otherwise let's get on with it through this process. So I said fine, and I got my staff together.

We had a cultural attaché, we had a press attaché. The cultural attaché was Greg Gorov on my left hand; Jerry Verner, the information attaché on my right hand, literally on my right hand. He was senior, and he was the information officer, information attaché or press attaché or both. Each of them had with them other members of their staffs. So we would appear in two cars. We had one, two, three, four, five, seven or eight people for each meeting, one of whom was the reporting officer. The first reporting officer who would be taking notes--you know, there was nothing, at least on our side, done with a tape recorder; maybe they did, though they had a reporting officer there to scribbling away like crazy--was Mark Taplin, whom you know, who was in the cultural section. He wrote like a dream, and he was very smart. He caught everything. He knew Russian well. He was sitting off toward the end of this line at this great big rectangular table, and he was taking notes. That's the way we went on. There were no representatives of the State Department side of the embassy; there was just us from USIA.

Anyway, Arthur said, "That's what I want you to do, and we'll set about doing it. We have to agree with them on when they would like to begin. They take their vacation seriously, and we want to have ours." I cannot recall when we agreed on the date that we would begin, but it was agreed, and it had to be done in advance because the Soviets had to arrange their vacations accordingly, and we would begin in early August. I went off as an aside to Yugoslavia with my two sons, and we sailed the Adriatic with a Serb friend from Rovinj to Dubrovnik. It was a gorgeous trip, three weeks.

We got to our first meeting in a room in the Office of International Programs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was right across the street, an old ducal palace. It was right across the street, Karininski from the sort of campus which held the buildings of the Friendship Society, which I think was a Momentov estate. These are old buildings and very beautiful indeed. Our meeting place was a ballroom. They had a big rectangular table, and we sat facing the street side windows. We had 65, at least, meetings there. We started in August of 1984, we watched winter come, we watched the leaves fall, and we watched spring come. The last meeting was toward the very end of October of 1985. We discovered when we had our first meeting, which was just to establish the process, that they didn't have a text; they were preparing their text.

Q: Did you have to wait for them, or did they work from yours?

BENSON: You anticipate the answer. What they did, because they didn't have it, because they couldn't put it together because their bureaucracies were rivaling each other but didn't communicate with each other. But let me get into that little bit more in just a minute. They decided they had to have some darn text to get started, so they translated our text into Russian. We didn't realize this for two meetings, because they didn't hand the whole thing over to us. They told us that, of course, as we proceeded in the negotiation, both sides will reserve the right to change the text as the negotiating discussions indicated the necessity of doing so. We said of course, if we don't give you a bronze tablet, you don't give us a bronze tablet. Well, good, so we can begin. And they immediately began changing texts because it really didn't suit them to accept our text, but they had to have something to begin with. We now had it. We begin with the preamble, where some changes were made. And it went on like that. Later in the process, great hunks of text were changed on their side.

We have already, in talking here, anticipated the reason, and the reason was simply that it was impossible for this office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which handled negotiations of such agreements and had the responsibility of monitoring of such agreements and so on, despite the rank of its senior officers, it was impossible for them to order the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Higher Education and God knows what other organizations were involved--we do know which other organizations were involved--to produce a text by date certain. Who could Alexander Churlin who was in charge of this office, communicate with at the Ministry of Higher Education? He's not going to call the Minister; he has no right to do that. Perhaps not even in the United States would it be done that way, but certainly there it wasn't. So he communicates at his level in the Ministry of Education. This guy hasn't received any orders yet to accept the charge from Churlin to produce a text, nor does he know in what context is all this, or if he knows he doesn't know who in his ministry knows. How far has this information been disseminated? He can't rush up to his minister and say, "You know what I just heard from Churlin?" Well, time passed, tediously.

Q: Was Churlin the lead figure in your face-to-face negotiations, supported by representatives of the other ministries involved?

BENSON: Yes, Churlin was the lead negotiator on their side, but other ministry representatives came and went. My guys and gals were there for a year and a half. I had a permanent team. We had really a position of strength. For one, to begin with and for a long period of time, the negotiations revolved around our text. Even when they're getting rid of it, it's our text. For another, we had a team, colleagues and friends. They had Churlin, who was very good. They had a representative of the American Bureau always, the counterpart of SOV, the Soviet Office. He was over on the right hand as I faced the other side of the table. They had a note taker. They had an interpreter.

Q: I was going to ask you, what did you do for languages in these encounters.

BENSON: Well, they had an interpreter; they had interpreters. As time went on, an interpreter would disappear and go to Geneva or go to Paris and what have you, and a new one would come.

They were top notch. Churlin understood English, and obviously we all understood Russian. Some of the people who would appear from various ministries on his side when the relevant paragraphs were up for discussion knew English very well. Some knew it not at all. So what we obviously decided to do was have each side speak his own language; and whether Churlin understood me or not, it was going to be translated.

Q: And that, of course, gives you the chance to hear the other guy's statement twice before you have to answer.

BENSON: That's absolutely the case, and it was of crucial importance all the way through, because you don't get into an immediate repost because you have to wait for the translation, during which you think over whether you should offer a repost or a comment. It eases and softens and makes much more intelligent the response, when it finally comes your turn.

Q: This is a very important point, because I think people often think of language barrier and interpreting as an obstacle, when in fact it can facilitate back and forth. Assuming that you know the other guy's language so you hear it in Russian and then you hear an interpreter put it into English, and vice versa. Say you make a statement in English and then you hear what it sounds like being put into Russian.

BENSON: This is perfectly true, and very often I would correct the Russian translator and say I think there is just a little bit of a shade there, or sometimes they'd get it way off because we speak our language with some idioms, you know. You learn as you're going through the negotiation to speak more slowly and to speak in shorter sentences. You try. You don't use baseball terminology. "You couldn't get to first base," would throw the usual Soviet interpreter. And they too.

Gradually as we began--I say we had 65 sessions--we learned how to deal with it. We would speak more slowly and less in the vernacular. So texts were exchanged, changed text, new text, new suggestions in one language only. They would give it to us in Russian; we would give it to them in English. On the next session they would show us the translation into Russian of the text we had given them in English, and vice versa, and then both sides would correct, because you can go off a little bit. There's a lot of sort of what sounds like minor administrative back and forth but which is absolutely essential if you're going to finish page one and go on to page two and three and so on. You know, our agreement had three parts. Part One was a statement of general principles, let's say. Part Two was the program document. Part Three were so-called implementing conditions. They were interrelated, quite obviously. They had to be signed at the same time.

Q: Did your program document list all of the specific programs that would be covered and how many concerts back and forth, to that level?

BENSON: Oh yes. The implementing conditions would frequently be of interest to people like IREX and money, per diems.

Q: But the agreement didn't specify, for instance, the American organizations that would supply the person-months under a certain category, or did they?

BENSON: They did in the case of IREX. They did in the case of the Fulbright Commission. By that time we had a Fulbright agreement of a kind.

Q: Oh, so that was running even when the cultural exchange agreement had lapsed?

BENSON: Right, limping but running.

Q: You see, I was there on IREX, which was functioning despite the lack of the agreement, as you explained. I was also a member of the Fulbright Committee for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe at that time, and this involved me in a brief negotiating session--it was actually one morning, I think--with Greg Gorov and some of the other people in your staff and a couple of other people, a woman whose name escapes me now, a Polish name, I think. We were discussing with the--I think it must have been in the Ministry of Higher Education--some of the problems in the level of implementation and the difficulties people had experienced on both sides. And that negotiation incidentally was conducted completely in Russian.

BENSON: Well, you knew Russian, Greg knew Russian.

Q: Well, everyone in the American group functioned in Russian. So that was just a little filler that occurs to me that illustrates what was able to go on during that period when we had no agreement. Then what was the impact on the embassy and your work generally when Gorbachev took over in March of 1985?

BENSON: By that time--we had been negotiating since August--Soviet organizations, various ministries, *Gosconcert* and other administrative units on the Soviet side had been brought into the picture, had been made to focus on the texts which did refer to them. They would often say, "Where did this text come from?" and my counterparts would say, "Look, it's the American text that we have had to translate because you didn't give us anything else!" Well, I didn't hear such a conversation, but I know it happened, I very definitely know it happened. "...and if you don't like it, come up with a text. We've been talking to you for the better part of a year, and you haven't come up with anything. We're negotiating now, so it's now or never."

So then they'd come in and they would table a text for discussion next time, and we'd see it changed dramatically. We would wink at each other and we'd say, "Thank you very much. If you think this is realistic, we will talk about it next time." And that's the way it went. By the early part of the year we had moved along substantially. There was one crucial point which the Soviets held out as being basic and if we could not reach agreement on it there would be no agreement at all but "Let's continue talking about the other points." So we agreed with that, of course. And that point was the use of national airlines to move the exchangees. You know, after the invasion of Afghanistan, the air agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union was terminated.

Q: Oh, so Aeroflot could not land in the States.

BENSON: Precisely right. Nor could Pan American land in Russia. So they said it was ruinous for them and they couldn't deal with it any other way, to have an exchange program, if the Moscow Philharmonic had to pay international rates; it was just not possible for them to do that--or even individual scholars. Parallel to our negotiations, Aeroflot and Pan American under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Department respectively were negotiating an agreement to resume flights. We're both aware of this obviously, and I said on many occasions, "We wish them well. It's got nothing to do with this agreement." And they were saying, "Indeed we wish them well. It has everything to do with this agreement, because we can't afford to send them any other way." We suggested that they send their groups on Lott, the Polish airline, which flew to the United States. I said to Alex, "I'll bet they'll take rubles too." He winked at me and he said, "For us it has to be Aeroflot." The reason I go into this as background is because it will later play a crucial role in the end game as the agreement was agreed. It goes directly to help answer your question about the influence of Gorbachev. As we're going along and we are hacking away at this thing and we're getting changes and we're reserving positions for the end game and so on, underneath is this terrible problem.

They will not sign--and they let us know every time we turned left or right, that this thing has to be settled. We say that it has nothing to do with this agreement, and it keeps getting stated and restated, stated and reiterated that we leave it for the end game. Well, some of the positions--back to Arthur Hartman now--that we were reserving, apart from the issue of the flights, were piling up at one point, and our desire in the embassy, to compromise in this point or to be firm on another point we were communicating fully with Washington. There was a daily telegram that was drafted by Mark Taplin and, when he gave up on it, Mark Smith, another one of my staff on the information side, who was another magnificent drafting officer. And at one point Arthur said to me, "I think we've got positions reserved on both sides, and our views are changing a little on how we might adjust the basic original text. I think it's time for you to go back to Washington." "Oh?" I said. "Yep," he said, "rather than our sitting here and sending a long telegram which would offer the argument for changing this or reserving this or being stubborn here, which is going to be read by everybody in Washington, we think this and we think that, you go back and you talk to SOV and you talk to the NSC." The SOV was then headed by Tom Simons, an old Soviet hand, an East European hand, who eventually became ambassador to Poland and then later Pakistan. In fact, he may be there now. And the NSC person in charge of Soviet and East European stuff was Jack Matlock.

So off to Washington I went, preceded obviously by a message from Arthur saying I was coming, and the idea was that there was massive reporting already in hand and we would get either an affirmation of the direction we were going and a little bit of applause, or we would get new negotiating instructions which would be specific to certain points. They would analyze where we'd gone and where we might be going, and they would say, "Go," or "Just a moment. This is how you should change."

Q: This must be the trip when you turned up at the Kennan Institute when I was there in the spring of 1985.

BENSON: That could very well be, because I think I came only once in the spring of 1985. This trip was fabulously successful. Tom Simons understood exactly what was going on. He read everything which had come in. He was reading the daily reporting telegrams, or the thrice weekly. He had read what Arthur had to say, and I went over to SOV and we talked about this and that and the other thing. A meeting was set up with Jack Matlock in Old Executive Office Building, which is where his NSC office was. We showed up there with Marlin Remick, who was the deputy of Len Voldig and had been my deputy in Belgrade in 1979 to 1982, and another person. Tom Simons was there, and there was somebody else. We'd go through the argument, recap the discussion, and Jack Matlock says, "You know, I think that these are very difficult discussions. It seems to me you're going along a very productive path. Can't predict the future, but right now I don't see any need for changing the operating instructions. Comes to that, we'll note it. I read the reporting cables. Tom reads the reporting cables. What do you say, Tom?" "Oh, fine," he says, "so we'll stay in touch here..."

All along it's understood that we would report back whatever happened, and if needed the instructions to continue on the basis of this document would change. So Jack was saying there's no need to change that: "Everything's going along fine." Tom Simons on behalf of SOV says, "Yes," and so there it was. We had the verbal stamp of approval. Something must have been written back to Arthur saying, "General review here. Progress very satisfactory. Continue. Keep reporting. You'll be in touch with us and we with you." So I went back and I said, "You know, it really cleared the air," because this decision by SOV and NSC was communicated to Charlie Wick, not that Charlie Wick or his people had been complaining necessarily but that we had been chipping away at some of the language that Len Voldig and I had left in the basic text because that language was necessary to get the text by Charlie. He wasn't reading any reporting cables, you know. But we didn't want to be in a position where somebody would rush to him and say, "Charlie, do you know what's happening? In paragraph 1A this is gone; in paragraph 2C this is gone," and he would say, "Oh, my God, you're giving away the keys to the safe." So, before that would happen, he would have received, and he did, from either Jack or Tom or both, word saying okay, good, NSC approves. So we proceeded.

Now, to talk about the difference in the Soviet Union when Gorbachev come into authority. We'll talk about this and other contacts when we go back and talk about intellectual life, cultural life, and so on in the Soviet Union at that time, but there was something else that was going on apart from Gorbachev's coming in, which is that the Office of International Programs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had finally been able to get all the responsible parties in the Soviet Union to focus on the fact that we were working through, a quarter through, a third through, half through, this major document. "It affects you, it affects you," and so on and so forth. Of course, the knowledge of what was going on was up at a good high level in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so increasingly the texts were germane to Soviet interests, and we were proceeding along. Well, not to go through the absolute--and perhaps we'll pick up a little bit when we get to looking at the typed script--picking up the absolute, every...; I can't recall every negotiating session, you know. But, talking about Gorbachev, it comes to a point when we're finished, around the fall of 1985; October of 1985. Aeroflot and Pan Am are negotiating away a blue streak. They don't have an agreement.

Q: That explains how I got there, because I flew American to Rome and then Al Italia to Moscow. If the State Department suspended Aeroflot's rights in 1979, then how could resumption just depend on negotiation between the two airlines?

BENSON: Well, because when there would be a result satisfactory to Pan American, the State Department would be asked to rescind or relax its order.

Q: I see. So Pan Am was really negotiating to get an acceptable deal before asking the State Department to relent?

BENSON: Yes. That's the way it was before too, and the number of frequencies and other conditions attendant on flying back and forth, how many people would be resident in the Aeroflot office: you don't need 60 people for two flights a weeks, and that kind of thing. A very important thing was the security considerations. You needed groundskeepers and all. So they're negotiating away, and the Soviets tell us that we have agreed on everything, except aviation reciprocity issues, and we have told them that we will not have included in the cultural agreement any reference to flights, it's not for this agreement. We'd been saying that for a year and a half, and we ended up saying it. So what we ought to do is prepare the text we suggested as it stands in Russian and in English, and we'll take it to Geneva and it will be decided there whether Mr. Gromyko and Mr. Shultz will sign it. There was no other way to deal with this, you know, and it was agreed by us and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that that is what we would do. They would reserve their position, we would say, "Your position is impossible," and then we would have completed the text with airline problem pending, this resolution.

They're negotiating away in Moscow, the airlines, and we prepare the text. It's finished, and it's finally in Geneva printed up on the proper protocol paper, which they ran out of--their documents have to be on their paper and our documents have to be on our paper--and suddenly they realized that in Geneva, where they had a lot of offices and a lot of agreements, they'd run out of protocol paper, so they had to wire Moscow to send a special courier to Geneva overnight with a ream of protocol paper.

Q: Now, you were in Geneva?

BENSON: Oh yes, I went with Mark Smith, who was the second reporting officer after Mark Taplin. We had the responsibility of printing up all these copies. The Soviets are amazingly incompetent in doing these things. In the American mission, we had to find a copy machine which could handle the Soviet protocol paper, which is uncommonly thick. It must have been 19th century paper, for the thickness of it. Most of the printers which we had in the special offices, which were set up in a hotel which we took over to accommodate it, couldn't handle this paper. But in the basement of one of the buildings of the American permanent mission to Geneva, there was an old copier which could handle that paper.

God, we were in a mess. But anyway, it was done. At one point they're ready now to--this is Reagan and Gorbachev--they're ready to have their aides tell them all these documents are ready for signature tomorrow. There were various documents which are signed on such an occasion. I was not at this meeting. Reagan is sitting on a couch. Gorbachev is sitting on a couch. The fire is

crackling, and this is the end of the negotiations and various groups have gone off to perfect or cross the final 't', dot the final 'I' on the various agreements which will be signed. Apparently the group which went off to a separate room, headed by (Deputy Foreign Minister Georgi) Korniyenko, had among the documents they were considering the cultural agreement. So finally one by one the chiefs of these various subgroups returned and reported, "We are ready, sir. We'll get the documents ready for tomorrow," and so on and so forth. Korniyenko comes in and he says, "This is ready, but we have a problem with the cultural agreement. Can't sign it." There was consternation. Gorbachev says, "Why can't we sign it?" "Well, it's because the Pan American and Aeroflot agreement is not ready." Gorbachev says, "What's that got to do with the cultural agreement?" Korniyenko says, "Well, because the groups fly on Aeroflot, and it's just very difficult for us to carry off. You know, we have scholars and these are all the people who would move per the paragraphs of the cultural agreement." As I hear it, Gorbachev says to him, "Is the cultural agreement ready?" "Yes, sir, it's ready, but it doesn't have anything..." "Okay, it's ready. Are they negotiating in Moscow on the Aeroflot and Pan American agreement?" He said, "Yes, that negotiation continues." As an aside, an hour or two, three, four earlier in Moscow, Aeroflot and Pan American had reached agreement. Geneva didn't know that.

So Gorbachev turns to Korniyenko and he says, "I think we're talking about two agreements here. One is finished, and the other is being negotiated. We hope we will sign both. We will certainly sign one." Korniyenko, I'm told by somebody who was in the room, takes two steps back and he says, "Yes, sir." So the cultural agreement was finally ready for signature. On the next day in the auditorium where the various agreements were presented for Shultz and Gromyko, and I was sitting next to Art Hartman, the agreement was signed and he said, "I'll get you the pen," which he did but I lost it.

Q: We have just finished discussing the negotiating and signing of the renewed exchange agreements in 1985. Would this be a good point to turn to your picture of the Soviet cultural scene during those first years of your second tour?

BENSON: Well, why not? The first years of the tour did not presage just yet the changes which occurred so quickly when Chernenko died and Gorbachev took over in March of 1985 under the doctrine of *novea machanya*, or new thinking, Glasnost, and Perestroika. Arriving in 1983--we've gone through this already--there were tough times immediately that year with Andropov disappearing from view, the KAL plane being shot down, but I found my old friends who were there—(Bella) Akhmadulina; (Andrei) Voznesensky; Roshin, the playwright; Yuri Lubimov was out of the country, living abroad at that time, he's back in Moscow now; (Oleg) Yefremov, deceased three or four weeks ago, the head of the Moscow Art Theater--many people, some of the artists, without going through name after name after name, were very willing to resume our acquaintance.

Q: This is the afternoon of June 12th 2000. Ray, we were talking about the cultural scene in Moscow from 1983 on.

BENSON: You were asking about the differences with earlier and how did things go--earlier meaning my earlier tour of 1975 to 1979--in view of the difficulties of the period, 1983-1984, the shooting down of the KAL plane, lame-duck governments at the top, tough language against the

United States and so on, but there was not, as far as our relations with the cultural elites insofar as we knew them and met them--we knew many of them--there was no feeling that Stalinism lurked. They didn't feel it quite obviously, because they did welcome us. They didn't have to do that. They did attend the lunches and dinners and evening receptions, the concerts and so on that Arthur Hartman and his wife, Donna, sponsored at Spaso House, which I've referred to. They wrote for the drawer, meaning there was no substantial lessening of restrictions against publication, but there were no dramatic persecutions of people who were writing. There were no raids of apartments with police standing by and hauling out manuscripts from these drawers.

Q: Compared to some of the repression, the dissidents in the 1970s.

BENSON: Yes, or the 1960s even worse. You had (Andrei) Sinyavsky and (Yuli) Daniel. The refuseniks, some of whom were in the cultural area--these are people who had applied for permission to leave the country and were denied that permission, who had applied for visas to the United States and were denied that, many of them Jewish who had applied for the right to emigrate to Israel and were denied that--were very public in their protests about all of this. Sakharov was in Moscow at the early period here, if I recall it correctly, in the 1970s, and had been remanded to Gorky, where he lived, now named Nizhny Novgorod. He was only released from internal exile by Gorbachev in 1986. It was not too long after he came in and sort of gathered his strength, if you will, and sense of purpose.

But we found the theater very, under Soviet conditions after all, very adventurous. Sasha Gelman's place, Misha Roshin's place, Sakharov's place--although from a Leninist point of view, bless him--they didn't shy away from criticizing things as they were; or things as they might have been were adduced. The younger generation was depicted frequently being in opposition to parents, younger generation clad in jeans on stage, you know, this sort of thing. It was lively, it was interesting, and there was no thought of episodes like the bulldozer incident that you asked about, which preceded our arrival in 1975. The Balia Grozinskya exhibit hall was still in operation. The unofficial artists were selling to foreigners and trying to get out of the country. They were among the refuseniks. Arthur Hartman did marvelous things--I've said this three or four times already--with some of these people. They were hassled, they were interrogated. At the gate to Spaso House they had to stand in line, these people, with their passports, internal documents that is, with their invitations while the guards at the gate there--you've seen them--would look them up and down and make a great point of writing in a book what their names were. We had embassy officers, notably from my staff, who would wait out at the gate and escort these people in, or try to. They would be stopped by the guards. They would wait while these people were looked over, while this purposeful writing of their names into *the* book went on. Then they would be walked to the front door, somebody else would take over for the next person, and that's the way we did it. But it went on. That is to say, the groups came, the people came in, by and large. The Hartmans' point was made. The invitations were honored, as they were at occasions in our house. Cultural life was active, cultural life was rich. These people were hoping and waiting for change. Change was in the air, although one didn't know where it was going. Brezhnev had died, Andropov had died, Chernenko was on his last legs. You could barely tolerate the sight on television of Chernenko breathing. He had terrible emphysema; that's what he died from.

His shoulder was hunched over as is typical of people with emphysema, as he was trying to create a bellows effect to be able to breathe more easily with his diseased lungs. I think we might go on about this a little bit at length when we can see a typescript and so on, although I can't be encyclopedic in describing all of the things which were happening in the cultural scene below the threshold of the continuation, or within the context, of a system which still had a censor. You couldn't publish freely. You still had reviews by the Ministry of Culture committees, which would go to a theater prior to the dress rehearsal and sit there with the scripts in their hands and look at the text and review what was being said to see that they weren't sneaking anything by, while suggesting changes and so on.

Q: What about the effect, if any, of Gorbachev's taking power in March of 1985 on the cultural scene and your mission in dealing with the cultural world?

BENSON: Well, the effect was almost immediate, of his taking over, or at least it was soon in coming. You know that famous phrase which you have pointed out to me was Rabbi Hillel's rhetorical question, "If not we, who; and if not now, when?" is one that Gorbachev, without quoting Rabbi Hillel, addressed to a group of Soviet writers and intellectuals--not 250 people, maybe 25...

Q: In June of 1986, I think.

BENSON: ...that sound about right--whom he summoned to a meeting, and they talked about the creative arts. He said, "We've got to stimulate creative energies in the intellectual area; and "if now we, who, and if not now, when?" and was quoted in the papers, very openly quoted in the papers, as this meeting was described. Well, there were subsequent and, in fact, immediate developments in the so-called cultural journals, the learned journals, the thick journals, notably one journal which was more popular, which was Ogonyok under the editorship then of Vitaly Korotich. This is a separate story, but if you took on a horizontal level all of what was being published now Literaturnaya Gazeta, the literary paper of the writers' union, and the Soviet Kultura, the cultural paper of the cultural office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party--I think Kultura was a weekly and Literaturnaya Gazeta was also a weekly; Kultura might have been twice a week, I can't recall.

Picking up after a little break, there may be a lack of perfect transition, which we'll correct later. Things began to be published in various literary journals. Novi Mir; Questions of History, Voprosy Istorii; and so on simply loosened up. There were struggles within editorial boards. Certainly the historical and theoretical journals, which were closer to the core of Communist orthodoxy, had more of these struggles. The literary journals had fewer of them. Grossman's work was published {Ed: perhaps the reference is to Life and Fate published in 1980 in Switzerland}, Vasily Grossman, the novelist.

Q: The novelist who wrote on Stalingrad, etcetera.

BENSON: Right. Rybakov, who wrote on Stalin, was published. The changes, the opening went on across the board. It was a time of really great excitement and a little puzzlement. Was this going to be like Khrushchev's thaw, which proved to be, relatively speaking, in crucial areas

short lived or nonexistent? Khrushchev was not a great liberator after all. He loosened things up, to be sure, but not permanently and not, they would say, in a basic sense, but this seemed to be heading in a much more forcefully or much more purposefully and a much more basic direction. It was exciting to be there.

Q: Who were some of other key people in the embassy who you worked with during the Hartman years?

BENSON: Well, I noted already his DCM when we came back in 1983 was Warren Zimmerman. He later was very much in the public eye because he was the ambassador to Yugoslavia during the days when the country was falling apart, 1991. In any event, Warren had been in Moscow when we got there in 1975, in the political section. He left very shortly thereafter. He was a good linguist. He was a Yugoslav hand and a Soviet hand; we shared that. He was very intelligent. He had very good cultural tastes, if you will, as did his wife. He was very decisive without being arrogant. He was very quick to penetrate to the core of an issue, of a problem, of a situation, and he did not like for anybody he worked with to anticipate his judgment and to give him their judgment in anticipation of his; i.e., as a clumsy way of putting it, he didn't like 'yes' people. He wanted people to offer their view and to argue them, so that various intelligences could be brought to bear. There are some people who are very sharp in their way of expressing their views. Matlock was one who didn't seem to encourage that kind of behavior by people under them, but Matlock really did, but he didn't have the outward personality to encourage that. Warren did. I'm not saying one is better than the other, because it behooves a younger officer to fight through this until he's permanently squashed and then decide that indeed this other guy does not want to have a free flow of opinion. But Matlock did. He just didn't express his desire for it in the way that Warren did.

Warren was a remarkable wordsmith. He had been a speech writer somewhere in his early career in the State Department. He edited quickly, incisively, marvelously, and was in general a delight to serve with. He was very sociable, and we hung out a lot together. Matlock came in as ambassador during this second tour of ours. He had been the DCM in the earlier tour. He came in [April 1987] from the NSC after Hartman left [February 20, 1987]. We were old friends, and I don't know quite how to describe the situation, but let me do so, up to a point anyway. He followed an ambassador, Arthur Hartman, beloved by his staff, who had an extraordinarily popular wife, Donna Hartman. I'm talking about internal embassy relations, you know, not with the Soviets. Let me pause a minute to say Jack was totally bilingual and bicultural. There was very little he didn't know about Soviet history, Soviet literature. He had a great collection of Russian and Soviet literature, art, and so on.

Q: I understand he even gave speeches in languages like Georgian.

BENSON: Well, let me say that he claimed to be able to do all of that, and he would give speeches in different languages, but it reminds me of my days in Yugoslavia when I used to give speeches in Macedonian and Slovenian, having had them translated from Serbo-Croatian or English by my staff and coached in the various accents which were different and so on. Not to denigrate it or make it cheap, he thought this was important anyway, to show his respect for the

local languages. And if an entire speech was not in Georgian, at least the opening paragraph would be, and it was terribly much appreciated by the local people.

Q: Certainly because the Russians in the non-Russian republics have never bothered to use any of the local languages.

BENSON: Absolutely. These speeches, by the way, were required at the openings and on occasions surrounding the presence in given cities of the USIA exhibits. We would go together. This was during his days as DCM. He would open an exhibit, I would speak and introduce him, he would speak, and so on. He was fine.

Q: In the 1980s you had no exhibits to open because the cultural agreement was in abeyance until 1985.

BENSON: Exactly. The first exhibit per the new agreement came to the Soviet Union after I departed in 1987. I did not witness it. It takes a while to get these things going. But Warren was a lovely man to work with. Jack Matlock, I had no trouble in working with at all. I've described my relations during our first tour when he encouraged me to become a reporting officer on certain issues of the day affecting the cultural scene, which he edited, to be sure, but never cut.

Q: When did Zimmerman leave as DCM in Moscow?

BENSON: Zimmerman must have left by January 1985. He could have left in the summer rotation cycle of 1984.

Q: Who replaced him as DCM?

BENSON: Curt Kamman, who moved up from Political Counselor and later became--I think he's in Latin America now, or South America--but he became the head of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. He was a splendid linguist also, and was there all the time... In fact, let's look back. During our negotiations, the one who on behalf of the embassy would be looking at our text was generally Curt. It could very well be that Warren left around summer 1984. I simply do not remember.

Q: This is Robert Daniels continuing to interview Ray Benson, picking up on Monday, June 19th 2000. We are in the middle of discussing Ray's second tour in Moscow, which was 1983 to 1987. We would like to talk about developments after the conclusion of the cultural exchange agreement in October 1985 and the Geneva Summit meeting of November 1985 during which Shultz and Gromyko signed the exchange agreement.

BENSON: Remember Gorbachev was there and gave a signal to go ahead and sign it. Well, what happened afterward, after really the Christmas vacation, early in January 1986, I'll point out several things. There was an immediate barrage of program proposals for the "opening of the Soviet Union" which hit the desks of the action officers in USIA in Washington. Every state, every nonprofit organization, it would seem, from the Rotary Club on down seemed to have an idea, or have had pending for the last couple of years, about what they would do once the Soviet

Union was “open again,” and this swamped the USIA. They decided the only way to handle it, since the desk, the program desk, in the European bureau was just incapable of dealing with this, had other things to do, was to open or create an office to deal with this whole matter. So they started small. Steve Rhinesmith was hired on contract to head the office. Molly Raymond from the Education and Cultural Bureau of USIA was seconded to it. The proper number of secretaries and computers and filing cabinets were scattered around some very nice office. Greg Gorov later joined this office.

Q: What was the office called?

BENSON: What was the office called, you ask. I shall have to look it up, and we'll put it in at a later stage. There was obviously a commitment in space, in resources, in persons by the USIA to try to make all of this coherent and to give form and a little bit of direction in liaison with us in the theater so that this could be reasonable in terms of our priorities and USIA's priorities. That was one effect that was with us for some years. That office no longer exists obviously and didn't last much longer than my tour of duty. But it did fulfill its function. We can talk more about that, and certainly when I review the text with you later, things will come to mind and we'll fill it in. The second interesting effect is one that you are quite familiar with from subsequent years. In January of 1986 several presidents of American universities visited the Soviet Union.

We got a telegram from the State Department saying that these people were coming and were on their way to see Sakharov. They wanted to talk with us, because we were the office which had negotiated the agreement. They were all excited about it, and in fact the leader of the group was Olin Robison, who was then the president of Middlebury College. They came into town. They contacted us. Three of them said that they would separate themselves from the rest of the group and come with me. Would I set up a meeting with the office which had negotiated--I've referred to this in a previous tape--negotiated the agreement. So David Fraser, the president of Swarthmore [1983-1991], and Alice Stone Ilchman, the president of Sarah Lawrence [1981-1998], and I and I think it was Carol Dorflin, the person in charge of academic exchanges in our office, we went along and talked with the people who in fact had been across the table from me during the negotiations. I've referred to this. The interesting thing was that these people were keen on developing a program of college-level, undergraduate, exchange with the Soviet Union, which didn't exist. There had been some Soviets who went to the States on special programs; some were undergraduates, especially Moscow State University/SUNY Albany exchange. They had a language student, language major, exchange.

Q: The major exchange before that, conducted by IREX, was at the level of graduate students and faculty?

BENSON: Yes, graduate students and faculty. There was a CIEE program that you've heard of. The Council of International Educational Exchange had a program which was located in Leningrad. It was for American students who could pass an exam signifying that they had a certain language achievement already, and they paid for the privilege of going to Leningrad. There was an American who ran the program, and it had a USIA grant annually and continued through all the bad days when there was no agreement.

Q: Go on about the idea of the undergraduate exchange.

BENSON: Well, the presidents led by, as I recall it, David Fraser and Olin Robison, Swarthmore and Middlebury, were saying how pleased they were that the cultural agreement had been signed and they knew this office had played a major role. The Soviet side said that it seemed to them that the time was right to have an undergraduate exchange. Students would go for a full year. This is what they would welcome. Obviously there had to be language preparation, but they would study in each other's country for that year. Certain details, many of them, would have to be developed. But what did they think about the prospect of beginning the new era with such an exchange? And they pointed out that the United States had such exchanges of foreign students from tens and dozens, 100 other countries, but not from the Soviet Union on the undergraduate level. Well, the Soviets, the people on the other side of the table, said, "It's just fine. We think you're right. It's time we move to try to implement such an idea. Fill in the blanks and make us an offer." We discussed other things. The meeting was very congenial, with tea and cakes and all of that. We went away. The presidents were in a state of euphoria. We from the embassy thought this was just idle blabbermouth talk.

Well, what happened then was that Robison went back to the States and had a meeting of his athletic conference, NESCAC (New England Small College Athletic Conference), which was dealing with hockey scheduling, paused in Boston on the way back to Middlebury. After the meeting, he asked them if they would give him five minutes, and he told them of this conversation, just about that much, and he asked for a show of hands which of the group sitting there would be interested at all, if they could get the details ironed out, in hosting Soviet students for a year and sending theirs over for a year, and everybody raised his hand. So, as Olin told me later, "I now had a problem. I had to do something with this brainstorm of ours." He went back to Middlebury, continued on, and wrote a letter to the group and only two or three backed off. One was not at the meeting; that was Bryn Mawr. Another was Tufts, and the third at that point was Haverford, with Amherst saying neither yea nor nay. The next thing that happened is that--I didn't know any of this until later--Tom Beyer, professor at Middlebury and the chairman of the Russian Department, came into Moscow, called on me, and asked if I was aware of this interest among the small colleges. "No." Well, he would like to bring the results thus far to the Soviet side.

So I said, "You must go to the Ministry of Higher Education, because ultimately it's going to have to be that body which will be the action office on the Soviet side. Don't worry about going to the Foreign Office, but they will have been informed." So he went to the Ministry, and he got to be very, very busy. He called me from the airport on the way out, and he said, "They said, 'Of course, yes, but where is that document or where are those details?'" He said, "I've got to talk to Olin." Well, next thing we heard, from the Department, I guess it was, or USIA, was that Olin Robison wanted to visit. This would have been in the mid-spring 1987.

Let me think a minute on this timing. We signed the agreement in November 1985. This was 1987. I might have earlier said that they visited in January of 1986, but they didn't. It percolated during that year while the office of Steve Rhinesmith was doing its thing. In any case, it was the early spring of 1987. By then I was a short-timer, with order to depart post midsummer, early summer. And into town came Olin with his wife Sylvia toting two enormous bags, Middlebury

tote bags, of catalogs from 18 or 19 separate academic institutions. We went over to the Ministry of Higher Education. A huge group assembled. Olin, I, and Carol Dorflin lay on them all of these catalogs and the fact that we wanted to start this agreement; we were quite serious about it. This is Olin speaking. "We, the consortium here..." There might be a very good thing at the end of it, but he said to them that there were certain principles that the American side would insist on. It was arrogant to do that, but at the on-set we should say so so that there be no misunderstanding later. And they said, "We were quite aware," with a certain amount of concern. "Well, what are these principles you would insist on?" He said, "Well, they're very simple actually. Number one and perhaps most important, there would be no accompanying person, an uncle, a watchdog, from the Soviet Union, as these students would go out in twos and threes to each of these institutions. You should, however, have one person resident at Middlebury who would be in contact with them." At that time, you know, emails were beginning, and there were telephones. Olin speaking now: "Middlebury College would provide the basic costs. No trouble in communicating by telephone. So that's a basic principle. Another basic principle is that we cannot sign an agreement with you that does not say that the goal of this program is to have equality among the genders. You would have to send female students in about equal numbers. Further, it would have to be another principle for a full year; no semester students. And as for the rest, we ought to have an agreement. There'll be many, many details, and let's sort of get on with it."

The Soviet side agreed that these principles were satisfactory. They would be difficult, but it was satisfactory. There was nothing really onerous about it. "Let's talk about an agreement." And then, of course, the devil is in the details. Olin brought out the catalogs and--this is an aside--it was really amazing. Obviously he put Middlebury's catalogs on top. Why not? And there was a little description, a little brochure, on the Snow Bowl, the Middlebury ski slopes. The Soviets said, "What is this, a vacation spot?" and Olin said, "These are the ski slopes at Middlebury College's upland campus." They passed this around--I'll never forget this--beautiful pictures of what is in fact a beautiful slice of Vermont. It's a ski slope with many lifts and a lodge down at the bottom. It took them--and I don't know when we left if they really believed it--it took them a long time to absorb the fact that this was open to all students and it was where competitions were held among colleges and that it belonged to Middlebury College and that if their students would come to Middlebury they could ski on the slopes. In general there was both acceptance of the proposal in principle and disbelief about some of the conditions, which were very favorable actually to the Soviet side. Out of that came the request by Olin that I on retirement come to Middlebury and start the program. I did retire in July according to plan and came to Middlebury and we started a program, which is not the subject of these interviews.

Q: Nevertheless your tour in Moscow, which is very much the subject of this interview, underscores your role in this major accomplishment for you and USIA.

BENSON: It was a major accomplishment, if I do say so, though the agreement was only developed later in the year after I retired and mostly in early January 1988.

Q: This is when you were on the other end of it representing the consortium and working for Middlebury.

BENSON: Yes, yes, but to follow up on what you said a minute ago, the fact that they all knew me--after all, I had had eight years there and importantly I had been there for the last four and had headed the negotiation and brought these three professors and presidents to Moscow; that's when the idea was launched--it gave me such credibility with the Ministry of Higher Education that the launching of the program and then the continuation of the program, which was both effortless, one could say, and had so many problems to overcome in the first years because of the translation of the different systems of education for one side and for the other. Again, that isn't the subject of this interview but, yes, I will accept the fact that my being known by all of them was absolutely instrumental in the thing getting going and succeeding for as long as we had the money to keep it going.

Q: Now, the fact that you were able to get this very major exchange program started, from the signing of the cultural agreement through working for Middlebury, seems to reflect the breath of fresh air that came in with Gorbachev in 1985.

BENSON: There's no question of that. There is simply no question, and I suspect that will require a little more time before it is written up well under that heading, Gorbachev's Gift. But from the point of view of an American who was very doubtful of the sincerity of the Reagan administration in searching for broad-ranging agreements with the evil empire, it was of great interest, a fascination, very warming to see that during a Republican Administration these organizations jumped on the opportunity presented to bring these elements of the two societies together for a series of exchanges which were extremely productive.

Q: Today is June 19, 2000 and we continuing our discussion with Ray Benson of the situation in Moscow 1985 to 1987 and the circumstances around the conclusion of the undergraduate exchange program with the American Collegiate Consortium.

BENSON: The United States government, the USIA budget, found the means to offer financial encouragement to organizations which would send in proposals. They would come to the office, as I said a little earlier that Steve Rhinesmith headed. There was a serious evaluatory process going on there. They were graded as to the seriousness of the proposal--you know how these things would be done--and the profile of the organization and so on. Offices within the government, the National Security Council, and USIA, Charles Wick and his intimate advisors were solidly in favor of moving this thing along. We are, after all, in 1987. Just a few years earlier it had all been the Centurion evil-empire period on both sides, vituperation, and really akin to saber rattling. It was really reassuring and heartwarming to see that this initiative was taking off and so welcomed. This was a period of resumption of planning for the big USIA exhibits. I didn't see the first one, which came in afterward. This was the period of the resumption of funding for a certain number of concert groups.

This was the period when Vladimir Horowitz, the pianist, revisited the Soviet Union in April 1986. That visit was negotiated commercially. We facilitated that all the way by accompanying the negotiator, by advising, I guess you might say, on the behavior of *Gosconcert*. Peter Gelb was the entrepreneur who developed the project. This is all a subject for longer reminiscence by Peter if he would do it. In fact, Horowitz came, Horowitz played, Horowitz visited various places in Moscow which he remembered very keenly from the days of his youth. He visited Leningrad,

formerly St. Petersburg, once again now St. Petersburg. He visited old friends. He visited Scriabin's, a Russian composer, Scriabin's daughter, whom he knew when she was a little girl and he tinkled the keys on the Scriabin piano in the Scriabin home.

Q: You know that Scriabin was Molotov's uncle?

BENSON: By golly, I knew that was his name, Scriabin, but I didn't know he was of that family.

Q: That's what I understand.

BENSON: Well, fie on him, a grand lineage. It was a tremendous event, the Horowitz concert and all of the various episodes in Moscow. He stayed at the residence of the ambassador, Spaso House, he and his wife. Arthur Hartman was still ambassador.

Anyway, I was brought back myself to USIA at least once for long meetings with all manner of offices in USIA who were eager to steer some of their program money in the direction of work in the Soviet Union. It was a problem for us at the Moscow embassy, for me, to say "no." There is only a certain amount that can be done, not because the staff was limited, but it was, and not because our budget was limited, because it wasn't--we were unleashed--but simply because the potential Russian cooperating agencies, bodies, cities were not capable of handling all of this, nor was it useful to overload the circuits. Good, solid programs were initiated, were resumed, and on that basis we thought we would go on to see where both sides would agree on expansion.

But, I think my first visit was in early 1986, to emerge from Washington and return to the post in Moscow with the idea of spending \$4,000,000, \$2,000,000, for academic exchange student programs, concerts, and so on. Grants would be given to 15 American nonprofit organizations which wanted to have our intimate support in running programs through the Soviet Union, programs which had not yet been defined. This, it seemed to me, was a little too much.

Promises were made about what would happen, how much good work could be done by the new office and by the offer to expand USIA funds to run these new programs. It really was a bit of to-ing and fro-ing between us in Moscow and those in the United States and Washington with the best of will, who wanted to start everything at the same time. We had an enormous amount going, and it was great fun. When I left in July of 1987, everything was moving along marvelously.

The IREX program zoomed in full speed. In fact, when we go back and edit the text, Bill, I should note that Allen Kassoff and Dan Matuszewski came into Moscow in the course of the negotiations, because the implementing conditions, which was the third agreement among the three parts of the cultural agreement, i.e., general conditions, program agreement, and implementing conditions. And the details--again the devil--included details about the stipends, length of time, categories, and what have you, in the IREX program. Dan and Allen came to Moscow and helped for the day or two that we were centered on the IREX paragraph, and that program was booming along. ACTR, the American Council of Teachers of Russian, was looking to expand. SUNY was running its program very well. The Purdue program was running very well. The Rutgers/New Jersey State Consortium, which I mentioned earlier, signed an agreement

in 1979 that lapsed almost immediately because of the invasion of Afghanistan, was now interested in resuming its efforts. The Midwest Consortium for International Action, so-called MUCIA was interested in resuming its program. I'll try to recall the name, but perhaps it's not that important. He visited me when I was the acting DCM at the end of 1983 and said that times were tough but they were certainly interested in resuming this. They were nine of the Big Ten universities, and by 1987 they were away and running. It was amazing what was happening. It will be of interest to you that the Project Harmony, which has Vermont roots in the person of David Kelly, whom you know well, visited Moscow soon after the agreement was signed and encouraged us to be helpful as they started their work. Project Harmony at its outset had a very proper name. They were going to exchange choral groups of high school students. The organization continues and has a much wider scope of operation. It's difficult to go on about every single program initiative, I don't remember them now. I may add a few as we edit this.

Q: But in 1986-87 there was really an explosion of exchange initiatives on the American side and a comparatively wide opening on the Soviet side to receive them.

BENSON: That's absolutely the case. You see, on the Soviet side you had a document. This is a highly bureaucratized society. For SUNY Albany, or Purdue, or New Jersey, or what have you, it was interesting that you have the document because it means that they're more open on the Soviet side to resuming negotiations, but it doesn't have the same weight. In the Soviet Union it meant everything to have the Ministry of Education and Culture; Coskino, you know the film people and the exhibits people, and so on and so forth, have a document on which they could base their work, an approval for action. So there was an explosion absolutely immediately. It was very rewarding for those of us who had spent all of that time negotiating.

Q: About this time, shortly before you left Moscow for the last time, you received an award for public diplomacy.

BENSON: I did, yes. It was at Tufts University. I'm glad you remembered that. Yes, there is an annual award given to a person working in this area. It doesn't offer a financial reward; it's just an award, and so it isn't endowed, but it has been given the name Ed Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy, one a year, and that year they gave it to me. It was really splendid. I went to Tufts and was given it at their graduation ceremony. I was promoted to the rank of Career Minister, I think, the year before. Those were the final recognition of my achievements.

Q: Let me ask a general question about your career experience. It seems to me that you have a very high regard on the whole for the professionalism of the people you worked with in your various postings abroad. On the other hand an American academic often had a jaundiced, if not to say cynical, view of the institutions and the people he's worked with. Is that a fair impression of those two worlds?

BENSON: Well, that's a fascinating question. When I first came to Middlebury to oversee the exchange program we have referred to, Olin Robison sat me down and he offered several pieces of advice, some of which are totally irrelevant but one of which bears exactly on your question. He said, "You will not find here on this campus, even though I am running the college, what you

found at an embassy. There is no discipline here. There is no chain of command, even though I am the president here. The most that we can achieve is to have what you might call organized--and he drew his voice out--organized chaos. But nobody listens to anybody necessarily." But the opposite is what happens or should happen at an embassy. You have to have, at an embassy or within your own staff, you have to have it clear that within your own staff, if you are a public affairs officer, that you're the boss. If you're the ambassador, you're the boss. But in order to allow the creative juices of the other people to move, to flow, and to keep on moving and flowing, you have to encourage and allow discussion of every issue. At the end of the day it may be that the vote, if you want to put it that way, in the country team is 13 to one, the ambassador being the one, and that is what we will do.

Q: As Abraham Lincoln said, "The ayes have it."

BENSON: Exactly, it's absolutely the case. He may have been able to run the government that way. He had his trouble with some of his people under him, didn't he? But that, it seems to me, defines the way in which an embassy has to run and defines the way in which it did run. I suppose what you see--it's not unfair to put it this way, it's certainly not unfair to me to put it this way now--what you see in my judgment of the people I worked under is a reflection of their respect for my work. Even Bill Macomber, whom I may have described this way earlier--I certainly will when we edit--who would become so furious at me for certain things that he would throw things, always threw to miss and always missed, became and really was a good friend. He threw ashtrays. But, you know, the people I worked with--I pause to say this--in Eastern Europe at that time, certainly in the Soviet Union at that time, were very experienced hands. I don't know how Moscow is staffed these days, but everyone had gone through language school. Many people had degrees in Soviet affairs. Many were on their second or third tours. It was a volunteer service then, and the momentum or the excitement in being there--some of the days were tough, with the KGB and the microwaves and all of that; we haven't paid sufficient attention to the microwaves; we will when we do the redraft--there was a commitment on the part of everybody, from the military attachés, the (CIA) station people, bless them; to those of us in the more traditional Foreign Service. If that continues now I do not know.

Q: You've explained the character of your work experience on a structural basis and would compare it with Olin Robison's view of the college from the top down. I'm thinking rather of the view of leaders from the bottom up, that your experience with the people you worked with, the caliber of the people that you worked under seems to be uniformly on the whole much better than the average academic or governmental experience.

BENSON: Well, of course, it's hard for me to compare. My career was spent entirely in diplomatic service except for the 12 years in Middlebury, where I was both within the context of the college and running a separate program where I had enormous independence. The people, I repeat, the people whom I worked with in my foreign service career, there was never a political appointee; they were always deeply experienced. Arthur Hartman I have described as one who didn't know much about the Soviet Union, but he was a quintessential diplomat, personable, intelligent, graceful. Matlock was frequently not so personable, not so graceful. But he was one of the world's great experts on the Soviet Union. Now, if you work under him and you do not realize that and do not respect it, you're a fool. And furthermore, you're not only a fool but

you're going to ruin the program that works under you. Now, in my case I was a personal friend of Jack Matlock's, as well as my wife, so it made all of that easier. Mack Toon, this was his third turn-around in the Soviet Union. He'd been the head of SOV, the Soviet Bureau.

Q: Did you find, comparing notes with other people in USIA or in the Foreign Service who had worked under different kinds of people in different situations and worked under political appointees, for instance, did you find distinct differences in the atmosphere of your posts compared with others that you came to know about?

BENSON: The answer is yes and yes. A political appointee--as I say, I never worked with one; many of my friends did--could be a marvelous person and could have been a good businessman and knows how to work with a board or an executive committee but doesn't know anything about the country. That political appointee's problem in organizing the staff and playing any role at all in the embassy is a very keen one under the heading of management, but it doesn't have included within it any of the substantive expertise that all of the people I have named brought to their job. Look at Eagleburger, Anderson and Scanlon. I never worked under Scanlon; he was a deputy there. But, my goodness, these are people who began their academic studies in dealing with foreign policy affairs and the language and were on their second and third tours. So there is that matter of substance that you can't expect from a political appointee.

Q: But anyway, the East European posts and USIS were grounded much more in expertise on the area compared with the services generally?

BENSON: Yes, certainly USIS. There were examples of people who were assigned as ambassadors to East Europe, not to the Soviet Union, whose credentials involved their being firm and sometimes very loud anti-Communists.

Q: Perhaps also being of the nationality by descent of the country they were posted to?

BENSON: Yeah. Well, that in itself might make them very sensitive to the situation. It could also make them falsely arrogant about how much they know because they knew the language well. And it could mean that they were vehemently prejudiced against the current regime because they had suffered, or their family had, under them. It doesn't necessarily lead to a balanced approach to relations with the United States. But by and large, your point is well taken. Other posts, other missions, in East Europe were well served by, by and large, experienced Foreign Service officers. Moscow, the mission there was headed in historical timeline by people who were not diplomats: Walter Beetle Smith (1946-48), Thomas Watson (1979-1981), Robert Strauss (1991-1992), or earlier Admiral Standley (1942-43).

Q: In your time it seems that at least the missions in Belgrade and Moscow were very well served by the people who were in charge and people who worked for them.

BENSON: We were equally well served in Ankara. When I got there, the ambassador was Bill Handley [June 1969-April 1973]. Bill Handley, a State Department officer obviously, had worked under Joe Sisco in the Near East Bureau of State and then was seconded to USIA, where he ran the Near East geographical office in USIA as a lone State Department officer. By the time

he appeared in Ankara, an East European hand who knew everything about USIA--Turkey had been moved to the European Bureau in USIA--perfect man for the post. Bill Macomber came in. I worked under Bill Handley for only one year. Macomber came in, had been the ambassador in Jordan, and had been the author of a study on the reorganization of the State Department. He was the head of a series of task forces, the so-called Macomber Report. That's pretty good background. Neither of them knew more than 10 words of Turkish. That was very rare.

Q: There must have been special atmospherics to Moscow, at least until Gorbachev's time, of being almost marooned on a desert island, being the American embassy surrounded by a hostile sea, so that the people in that post would really have to depend on each other psychologically perhaps more than in the conventional diplomatic post?

BENSON: Well, that's an interesting question, and the answer to it is yes, that's what was the case and should have been acknowledged by all. It frequently challenged people. Not everybody is capable of becoming a collegial member of a community, just by the nature of the psychology of that person. The embassy in the 1970s and in the early 1980s was relatively small by all objective criteria. It's a huge country we're dealing with. The embassy now is enormous, as you may have heard, and the function assigned to it. NASA has a huge staff, the DEA has a huge staff, the IRS has a huge staff, and the FBI has a staff there. This was unthinkable in our day.

Q: And these people have filled up the premises of the new embassy while the old one still functions?

BENSON: I think that's what's happening. I don't--this is a little beyond me there; I was there obviously my last tour when the 'oh my God' discovery was made that the Soviets, left to their own devices, which we left them to, had implanted bugs all over the darn place, and so the new embassy was not be usable. That is being corrected. I do not know. I'll know more after our visit in September. We're going to be the guests of the DCM in Moscow. I do not know what they have done with that huge building. I know that when I was there last they were continuing to scrape out the interior and haul away all the stuff. The problem was that the bugs were implanted in the steel I-beams. We had in our wisdom allowed them to provide the construction members. It was really pretty silly.

Q: The bugs were in these beams when they brought them into the construction site.

BENSON: There you have it. Apart from the tunnels underneath the building... It was really pitiful.

Q: Can you tell us about the tunnel episode during your second tour of duty in Moscow?

BENSON: The tunnel episode was very widely reported in the American press. It came to pass that the CBs (Navy Construction Battalion workers) were contracted by the State Department to provide certain expert, highly cleared obviously, maintenance people. These were people who would be able to repair complicated communications equipment, but they would also be able to paint and plaster in classified offices. Here we are not talking about classified offices, and maybe if memory serves, they would also employ the sons of some Foreign Service Officers to do

routine painting of bachelor officer apartments in the south wing of the embassy. As I recall the story, they had finished a wall or two and were sitting on the floor enjoying a sandwich and a Coke and talking about the security perils of living in the embassy and listening devices and so on. One of them says to another one, "You know, if you see on the wall, for example, a little black spot, it could very well be the end of a wire, and that wire could very well be a point of reception for an apparatus which is a little further along so that sound, speech and so on can be transmitted to this apparatus." As they were sitting there, this one guy says to the other, "You know, I'm looking at the radiator, and that's a perfect place to have such a wire, and I am looking at a black spot behind that radiator. It can't be, can it?" And so they walk over, and damned if it wasn't a wire.

They quickly brought reinforcements in there and traced the wire through the wall to a nonfunctioning chimney, because these south wing apartments had been part of the apartment structure which was basically Soviet. And the chimney went downstairs to a boiler as part of the heating system for this wing of the apartment complex before we took over this part of it. Having taken over this part of it, the chimney was no longer functioning. It was a huge chimney. Inside of it there was a staircase, or stepladder, protruding rungs. If you find the proper issue of Newsweek or Time, you'll find all this described with pictures and everything. Well, it may have taken more than a day, but they cut their way through. How they camouflaged with all of the people who were listening, I have no idea. They worked their way into the chimney, they came down the chimney, they moved along a hall into the basement of the nearby apartment building, and found themselves face to face with several people with earphones and battery devices, a very proper listening room. Well, what shall I say? Diplomatic protests, news stories. We cleaned up our act on that wall. The whole building was thoroughly inspected. Now, in this effort to get to the bottom of it, there was a lot of digging. You go down the chimney and then you have to dig through...

Q: Roughly when was this episode with the chimney?

BENSON: This would have been probably 1984. I think it was 1984. There was a lot of earth that was piled up outside near the staircases on the south wing. I came home from a trip out of town, saw the earth and asked someone and that is how I became aware of some but not the whole story. Then I soon became aware of the whole story as I talked to people in the security office.

Q: This is June 19th 2000, afternoon. We are continuing on the review of certain special episodes in Ray Benson's Moscow tours of duty, now finishing the story of the bugging that was discovered through a chimney and tunnel in 1984.

BENSON: Early in the morning very soon after I came back from this trip and became aware of what was happening out there, there was a ring on our doorbell, and standing out there leaning on the door jamb was Kevin Close of The Washington Post and Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times, both of them very new in Moscow, very young and tall, good-looking guys, superb.

They said--I think it was Kevin who said, "All right, Ray, what's going on out there with the tunnel?" I can't remember what I said then and how the story played out. I know that pretty soon

everybody became aware of it, it was in all the papers, protests were made, guilt was denied. We patched up our walls and made sure there was nothing sticking into them that would lead to any Soviet listening apparatuses.

Q: There was also some security problem involving the Marine guards.

BENSON: Well, that would have been in 1986, because there were still Soviet employees at the embassy. There were two Marine guards who were accused of having become involved with local female employees in our embassy and of having succumbed to temptation, including giving these women, especially one, I guess, materials from safes that they were monitoring as part of their responsibilities, the safe they would open and close. Details are a little remote in my memory. I can't remember exactly. It was, of course, a terrible time.

It was 1986. I now recall that one of the Marines had been transferred to Vienna, but had on temporary assignment gone to the Summit in Geneva. It was he who couldn't bear it any longer and made a clean breast of it with the security officer in Vienna. One was acquitted of responsibility. One went to prison. I think he is now released. He was a Native American, which is irrelevant except that much was made of it because he was the one who went to prison. The other guy was released, that is to say was not prosecuted. It helped create the climate of heightening concern for security which came to a head later in 1986 when, I think it was in October, the Soviets removed all Soviet employees from the embassy overnight. They didn't appear for work one day.

This was in retaliation for the United States government's asking the Soviet embassy to remove from the United States an awful lot--my recollection it was in the 40s, maybe 50--Soviet citizens who were doing various things--could have been newsmen or tourist people--in the United States including some so-called lower-ranking employees of the Soviet embassy in the United States.

Let's say "so called" because they might have been senior officers of the KGB who were driving vehicles around. They were given access to running around town in a way that others would be followed more closely. In any event, we at the embassy on this given morning suddenly had nobody, no char force, no chauffeurs, no customs expeditors or travel people, nobody buying tickets, nobody helping in the mail room hauling mail sacks and so on. The word came at a time when my wife and I were in Helsinki on unclassified pouch courier duty. Twice a week somebody from Moscow went to Helsinki by train and came back by train with the unclassified pouches, which were mostly mail for embassy personnel. But we were called in the morning and were told to come back on schedule, but don't worry about accompanying any bags because there wouldn't be any bags because we couldn't figure out how to have trucks driven to the railroad station and we didn't even know the procedure for presenting unclassified pouch customs clearance papers because the Soviet employees had been doing it all these years. We were told what had happened and "come back and we'll all talk about it together," so we came back without any bags.

The embassy had to go into sort of Plan B. Duty rosters were set up which people were assigned to different tasks in addition to the regular work they were doing, tasks which had been accomplished by Soviet employees including mopping floors and cleaning windows and

cleaning toilets and sinks and carrying equipment in the back yard and driving, chauffeuring, repairing motors, clearing things at the customs shed and the airport and so on and so forth. This went on for months and months. We were all assigned to specific tasks. Mine was on the ground floor doing halls and the bathrooms off of the hall; that's what I did, from the consular office bathrooms through the hall. My mind goes back now; I can count the bathrooms for you, but I won't. I was very proud of doing a good job. It was in a way the embassy's finest hour. It again illustrates a point that you have made on several occasions about the sense of community which a time of stress can engender, which has to be there if you're going to keep on functioning. Again, it was a wonderful show by professional Foreign Service officers. Art Hartman was the ambassador. Everything had to be done, vacuuming of the carpets; it goes on and on and on.

Q: How was it finally resolved to get the staff back?

BENSON: Well, I'm trying to think. I do not think that in our day--we left in July of 1987--the char force had returned to duty. We still had no Russian staff. In fact, by then various of functions at the embassy had been contracted out to American firms, Pacific Engineering or Boeing.

Q: I've always wondered since my first experience in Moscow--that goes back about 45 years--why in a country like the Soviet Union we would hire locals to do all kinds of embassy jobs whereas over here the Soviets would only bring Soviets to do work in their embassy. Was there an inherent security problem?

BENSON: Of course there was. There was an inherent security problem. There's no question about it. It was foolish.

Q: But this has been a practice throughout the American foreign diplomatic missions to employ locals for any kind of non-sensitive and non-specialist job. One other episode I want to ask about if we can get it on this tape, and that is the problem of the new embassy building in Moscow and the bugging that was discovered built into the structure.

BENSON: Well, that's a statement of the fact. I cannot remember a date. I would imagine it was in 1986. It was certainly playing out in 1987 as we left this assignment in the summer of 1987. The new embassy was being put up finally. Sophisticated means of testing the security of this building discovered that the new embassy, which was in the center of the complex surrounded by townhouse and a low-lying building in which there would be two theaters and an exhibit area and the consular section, this building which was in the center was riddled with bugs, many of which had been implanted in the steel construction beams. The framework of the building was riveted steel I-beams, which we had contracted from the Soviets. We had bought cement from them; they poured it.

Which reminds me--I'll put it in right here--of a story I got from a friend of mine who was in Poland at the time when we were building a new embassy there. Part of the contract there was that we would pour the concrete, they would not. Our workers would appear in the morning to discover that six inches of concrete had been poured overnight, which we would then remove, and all sorts of fancy little bugs would be pulled out. The Poles would be scolded. They would

say, "Can't understand how this happened." Very tediously the embassy went up, after which, again, sophisticated means of counter surveillance were brought in and discovered the walls were just riddled with the kind of wire, which was a transmitting wire, that I have described a few moments ago as having been found in Moscow.

This experience notwithstanding, we were very, by my likes, very careless in Moscow, which is even a more severe security environment. The new embassy was finally declared not useful, and to my understanding, to this point it has not been remodeled, refurbished so that it is. They were scraping out the insides and getting rid of a lot of stuff and analyzing carefully whatever they hauled out, but the embassy is still in its old quarters. I don't have more in detail about that episode. It added to the whole sense of being beleaguered.

I should speak about the IBM typewriters, which at one point we had ordered a bunch of for the embassy, very sophisticated machines, you know, that had memory and all of that. This is the last step before the personal computer was brought to us. Through analyzing certain behavior on the Soviet side, it was concluded that the messages typed on these typewriters were being read. It was finally determined that somehow or other between the IBM factory and receipt in the embassy, the most fine and small and sophisticated apparatuses had been inserted so that everything you typed could be read.

Well, what to do? Well, what to do is put all typewriters within the secure rooms. You know, the embassy had many of them, though we had not used them to put the secretaries in with these machines, but that's what happened.

Q: In the secure rooms then whatever signal came out of the typewriter could not be picked up from the outside?

BENSON: Well, the first thing you do is remove these devices. Once you've discovered one, you know how to find all of them, then have, you hope, clearer typewriters. But from the on, classified information was typed in those rooms. The rooms were used for dictating. You couldn't dictate anything classified outside of those rooms, or for conferences, one-on-one discussions and so on. But we had not seen them as a typing pool. My recollection is that a large room was brought in, one of these new ones, and put up near the political section and a bunch of typewriters were placed in there. It created--you can see all of these things together--an atmosphere of being beleaguered in security terms, which I guess we always had been.

Q: It's a little paradoxical that your sense of being beleaguered in the security matters was getting even worse in 1985-1986 after Gorbachev had come in and after you were scoring breakthroughs in the negotiation of the exchange agreement and getting academic exchanges moving.

BENSON: Yes, there is not here in my view a contradiction, because the search by one side for a more sophisticated way of becoming aware of what the other side was doing, thinking, writing, receiving, sending, went on and continues today. It is not sensible to think that it stopped at any time. Means of surveillance would jump ahead of means of apprehending the means of surveillance, and then the latter would jump ahead. Technology was a wonderful thing, and it's

probably going on at this minute at a level that maybe one side or the other side doesn't know anything about, but so it goes.

PARKER W. BORG
Deputy, Office of Counter Terrorism
Washington, DC (1984-1986)

Ambassador Borg was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at Dartmouth College and Cornell University. In 1965, after a tour with the Peace Corps in the Philippines, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During his career he served in Vietnam and Zaire, and in the State Department in senior positions concerning Vietnam, West Africa and Counter Terrorism. He served as US Ambassador to Mali (1981-1984) and to Iceland from 1993 to 1996. Ambassador Borg was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Today is the seventh of October 2002. Parker, in 1985 you were going out to combat terrorism. What was the job?

BORG: It was 1984, it was the summer of 1984, and Bob Oakley had asked me to come back and work with him as his deputy in the Office of Counterterrorism. I knew little about the job. I arrived in August before he arrived. The office was then headed by Ambassador Robert Sayre, and I worked with him for the first couple of weeks before Bob Oakley arrived, but I do recall that the very first weekend that I got there, something like August 24th, there was a hijacking, and that would be the pattern of the way things would be for the duration of the next two years that I worked in that office. There seemed to be hijackings or terrorist incidents almost continuously.

Q: When you say a hijacking, did you gear up if it was a hijacking of a Russian, or at this time a Soviet, plane by Chechnyan people? Or was this only ones that concerned us?

BORG: We were concerned about hijackings especially if they were American aircraft or, secondarily, if there were Americans aboard the aircraft and, in a third position, if they were the aircraft of a friendly government where we might have some kind of other relationship.

Q: These things change. In this '84 to '86 period, what constituted in our definition 'terrorism'?

BORG: Well, the number of incidents increased dramatically about 1983-84, and the predominant view when we came into the office was that there was a very close Russian connection behind most terrorism around the world. Clair Sterling had written a book which tied the Russians to the assassination of the Pope...

Q: The attempted assassination.

BORG: ...excuse me, the attempted assassination - and pointed out that most of the Palestinian groups had had training that was supported by countries that were supported by the Soviet Union, that East Germany provided haven for terrorist groups and that, if you looked carefully at every single terrorist group, you could find a Russian connection. I guess, in addition, there were all of the leftist guerilla groups in Europe, the Red Army faction...

Q: Bader Meinhof.

BORG: ...Bader Meinhof gang. All of them, Italy, France, Belgium, Japan, they all had leftist terrorist groups. Bob in particular felt that this was not correct, that the correct way to look at terrorism was that there were individual causes in each one of the countries that had led people to become terrorists and that in the Middle East it was very dangerous to try and tie the Soviet Union to all the different terrorist-related activities, and that in Western Europe there may have been leftist groups but there was no clear evidence that the Soviet Union was in fact supporting what they were doing, that they seemed often to be independent operators who were pursuing their own leftist agenda.

Q: Now, in a way, given the time period, this would have been rather unpopular in the power structure.

BORG: We suspected that it would be but, in fact, by declining to emphasize a Russian connection and focusing on the local groups that were behind the different incidents and seeking programs to combat the terrorist problem individually within each country, we essentially went beyond the simplistic notion that there was a Soviet connection. There was another issue that was going on at the same time and that was, because of the considered threat to Americans, there was a commission that had been set up in mid-1984 that became known as the Inman Commission that looked at diplomatic security outside the United States and what do we need to do to beef up the protection of American diplomats overseas. This quickly got confused with the whole question of counterterrorism, and we had to fight a bureaucratic battle to stay separate from the new diplomatic security office. We argued that diplomatic security was essential to protect American embassies and American government personnel overseas but that was not our issue. Our issue was the broad question of terrorism as a policy and the way it impacted on our foreign relations and the way it affected American citizens in general, not just the American official community. It took us a while to convince people that this was a separate issue, but eventually we were able to keep ourselves separate from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. We were originally, for the first year or so, operating under the Deputy Under Secretary for Management - I guess he was called the Deputy Under Secretary for Management at the time. After about a year the office was changed from being MCT to being SCT. We became an adjunct to the Secretary's office.

Q: Diplomatic security, was this the normal bureaucratic tug-and-pull of trying to expand its horizons, do you think, or was it just a misperception?

BORG: The Inman Commission created a vast new bureaucracy which greatly expanded what the activities of what had previously had a different name - it wasn't Diplomatic Security - and there was a great augmentation of personnel brought into the organization. Diplomatic security

officers were assigned to posts throughout the world, standards were created for what embassies needed to be like, and there was a tremendous emphasis on protecting the American diplomatic presence outside the United States. It was much more a question for us of maintaining our identity and maintaining the policy issue, that this was not a part of protecting American diplomatic personnel. That was the purpose, that was their program and they should do it. We did not feel that the Diplomatic Security people should be the ones dealing with foreign governments when it came to general terrorist issues, that this was a clear and separate issue which would have gotten lost in diplomatic security.

Q: In a way, I can see you had two customers, clients, or people you went after. One would be the intelligence people within the United States, the CIA, the FBI, INR and the military, to feed you information, but the other one would be foreign governments, particularly the police powers or their investigative powers. Let's talk about the overseas operation first. What were you doing?

BORG: Overseas we were, for the first year or so, responding to terrorist incidents as they occurred and participating on almost a weekly basis in task forces back in Washington where we were attempting to resolve these crises. There were the individual crises, individual terrorist incidents, the various hijackings that took place; and the second type of crisis was the continuing presence of hostages in Lebanon, and an organization known as Hezbollah kept taking Americans in Beirut and holding them hostage. This was an issue that was there when we started in the office and was there when I left the office. It was a continuing high-profile and very difficult issue that we spent an awful lot of time on. This goes back to your original question of how were embassies organized. I'm trying to think if we had a counterterrorism coordinator. I don't think so, because if there was an incident, then the ambassador and the DCM and everybody became involved, and when there wasn't an incident, we were focused somewhere else. So it wasn't the sort of thing where there was a continuing problem. The bureaucracies in Washington were far more complicated. We first had to sort out our relationship with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) and between ourselves and the different regional bureaus as to who took the lead when something occurred outside the United States. The third level was the relationship with the CIA and military. I think that it came to a draw within the Department, because we were quite successful at dealing with the CIA and the military and the FBI in bringing everything under a common umbrella over the course of the time that we were working in the office. Once it was established that we were separate from DS, we went to Ambassador Spiers' daily meetings where we talked about security, but there was rarely a question again of what was our issue and what was their issue. Essentially that was resolved. When there was a hijacking or something of that nature and a task force was established, there was always the issue of were we in charge of it or was the regional bureau going to be in charge. The way it worked out, for the most part, was that, since the Middle Eastern Bureau had so much experience and so many people who had worked these issues, we had sort of a co-equal relationship with them when there was an incident, but when it was one of the other regions in the Department, we had the expertise and the region didn't, so they deferred to us.

PHILIPPE DU CHATEAU
Assistant Information Officer, USIS

Moscow (1984-1987)

Mr. du Chateau was born in Illinois and raised in Illinois and Indiana. He was educated at the Universities of Indiana, Cornell and Harvard, and Middlebury College. From 1973 to 1977 he worked with the US Information Service in the Soviet Union, joining its Foreign Service in 1979. Mr. du Chateau served several tours at USIA's Headquarters in Washington, DC. His foreign assignments include Sofia, Moscow, Tel Aviv and Helsinki. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Q: Then where after Bulgaria?

DU CHATEAU: Well, our next assignment was as AIO, Assistant Information Officer, in Moscow. I've always had good luck with assignments. I can never complain. We've just been very fortunate. We went to interesting places, places we wanted to go. That's unusual, I guess.

At that time, the Soviet Union was our adversary, of course, but it was extremely important in the American psyche. We cared a lot about them. Nobody does now, except maybe we pay attention to Putin occasionally. It's all the Middle East these days, Iraq and Afghanistan.

But it was also true that at least for USIA people at that time, it was important to cycle through Moscow as a Foreign Service Officer. I heard an earlier USIA director, Frank Shakespeare, wanted to make it mandatory for anybody rising in USIA to work in the Soviet Union. Now I suppose much the same would be said about Iraq and China.

The Soviet Union was a so-called hardship post, of course, but it didn't make any difference to me or my family, because we liked being there. We were used to it. Golnar had relatives there. It was an assignment that other people might have avoided. I thought, "This is good stuff." And of course there was extra pay.

They made me AIO, Assistant Information Officer. Anything to do with anything written, magazine, books, I was the person in charge of it. I was the deputy press attaché, you could say.

We came back to Washington for about six weeks to relearn Russian and that was pretty successful. I had to retest in Russian, which was no problem, and so I got my incentive pay, which I always liked. And then we were off to Moscow in the fall. I think we arrived in October or November 1984.

Those of us who were due for transfer in the next year were supposed to bid on maybe 5 possible assignments. But as I recall, I never did that when bidding from Bulgaria. I think the AIO Moscow assignment was out of sync with the rest of the summer reassignment cycle for some reason. However, folks in the Washington office that covered the Soviet Union knew me, and I had a good reputation in USIA for working above my pay grade, after all I was acting PAO for months at a time in Sofia, so they offered the job to me. It helped that the timing worked well in that I could get some Russian language training before going over. After consultation with Golnar, I took it. That was easy. I don't recall bidding on any other job.

Q: What was your wife doing at this time?

DU CHATEAU: Well, my wife, first of all, like in any successful Foreign Service family, she was totally my partner in all of this. And she would always pick up jobs at each post. As I mentioned, she worked for DAO in Sofia. We also had a newborn child when we were in Bulgaria, so that became a full-time job.

In Moscow, Golnar ended up working as the accountant for the ABC News bureau, for a gentleman named Walt Rogers. This was interesting, because part of my job was to work directly with ABC News as well as all of the news organizations in Moscow. But there was no conflict - Walt was very honorable. He never ever asked for any special information or access just because Golnar worked for him. I think my bosses in the Embassy were a little concerned at first, but it worked out.

There was a reason why Walt hired Golnar. He was getting cheated. He had hired Soviets to do his bookkeeping and they were just both incompetent and corrupt. He did not have the budget to bring in someone from Washington full time. Where would he find housing, for instance? So I guess he looked around in the Embassy community.

I don't know how my wife met him, but she did. She has no bookkeeping background, but she's honest, always a plus. So she worked for Walt for most of the time we were in Moscow. She got to meet some nice people through the bureau, and she had a very good time.

Her working in the ABC bureau helped me, too, in a way. I grew to have a better sense of what life was like for the correspondents in Moscow, what their pressures were. Often FSOs feel threatened by the press, but this relationship helped me understand better what the Embassy looked like through their eyes. Since my main job was working with the press, not as Embassy spokesman, that job went to my boss, but rather on a more mundane level, arranging press events, what have you, I think this very informal relationship with the ABC Bureau made me a more effective officer.

Q: You were there from when to when?

DU CHATEAU: I would have been in Moscow from the fall of 1984, when I got done with language training, to July of 1987.

Q: What was your job?

DU CHATEAU: I was the Assistant Information Officer for Press and Publications, an AIO. As I mentioned, there was a press attaché, my boss, and under him there were two Assistant Information Officers. I can't recall exactly how we split the work, but I recall the other AIO was in charge of anything having to do with movies, anything not in print. Our tiny offices were right next to each other up on the 6th floor, I think it was 6, anyhow up in the secure part of the Embassy, beyond where the Marine stood guard.

USIS Moscow was split into two main offices. The PAO, his admin assistant, our budget officer, the Information Officer or spokesman, and the two AIOs were all up in the secure area. The culture section, which had just as many people, was down on the ground floor. It was not in a secure area, anyone who had access to the Embassy could walk in, which was the idea. This is where Yuri Zarakovich worked. I mentioned him earlier with USIA exhibits. We also had a space in the basement of the north part of the embassy where we had storerooms and our large Xerox machine.

The simplest part of my job was to see if USIA's *America Illustrated* magazine was actually being sold on newsstands in Moscow. Our Soviet staff knew where it was supposed to be sold, so when it came out on the first of the month, I and the P&C driver would go around to the kiosks and ask them if they got them and if they were selling.

I did it, but it was just a big farce, because the kiosk people I asked, of course they would say they were selling them. Yet somehow they couldn't sell all of them, even though it was obvious that the magazine was popular. At the end of the month, or every couple of months, we would get the "excess" copies of *America Illustrated* into the embassy and I had to store them. We had a little storeroom on the north side of the embassy building. I can still remember it, as well as how cold it was going around to the kiosks in mid Moscow winter.

If the Western press had any questions, they tended to call me and I would deal with it. They couldn't get to my boss that easily. It worked out well as I fielded the questions and made the call back.

I also ran the Wireless File reproduction operation. I think I've already mentioned that the File was a compilation of news stories sent out by dedicated line from USIA in Washington every workday. We would take it down in the night, and several of the Soviet staff I had working directly for me would run off copies for distribution. We had an enormous Xerox machine that always seemed to break down. I've forgotten how many copies we made, but it was considerable, because the driver for the press section distributed them by car throughout town each day, and we gave lots of copies to all the embassy offices.

Another job was to keep track of what anybody was saying about the Embassy and about the United States. I did this in order to prepare a press briefing paper for the ambassador every week.

I was very fortunate in my career. I always worked for smart competent ambassadors in all my posts, although in Jerusalem the ambassador was 40 miles away. Anyhow Arthur Hartman was the ambassador most of the time I was in Moscow, up to the last month or so. He had been ambassador to Paris and I believe he retired after leaving Embassy Moscow. I loved working for him and his wife Donna. I saw a lot of them.

Arthur Hartman loved talking to the press. He liked getting his views on a story out there, the reporters loved talking with him, because they could get something to write. The briefs were on background, but still it was good value for them. They always showed up.

My job was to get a briefing paper together in advance. The briefs were on Friday around 11, so

Thursday afternoon I'd go around the embassy, the political officers, consular, science, the Defense Attaches, and ask people what was going on, what was happening that the press might know about. I kept a clipping file of ideas on hand, too. I'd write up the memo Thursday afternoon, it would go through my bosses for further suggestions and clearance, that's to say through the Information Officer and PAO Ray Benson, and then up to the ambassador. Well, I suppose down, because his office was below ours. The memo also went out to all the section heads. It was considerable effort to put this together, but fun in its way.

I still remember the first time I did this, I had no idea what I was supposed to do, my IO boss did not help me, but I had already learned how to make things up, as it were. I was supposed to have several days of overlap with the guy I was replacing, but I barely met him. His wife was pregnant, she was being medevaced to Helsinki because of complications the afternoon after I arrived, so he was a little distracted. He had already cleaned out his desk, so he just went around in the morning introducing me, and he was gone. It was just as well. Too much is made of overlaps.

Anyhow, then at some point Friday morning, all the section heads would get together with the ambassador in his office and go through the points I thought of, and anything else I missed. It was hard, keeping ahead of these people, but I watched how Hartman would take something and use it to our advantage, turn the issue around as it were. I recall many questions about refuseniks, Congress, military affairs.

Then around 11 the reporters would get together at the embassy entrance and I would escort them up the creaky elevator, past the Marine Guard, and down to the small conference room where we had the briefs for the American press corps. I enjoyed just listening to the back and forth between the ambassador and the reporters. It was all on background, but Hartman gave good worth. He knew his subject well.

We did the same thing for the Western correspondents in town as well, but only about once a month. We held that brief in the Commercial Office, which was in a neighboring building where there was more room and security was easier. I think the only security then was the Soviet guard up front. Through that connection with the Western correspondents, I got to know a couple of correspondents who became good friends, and I'd like to think still are. Leif Davidsen was then the Moscow correspondent for Danish Television. He's gone on to be a very successful author in Denmark. His wife, Ulla Høy, became close to my wife. We still stay in touch and visit. Urio Lansipuro was the Moscow correspondent for Finnish Television. We also became close, and, purely by chance, he was very important in my last overseas assignment in Finland roughly 10 years later. All this because I would answer the phone and help them out when I could.

I guess I'm emphasizing this because so many FSOs are scared of the press, afraid that they will say the wrong thing and that it will ruin a career. Of course that is possible, I know from my experience with the Photo exhibit, but I think it never hurts to be helpful, does it?

At the time, our offices were in what's now called, I guess, the old embassy building, right on the ring road. What was the street name? Tchaikovsky Street comes to mind, but maybe it's changed. It was an old building and it had its problems. Other than the high rise fronting on the

street, we had a courtyard out back surrounded by low wooden buildings that housed the garage, the all-important snack bar, and the General Services offices, the workshop. Oh, there was a small medical clinic there, too, the one where I took the musician from the Preservation Hall band. Other Soviet buildings were all around, towering down on us. I'm sure there were normal apartments in those buildings, but surely people in others were watching everything we did.

Earlier I called us USIS Moscow, but actually we were called the Press and Culture Section of the embassy in Moscow, P&C, because, I guess, the Soviets didn't particularly like the U.S. Information Agency much. So we had this fictional mask. The culture side of the office was downstairs, in the south wing of the building, open to anyone who could get past the Soviet guard out front. People could walk in on it without any trouble at all and sometimes did. It was the so-called P&C Down. That's where all of our Soviet employees worked, except the ones in the north wing basement that ran my Wireless File distribution outfit, and P&C Down's where the CAO, the Cultural Affairs Officer, and two ACOs had their offices. They were tiny, too.

I mentioned P&C UP a minute ago. It was quite the schlep between offices, but I was always on the move, up the stairs a floor from my office, past the Marine Guard, out to the elevator and down to the street. We never took the stairs up or down, maybe partially out of laziness, but also because they were blocked at the street level for security reasons. And things were stored on the stairs I later found. It was exhausting, all the up and down.

My office was tiny, but I had a door to a little balcony overlooking the main ring road that we never opened. I have a picture someplace of the office in winter with snow that came in under the door. The only security violation I got in my career, I got up there one time when I didn't close a safe properly. Funny now that I think of it. The rest of my career abroad in Jerusalem and Helsinki I worked in unclassified places alongside my local employees, so no security violations were possible, and I liked that.

At that time, when I first came to Moscow in the fall 1984, at least in theory it was pretty easy for people to walk into the embassy. Foreigners just had to show their passport to the Soviet guard out front. There were a couple of large archways through the building into the courtyard through which we drove cars, the north one going in and south one going out. You could just walk through there. As I recall, that fall there was no Marine Guard at the ground level. The Soviet militiamen on the sidewalk out front of both drives would make sure only the right people came in.

The good times could not last, of course. Fairly soon we had a Marine Guard stationed at the vehicle entrance. And things tightened up considerably. We all hated it, because we had to wear these newly issued badges and show them to the Marine. It was terrible. I recently looked at the building using Google "Street View" and it looks like those archways are all filled in. Apparently we still have the building though because the picture shows an American flag out front.

So it was an old building. Full of bugs in all forms. We assumed there were listening devices beamed at us from the neighboring buildings, so we never had a conversation in the courtyard. Supposedly our upstairs offices were clean, but certainly not P&C Down.

Q: Did you have much contact with Soviets, the citizenry, rather than Embassy Soviet workers?

DU CHATEAU: Yes, all I wanted, but, you know, I was tired pretty of it after years of meeting Soviets during exhibits.

Maybe I mentioned this earlier. After my father-in-law died early-on while we were stationed in Moscow, my mother-in-law moved back to Finland where she grew up. At one point we brought her down to Moscow to live with us and visit with a sister she had not seen in at least 50 years, they were separated in the 1920s or 30s, anyhow well before the war. It's a long story and not worth going into here, but it's enough to say that we had close contact with Golnar's local family, not just with Soviets we somehow met. So we saw people, we knew people, we knew what was going on, we had, through family, extremely good unofficial contacts. We could go out all we wanted to around the city and did. Driving outside the city was another matter, though. Unlike Bulgaria, that was tightly controlled.

As I mentioned earlier, the Bulgars would not talk with us unless they had official sanction to do so once they knew we were with the embassy, and so that made it very difficult to get people to come to our home. They had to get cleared by someone someplace to come to have dinner at our house. Russians didn't give a damn.

Q: This was during the Gorbachev period, wasn't it?

DU CHATEAU: Well, no, not quite yet. We went through two official funerals, Andropov and Chernenko, while I was there. Brezhnev died while I was in Bulgaria. Andropov soon after I got to Moscow. By the next year when Chernenko went, we had the system down pat. We knew what the American press would want and how to do it for them.

But I remember Gorbachev coming to power. I remember watching him give a speech on television and thinking, "Oh, Jeez, we're in trouble. This guy's smart. He can talk, he thinks, he's not dead." And the poor people in the political section actually had to work.

Q: I guess the refuseniks were not on your beat.

DU CHATEAU: Well, no, not officially, but P&C dealt with them a lot. One of the things that Hartman did at least once a month on a Saturday afternoon was to have a 35mm film showing at Spaso House, the ambassador's residence in Moscow, that was for the *refuseniks*. The idea was that they could all meet on safe ground, and so that those embassy people interested in talking with the *refuseniks* could do so easily. As I recall, this was basically a P&C program, so all the AIOs and ACAOs had to show up and help. Of course other FSOs were required to be there also on those Saturday afternoons. There's really no time off, is there?

You could not just walk in to Spaso House and see the movie. *Refuseniks* on our list were sent an official invitation, one of those nice pieces of cardboard with the seal on top. A couple of us ACAOs and AIOs would stand on the street out front of Spaso House and check the invitation, but check it along with the Soviet militiaman who was supposedly guarding the residence. It was a bit of a dance, for if we were not there, the Soviet *refusenik* would not get beyond the guard, no

matter the invitation. It was fun in the summer, a little less so in bad weather.

So I got to know these people somewhat. The problem was they were difficult. They were not nice folk in that they had hard lives and were bitter. It's all understandable, but it was hard to know what to say sometimes.

My wife's relatives were just run of the mill Soviet citizens and they were hard to deal with, too, because they would constantly come up with the same sort of comments and criticisms of American life we used to hear from Soviet visitors to the exhibits. It all boiled down to the phrase, "*U nas luche*," "We have it better." That was a little irritating.

But let me take a minute to explain that 35mm film business, because it was a big deal at the time, and I expect that it is all gone now. Maybe it's the techy in me, but I think it is kind of neat.

I don't know who had it built, but there was a small movie projection room, a little cabin, built on the outside of Spaso House, outside the ballroom on the north side of the building. You climbed up a ladder from outside to get in. No heat, I think, but none needed as there were these two large movie projectors in there, and they could project movies through a hole in the wall. There was a 16mm projector in there for the typical flic that came into the embassy through DAO, the Defense Attaché Office, but the real deal was the two 35mm projectors. You needed two projectors to switch reels while showing the film, which was a trick. You could tell when the reel was going out, and so you watched the screen for a mark that's in the film, start up the second projector to bring it up to speed, then when the next mark came up, you shifted projectors. Done right, no one in the audience sees the process - which is easy to say. Anyhow, if I remember right, and after thirty years, who knows, the 35mm projectors came from the military. They were a kind of portable outfit.

One of the people I supervised, I think his name was Vlad, Vladimir, knew how to project films, so he worked overtime doing it when needed. I tended to hang out with him some, partially to make sure everything was going well, and probably also because I didn't want to be down with the guests.

These 35mm movies were a big deal. The ambassador, Ambassador Hartman, I guess though others must have had the same access, could get first run films directly from the U.S. One of us AIOs, my upstairs colleague or me, had to be around the film at all times so that we could say that no one had the chance to copy it. I suppose that's another reason I would hang out in the projection booth. We had great representational showings, I think we showed flics to the *refusenik* crowd, and I think we did something for the embassy kids.

Q: While you were there, did you sense any unrest among the various nationalities who eventually broke away into independent countries?

DU CHATEAU: No, I wouldn't say so. I think many people have excellent hindsight. I didn't sense that at all. Sure there were *refuseniks*, sure there were people who wanted to get out, including some of Golnar's relatives. It was there, but what does it mean? There was no way anyone really predicted what happened a few years later.

Q: The Baltic States are usually considered something different from the Soviet norm. Did you have a feel for the Baltic States?

DU CHATEAU: We did travel into the Baltics when we were there with exhibits, but not while stationed at the embassy. A feel for them? I think so. First of all, Estonia always was different. In the 1970s we traveled up there on our own, but the US government could not bring an exhibit to the Baltics. We couldn't go into the Baltic States with exhibits, because we did not officially recognize their annexation into the Soviet Union.

The closest that we could come was to Minsk and we did that with one exhibit, Technology in the American Home in the fall of 1976, I think it was 1976. People from Baltic States came down to see the exhibit in a big way.

Minsk was a very difficult city. It wasn't a nice place at all. The people we worked around were very nationalistic, nasty, and of course the city had a pretty rough time during WWII. Golnar and I walked out one day around in the neighborhood of the hotel, around where there were small private houses, and there was a big depression in the ground and a monument to Jews who were killed there.

We were very tired by the time we packed up the exhibit. I have a picture of it someplace, but also a good mental picture of looking out of our hotel room and seeing the Soviet cranes pick up the exhibit containers for shipment to Vienna. Minsk was our last showing city with that exhibit. We just made it during takedown, for as I looked out, I could see that it was snowing real hard.

Anyhow people came down from the Baltics like crazy. Their train would be stopped and they would be told to get off, but they would still come. It was amazing.

We traveled up in that area, to Tallinn and Vilnius, we never got to Riga, and you could see that it was so different. There were real stores on the streets, for instance, and at least in the center of the cities, things just did not look Soviet. The Soviet system really wasn't taking there at all.

I mentioned that when I was working for exhibits I had a little problem with the PAO, the head of the Press and Culture section.

Q: Yes, you said, talking to the press.

DU CHATEAU: I talked to the press and told them about the censorship that the exhibit went through and about the censorship of books and that and of course I wasn't supposed to do that - and I made my comments on the record, my name was in the article, what have you. It was embarrassing. The PAO, Ray Benson, was scathing in his criticism of me, and he was right.

Q: I know Ray very well. He was a Red Diaper baby.

DU CHATEAU: I don't know what that means.

Q: Well, his families in the Thirties went back to the Soviet Union and he was a little kid and he got the hell out, eventually. We served together in Yugoslavia.

DU CHATEAU: That's probably about the only time he wasn't in Moscow, or back here in Washington, because he was back and forth constantly, stationed in Moscow if not in DC.

I had no regrets whatever about talking to the press during that exhibit and maybe it was useful, a lesson learned for the future. I'm sure I put Ray in a bad position. Well, low and behold, he was my boss when I got to Moscow, Ray Benson and his office was like twenty feet away from mine. I knew he would be PAO before I was assigned there, but I thought, "Well, what the hell. Why not?"

We never talked about that whole experience until I was leaving town, when basically I was saying goodbye. It was in my so-called outbrief with him and I said, "You know, I was a little worried about coming here."

And he said something to the effect, "Yes, I remember the incident well." He thanked me, though, in more direct terms than I'll get to here, because I was dependable and I did not let strange personalities get to me. There were some problems in P&C Up, but I made it work. Ray and his wife Shirley were there the whole time I was there, all three years.

Q: Did the Sergeant Lonetree thing impact on you?

DU CHATEAU: I was going to talk about that.

Q: You might explain what it was.

DU CHATEAU: Lots of things happened when I was there in Moscow that made the news; anything that happened in Moscow made the news in the United States. Anyhow one of the Marine Guards got involved with a Soviet young lady and was accused of being a spy and letting the Soviets into our classified areas of the embassy.

Whether that was true or not, I don't know, but there was sufficient paranoia at the time that they were worried about it, whoever "they" are. They should have been worried about other things, too, by the way, because they should have been worried about the way they were building the new embassy down the street. But that's a different story.

But, anyhow, poor Sergeant Lonetree. If I remember correctly he was an American Indian, that is, Native American, and I remember him vaguely as a very nice guy. It was a big deal because we were looking for spies everywhere. I remember an Olympia Snow CODEL, congressional delegation. It was a big press issue, lots of people came to town to do their supposed research and then talk about it to the American press in Moscow. Such press briefs would have been one of the things I arranged. Lonetree was taken out of the embassy quickly, but I don't know what happened to him. I suspect one could find out on the Internet.

We had an unending number of delegations, congressional delegations, secretaries of state,

commerce, and again I would be working very closely with the American press arranging press briefings. My office would be the one that would do transcripts, if they needed them. There's a lot of scut work associated with these visits. My P&C colleagues and I got very good at typing up the transcripts and sending them by cable to the US so that they could appear in the Wireless File the next day. Actually, I hated it, but loved working with the press.

But, yes, the new embassy building was a lot of fun, too, because the central building, the brick main office building was already up, the brick outsides at least. There was always a question of what were the Soviets doing to bug the new building, as all materials were stored in a Soviet warehouse off site. Of course I did not work in that department, but I think the reasoning was that we were smarter than the Soviets, one had only to look around and figure that out, and so we would catch anything they did. We eventually found out they were very clever. I'm sure there are books written about this, but as I recall, the Soviets were able to implant devices into the structural steel.

Q: Was it a topic of conversation, that the Soviets must be sticking all sorts of stuff in the new structure?

DU CHATEAU: Yes, we just couldn't figure out how they did it. But, yes, as I recall, it was a constant question raised in press briefings. Eventually they had to tear the building down and start again, but this time trucking everything in under guard directly from Finland. What an incredible expense. Hard to believe. But that all happened after we left town. Much later, maybe about 10 years ago, I was back in Moscow for a day and visited my friend Paul Smith in the embassy. He was DCM. What a nice place it is now, a wonderful place to work.

I was on the outside with the Lonetree business, but here's another spy story that I really know. At that time, I guess it would have been in mid 1986, we were living in a very small, not very elegant, apartment, way out on Leninsky Prospect, Leninsky 83. My wife, as I mentioned, she was working for ABC News. Our time to go on home leave came and as was commonly done, we arranged for somebody to live in our apartment in order to keep the bad guys out.

We knew that the Soviets were going to ferret through our stuff when we weren't there. For once I'm not being paranoid at all - we saw the things we lost, small things, some of my daughter's clothing, pairs of shoes, that kind of thing, when we went out of town to Finland. It would be hard to spot sometimes, but you would notice these things just disappear. But they, the guys who came in, would never be nasty, they were just light fingered when they were going through our apartment. Other embassy folk had things damaged sometimes, but perhaps they were more of a target.

So one of my wife's colleagues at ABC News, he was glad to get a better place to live for the month while we were gone. So he agreed to stay in our apartment, and we left on vacation.

But then soon after we came back, a month would have passed, the guy from ABC approached my wife at work and said, "You know, the strangest thing happened to me and I didn't know what was going on, but when moved into your apartment, we came in the front door and we heard some commotion in another room, in the bedroom, and one of your marines came out with

a young lady and said he was doing an inspection of the apartment and they left.”

There’s some background needed here. In the years of all the increased security in the embassy, for a long time the marines employed Soviet cooks who would come to their quarters to work. The marines lived in the old embassy building, the same place where we all worked, but on a lower floor. Then, because of tightening security, the cooks were let go. I guess the marines had to start cooking for themselves, or more likely they brought in cooks from Finland or the U.S.

Anyhow, one of the cooks was a favorite with the marines. She was highly recommended, the marines loved her, she was a nice lady, we needed a nanny, my wife was working full time, and so she became our nanny, Nanny Galia. I don’t remember her last name. She spoke English. She was a very, very intelligent young lady, very good with my daughter. I sincerely want to be very complimentary about her in anything I say as she was a good person and I have no reason to think she was anything else. However, she was, as we know, working for the Soviet government, reporting on us. Of course she was and we didn’t mind that, we were very used to it, we knew what was going on. Working in the Soviet Union, we expected it. Who wouldn’t?

Unfortunately, one of the Marines, a Corporal Bracy, did get involved with Nanny Galia, who was a very attractive young lady. I don’t recall how we knew who the Marine was in our apartment, but we did, it was Bracy. And so as soon as my wife and I learned of what was going on, we got in touch with the embassy security officer and had a little discussion in one of the secure rooms in the embassy. Poor Bracy, I don’t know what happened to him, but he was such an innocent. He was a nice guy. We really liked him, we really like Galia. This all hurt.

Corporal Bracy later went on trial, I think, and maybe he did some time. They, whoever they were, they were looking for such compromising connections involving the Marine security guards in Moscow after the Lonetree affair earlier in the year, and we gave them one. It was a working assumption that these things were going on. Everyone was looking for spies.

I have no idea what happened to Nanny Galia. Golnar and I haven’t forgotten her. She was a good lady and my daughter really liked her.

A book called *Moscow Station, How the KGB Penetrated the American Embassy*, written by Ronald Kessler, who is a prolific author of books on intelligence topics, he quotes me at length and I don’t recall ever talking with him - but I must have.

In *Moscow Station*, Kessler attacks Art Hartman, “he must have known what was going on,” this kind of thing. But, no, it doesn’t work that way at all, that isn’t the truth at all. My quotes are accurate I think, if anybody ever wants to follow up on what was happening, but it’s a tendentious book.

I think you can find out more about all this stuff from the *New York Times* archives. They did lots of reporting at the time, and my memory on detail isn’t that great after some 25 years.

Q: Yes, well, again, ambassadors aren’t fully aware of what’s going on in their own embassies.

DU CHATEAU: Well, actually, if you look at it, as I've tried to lay this out, people did the right things. The ABC tech told us what happened. The Marine left, I think, and we never saw our nanny again. The weak link was the Marine guards and the Soviets very skillfully targeted them, just as I would hope we did the same to them here in the U.S.

So, that fall in 1986 was quite the interesting time. I've mentioned Walt Rogers and that my wife was working for him at ABC News. It was his American employee who discovered Bracy and Galia, and surely he told Walt. It's too good a story. But Walt never, ever, tried to get an exclusive story of any nature because of our personal connection to him. He was an honorable guy and we appreciated that greatly. Still do. Anyway, it was an interesting time.

Because of the Bracy affair, my wife and I got more than a little paranoid, living out there on Leninsky, exposed to anyone who wanted to do us harm. I said that earlier we only had very minor theft. Now I was worried. For one thing, we busted up their network, or whatever they were developing with Bracey. I expected something to happen to us.

In addition to that famous, empty, central office building, the embassy had built new housing on the compound. Nobody had moved into it, yet, or not many people. So there was housing there, they were moving gradually the pre-school in there, the pool was working, and I think the commissary had moved by this time.

So I was paranoid, but that doesn't mean I was wrong. I talked to people and made arrangements to move into a new apartment. I think I was one of the first because many of the apartments were not finished and we could not yet drive onto the compound. As I say, I felt very exposed, partially because we had relatives in Moscow and Leningrad, partially because "they," whatever you want to call them, knew us very well, we must have a dossier, my wife and I, who knows how thick, very thick, from a long time, lots of transcripts, I'm sure.

The embassy admin people said, "Yes, you can move in, but you have to make the move yourself. We don't have the manpower to do it." So we packed up the old apartment on Leninsky, scavenged every darn box we could find. I would take the P&C car, the one I went around town in to check for *Amerika* magazine, it was a station wagon, rather used, and I would carry boxes out of the apartment, into the elevator and down 6 or 8 floors, whatever it was, and out to the car. Down to the embassy, which was miles away, but I couldn't get into the compound and up to the townhouse we were given, because they hadn't finished the roads. So I would park outside the gate, take a load, put it on a dolly, take the stuff up to the townhouse, unload, go back. I suppose it would take maybe an hour and a half to make one trip, maybe more.

I did this for probably two weeks, on my own time, in the evening and on the weekend. All I can say is because I had done so much of this kind of moving and lifting with the exhibits, it was second nature, difficult, but doable. We did get moved in and I was very glad. The townhouse was wonderful, some of the best housing we ever had.

I guess, looking back, you can see from these examples the kind of pressure we were under. At

the time we knew it, but it was part of the life. Perhaps because we knew the country fairly well for foreigners, we didn't expect much else and we just got along. And then, too, we knew how much better we were living than the Soviets around us.

Q: How was the embassy, during the time you were there, reacting to Gorbachev?

DU CHATEAU: I didn't have much to do with it, in truth. I would set up these press briefings, distribute the Wireless File, what have you, but my job would be dealing with the press at a lower level. I have no idea what the political section doing, although I suspect they had to be working hard. Also I've forgotten, pretty much, to tell you the truth. It's been a while. Maybe it's me projecting back, but you know for years everything in the Soviet government was predictable. Just dust off last year's cable, you know. But now, with Gorbachev, everything changed.

Q: You'd been there, going back to when you were doing exhibits and all. Had the Soviet citizenry changed, when you got back?

DU CHATEAU: No, but then as it turns out we hadn't been away that long. We left in the fall of 1977 and came back in the fall 1984, what is that, seven years. I guess that's a bit of time, but as it turned out, there wasn't much difference. The old guys were still in power, the shopping systems were the same, the embassy was in the same old building, and the same old crowded offices. Just like going home.

We left Moscow in July or August 1987, and everything changed in - when? - summer 1991, I guess, four years later.

But you know, as I keep saying, all this is clear in hindsight, the breakup of the Union and what have you. There are so many books written about it, and we were thinking about that, also, at the time. But you know, I'm a hundred per cent positive that nobody in charge, nobody really knowledgeable about the Soviet Union, in any way predicted what would happen a few years after we left, nobody.

Yeah, everybody figured the place was going to fall apart sooner or later, because that was our ideology. And you looked around and you figured, yeah, this is not working. But when and how? The place could have staggered on another 20 years, just on inertia.

Q: Apparently, our ambassador in West Germany, Vernon Walters, was telling his staff "do a study of whether maybe Germany might eventually reunify" and everybody was saying the guy had gone off his rocker. He had at least an instinct that ...

DU CHATEAU: I think that Germany would be, in its way, more easily predictable, in the sense that the two Germanys had not been divided that long - not even my lifetime.

Q: It really boiled down to, eventually, to what the Soviets were going to do, would they back the East Germans or not? There were a few mistakes that were made on the part of the East German Politburo, they really didn't realize the consequences of their actions.

I think what it does show, anybody who knows about foreign policy and all, we tend to straight line predict. You can think about alternative futures, yes, it could happen. Right now we're going through the Arab Spring. Time tested regimes have fallen in Libya and Tunisia and Egypt and now we're looking at Syria, which seems to be going through a very painful process, but less than a year ago, nobody was predicting this.

It's very hard, because what you're doing is, you're talking about unpredictable events and if you're in the foreign policy business, you have to sort of work on the assumption that things, this is the way they are, and how do we deal with present reality?

DU CHATEAU: Well, actually, in that sense, I'm fairly conservative. I think that that's probably the only way you can do it. You should never say things can't happen and you should be out there listening, but you have to deal day to day with what's in front of you, it seems to me.

Q: Did you travel much?

DU CHATEAU: In the Foreign Service? Yes, constantly. I think I've emphasized enough how easy it was to travel in Bulgaria. We basically got in the car and went whenever we wanted. The first couple of years we had a little Volkswagen diesel Rabbit, but then someone hit me in the side when I was driving home on my birthday in 1983. Poor guy, it was his fault. So we had it towed to Thessaloniki where it could be fixed, and then we sold it to another diplomat. Golnar's people in DAO were using Volvos, and we learned that they did not cost much more than the Volkswagen, and were so much safer. So we used the insurance and sales money, and bought a Volvo in Germany and drove it back. We sold eventually sold to an Iraqi diplomat in Moscow.

We traveled a lot with the exhibits all over the Soviet Union. We had paid free time between exhibit cities, when the exhibit itself was on the road to the next city, and we used it. I think I've been to almost all of what were then called "open cities" in the USSR, that is, the cities that foreigners were allowed to travel to. Never did get to Frunze, though. It's Bishkek now.

So we had seen much in the Soviet Union, but now we had a young child and travel in the Soviet Union never was easy. In Bulgaria we tended to travel most weekends. We would get into the car and go places, because that was easy, we could pack up, put the kid in the back, and she was happy as a clam.

But in order to travel outside of Moscow, it was a different story. We had to file a travel request several days ahead of time. We did it through the embassy travel office, which would send the request to the right people someplace in the Soviet bureaucracy. So in that sense one could travel as a diplomat in the Soviet Union, but you had to plan ahead, and my wife and I are really bad at planning ahead. But we did, we made a point of getting out and getting around as best we could, mostly to places we could reach within a day and return, Tolstoy's *Yasnaya Polyana* near Tula, for instance.

Also, in 1986 I think it was, my wife's mother moved back to Finland, to Kotka, a town east of Helsinki where she grew up. We would drive up to visit her. What that means is we would put in

a travel request during the week, and then we would get up at five in the morning, get in the car and drive like hell. Of course you could not go off your route, and the Soviet traffic police checked on you as you went up the road. They had checkpoints outside each city where you had to slow down so that they could get a good look at you. We never had any trouble with them, but we obeyed their rules.

I should mention, anytime you left the Soviet Union you had to put your car in and have it inspected, to make sure it was up to international standards, they said. Again, the good folks in the embassy garage would expedite this. Our assumption was that someone was either taking in or putting out some kind of position tracking device. I think that's what I would do, so I'm sure they did it.

So we would drive like hell. On our way, sometimes we'd stop and visit my wife's relatives in Leningrad. Then we would drive up to the border.

But one time, we saw a church just off the road, over there a quarter mile to the right, something like that, so we just decided to eat our picnic lunch over there, it looked nice. We went there, we were there probably about ten minutes and a car came up, a highway policeman came out and said, "You've gotta go back to the road." So we did.

But how did they know we were there? We didn't see anybody behind us. We weren't trying to evade anybody. I think it's because we didn't check in to one of their checkpoints at their expected time, so they lost us and they had to find us.

Driving north to Finland was not much trouble as the trip was mostly in daylight, but coming south was harder. For some reason, the Soviets did not let you drive on the highway at night with regular beams, much less high beams. It was insane. If anyone was coming toward you, you had to put on your, I don't know, what do you call them, running lights. It was impossible to see anything on the road. It was horrible in the rain. I think I was told that the Soviets did this because their lights were always out of whack, blinding on-coming cars. Anyhow, it was nutty, and just added to our already low opinion of the Soviets.

We had a lot of trouble with spies in Moscow, but there was a spy and I forget his name now, it's well known (*Ed: Vitaly Yurchenko, previously the security officer at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, of all things, and later a senior KGB staff officer in Moscow prior to his abortive defection. He actually managed to survive this escapade once he was back in Soviet custody, supposedly because he was a protégé of the KGB chairman, probably an unappreciated early sign that the savage internal discipline that made the KGB such a fearsome opponent was unraveling*), he defected and got to the United States and then he re-defected, if that is a word, whatever, he changed his mind. Anyhow, he went back to the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

While this was going on, while he was in the Soviet Embassy in Washington, we took one of our trips up to Finland. Going across the Soviet border was never much fun. Well back from the actual border you would get to a building to go through passport control and they would look at the car, what have you. Then once checked, you would drive slowly to the actual border. I think maybe they checked documents again. It was all very, well, off-putting. Very controlled.

Well, being diplomats, they're not supposed to search our car, and being diplomats, we were not supposed to allow them to search the car. We took three or four trips out to Finland during that time and knew the routine.

But this one time, they said, "We have news that you have something wrong with your car," a bomb in the car, or something like that. They said that they were trying to protect us, that somebody had done something to the car and they had to inspect it inside.

We couldn't let them do that. Back and forth, back and forth, and I think we were there a couple of hours. I suppose we would not have minded so much, but Guzel was little, maybe 4, which made things uncomfortable. The outcome was we negotiated to the point where I would open the trunk lid, they would look inside, but not move anything, and I would close the trunk lid. That was the way we did it and we got on our way.

Looking back, I'm sure that the timing was such, they decided to hassle us at the border because of what was going on with the defector Washington. We happened to be the unlucky ones. If I recall correctly, we went into the embassy in Helsinki to report what happened, but nothing came of it. I probably talked with the RSO, the regional security officer, but I don't think anyone knew what to do with the incident.

Should I talk about when the Russians were taken out of the embassy? This is when we lost all our Soviet employees.

Q: Oh, yes, yes. As somebody who worked in Yugoslavia for five years, I'm well aware, of course, that all the local national employees were reporting. So there's no real problem. As a matter of fact, it's helpful.

DU CHATEAU: Well, we thought so and I believe people like Ambassador Hartman thought so, also. He knew what was going on. He was not an innocent. Nor were the political officers, the DCM, what have you.

Who did what and in what order, I've pretty much forgotten. This would have been in late fall in 1986. I had already moved the family into the new embassy housing, thank goodness. Anyhow, details of the back and forth spy expulsions, it's all in the books. But, essentially, what happened was, people I knew had to leave the embassy and Moscow very suddenly. We now know they were CIA agents, and had to leave suddenly because they'd been exposed. This had happened at least once before while I was there and we now know probably why they were exposed.

In the United States we picked up some of their agents, in retaliation. Or maybe it was the other way around, we kicked out their people and they retaliated. As I said, I can't recall the exact chain of events, but I remember well that we were all wondering what was going to happen next, waiting for the other shoe to drop. What would Gorbachev do? And the assumption was that some of us were going to get kicked out. I remember well thinking what would happen to my family and me if the Soviets fingered me and kicked me out. I was no spy, but that didn't make much difference. It would have been bad, as we had no place to stay in the U.S. We didn't want

to leave. It was a tense time.

And then all of a sudden I learned when I got to work one morning that Soviets were going to pull all of their employees out of the embassy. Right then. That day. No one had predicted this. It was new times with Gorbachev, for sure. UPRK, the *Upravlenie diplomaticheskiiy korpusov*, that is the Soviet government agency that was the monopoly supplier of local national staff to foreign embassies in Moscow, was told to pull all the Soviet employees from the embassy, all of them, gone. They had to clear out their desks, they had one day to do it and in fact we had to escort them around, to make sure that no sabotage was done.

I had about six employees that ran things, Wireless File delivery, running the enormous Xerox machine, people like Yuri Zarakhovich that I mentioned earlier, translators. Everyone gone, cooks, cleaners, repair people. All of these people were gone that day. I really hated it. – these were good people, some of them I had known for years.

Lots of stories were written about this, but generally everyone pitched in and did what needed to be done. The embassy admin people really had to work. They organized us into work crews to clean up the building, I had already learned how to run the 35mm movie projectors for those dissident film showings at Spaso House. I already knew how to run the Xerox machine and how to get around Moscow. I think this whole business did not bother me much except for losing the Soviet employees that I really liked working with. That hurt. I still think of them and hope things worked out for them. At least the people that worked with me, these were good people. I still remember the shock that I saw in them. Working for the embassy was a good life for them, and now it was gone, just like that.

In addition to my folk, I especially remember the lady who ran the embassy snack bar. She was tough, kept us all in line, kept order, played no favorites. She was famous, or I guess famous among those of us who were privileged to know her. She was gone. Her life gone. She had worked there all the time I had been going to the embassy, at least from 1973. All gone in a moment.

As it happened, I did not mind physical labor, and my wife and I were very comfortable working on our own in Moscow. We had language. I was really good at cleaning, at improvising solutions. I knew how to do it, because I had done it for so long with USIA exhibits. In fact, except for losing good people among the Soviet employees, I thought it was great fun, didn't bother me at all, especially as I was fairly bored with my regular job at this point. I now had a perfect excuse to let slide any tasks that I did not want to do.

Cleaning the embassy and keeping things going inside was the easy part. But it was a pretty rough winter for we had to figure out things like how to submit travel requests. Those Soviet bureaucratic details didn't quit. So we had to figure out how to do them ourselves and where they went in the foreign ministry. I remember making deliveries to this rather anonymous side door in the foreign ministry skyscraper.

I suppose there's a positive side to this, because we got to see things now for the first time that we didn't do before. We'd have more contact, in a way, with the bureaucracy than we'd had

before, because earlier we'd had our Soviet national employees as a buffer between us and reality.

Eventually we got contractors in to help. I remember the company name, PA&E, for some reason. American contractors came in that wanted to work in the embassy. Also, at the beginning that winter, for a short time we had American military Seabees helping out until the contractors could arrive. They did things we couldn't like automobile maintenance.

Q: I would think one of the problems with contracting things out, in many ways you're having a greater problems with security, because if you hire a guy from Des Moines who knows how to do some skilled labor task, he's an American, so you kind of have to trust him to a certain point, but the thing is, he's not accustomed to dealing with the Soviet system. If you have a Soviet who does the same job, you know where they stand and you can take necessary precautions, but your guy from Des Moines is more problematic.

DU CHATEAU: I agree entirely. That was my attitude toward the whole thing, but try to tell that to the Congressional committees. Anyhow, we did not kick out the Soviet employees, as much as they might have been a security risk. Gorbachev and friends did it. But you know, I know of no such security problem that arose from the contractors. But that doesn't mean much, I simply may not have heard of the problems. There was such a stir of new people, someone could have been gone without this AIO knowing.

Q: How about radiation bombardment at the time?

DU CHATEAU: Well, indeed while we were in Moscow, there was this whole issue about microwave or some kind of radiation beamed at the embassy from a building across the way, across that ring road. I think the business predated our arrival, but I'm not sure. Anyhow, my office was right on target.

I cared about it, but not because I had an office door out to a balcony that I would never go out on - it was a Soviet-built balcony. Scary. In fact, in the winter, the snow would come under the door. I cared because my office was one floor above the political section and the ambassador's office and it faced directly onto the big ring road and the Soviet buildings across the street where I'd heard the radiation supposedly came from.

Q: In order to eavesdrop.

DU CHATEAU: Well, eavesdrop in some fashion. There was no question that something was happening, as folks came in and measured the radiation that was coming at the embassy, but nobody could figure out what was going on, what it was good for. At least that's what I heard. As I recall it, I heard that best speculation was that they probably had some kind of devices in the embassy that they were accessing through that radiation. Who knows? I don't know. That's not the kind of thing covered in the ambassador's press briefings - what it was for and what they were getting - although the question would come up.

But it was the health issue - that came up a lot in my press briefings. Nobody was able to ever

pin down a cause and effect health problem, in other words, there was no statistical difference between our embassy staff and any other comparable group elsewhere. I think probably the real worry was cancer, but no one could prove any cause and effect.

We had screens on the windows to stop the radiation. I've no idea if they worked. Maybe someone someplace figured out what the Soviets were really getting, but I never heard.

Q: Well, was there any movement among our Foreign Service people, through their union or whatever, to threaten essentially go on strike over the issue? There was a way of stopping this, by saying we're going to cut diplomatic relations unless you stop doing this to our people.

DU CHATEAU: It's a good question and I don't know the answer. I don't recall any talk about doing that. It's been a long time now, but I seem to recall that we're not talking about lots of radiation, maybe stuff that was not much above normal background in the city. And then there's the constant paranoia in the embassy. I think that the Soviets probably denied anything was happening.

Q: You put up monitors that show this is happening and then say, "Cut out this stuff, or we're not going to play anymore."

DU CHATEAU: I suspect that the radiation was found to be low enough level that we could not show a real health hazard.

Q: Maybe we were doing it, too. I don't know.

DU CHATEAU: I have no idea. It's the kind of paranoia that we lived with at that time, too. You're right, maybe we did do it.

For instance, it was well known that with the new housing compound I lived on, there was a church across the street, and it was well known that they had their listening devices up there. You did not have a serious conversation on the street in the compound. It's probably still true today, though I think the church is now what we used to call a real "working church" with regular services. That doesn't mean it couldn't be used still for other purposes. Actually, also we were line of sight from a very tall apartment building to our north. We lived – we were down in the fishbowl.

It was there, it was part of the way we lived. Living in Moscow then, it was pretty hard on folks. I've been back to Russia a couple of times since, once to Moscow, and it's certainly much nicer now than it was then.

Q: How was morale?

DU CHATEAU: Well, it depends upon the person. Moscow was a hardship post with extra pay, and people who didn't come in with our background, my wife's background, a feeling for the country, maybe family background and language, lots of time they found it very difficult, especially support staff personnel, anybody in communications or anything like that. They

couldn't talk to Soviets, they had a hard time going out, and rightly so, I'm afraid. So it was pretty rough on them.

We had a pretty good commissary and a big effort to keep stuff in there and keep it stocked up, especially beer, which I appreciated. We had weekly mail runs by train to Helsinki. Everyone had an opportunity to escort the mail on overnight train out to Finland.

To be the escort on a mail run was a paid weekend vacation to Helsinki, overnight train both ways. We accompanied the mail bags so that the Soviets couldn't get to them. And that was a morale booster. That chance came to everybody in the embassy, it was on a rotation. Probably once a year you got that trip.

We had a very good snack bar, it was the place to eat in Moscow. It had Italian and Peruvian chefs who lived in Moscow with their families. Tasty stuff, I still think of breakfasts and lunch there most fondly. Soviets that worked in the snack bar eventually got kicked out, as I said. They'd worked there a long time.

Q: Who instituted the removal of the UPRK staffers?

DU CHATEAU: Oh, Gorbachev. It was a beautiful thing. We went after their spies. He said there would be consequences. And as I mentioned earlier, there was a day when everything was in limbo and we were trying to figure out what's he going to do. He decided to do kind of what you suggested a few minutes ago with the radiation business, except what he did was more effective. He knew we depended upon our Soviet employees and so he pulled them out. We could not do the same thing to the Soviet embassy in Washington because they did not have many American employees, maybe a couple of translators. It was a beautiful move if you want to think about it that way.

They, the Soviet employees, were all protected in the system, in a way - they got jobs and what have you, but it wasn't fun at all for them, either. I talked with my people and they were very unhappy. They liked working for us, at least my people did, they had a good job, I didn't hassle them. They did their work and they went home.

I'm sure - in fact I know - they went down the street and reported on us, but who cared? It was the way the system worked and everyone knew it. It just made no difference.

But it wasn't a disaster for all the Soviets. I've got a little side story here. Earlier I mentioned my friend Yuri Zarakovich, whom I first met working as the so-called protocol assistant with the Outdoor Recreation exhibit in 1973 and 1974. Then he was hired by the Press and Culture section as a translator, and - you've got to love it - I became his supervisor when I came to Moscow ten years later.

Anyhow, Yuri was exceptionally gifted. He was a poet and a published author in Russia. He could knock out any work we gave him in a few minutes. By the time I got there, he was totally bored. More than once he came to me and asked to be fired. You see, if we fired Yuri, then UPRK would have to find him a new job. That's how the system worked. Of course I could not

fire him.

Then all the Soviet employees were pulled out. Within a week or two Yuri found work at the local Time magazine bureau. He was terrific. Eventually, after the Soviet Union fell apart, he became a full-blown correspondent for Time with his own by-line.

And then his daughter moved to the U.S., to Florida, went to school here and became a lawyer. And a couple of years ago, Yuri and his wife followed and moved to the U.S. But we never got to see him in the U.S. He died of pancreatic cancer maybe a year after he got here.

I'm very bothered by this whole story, the assumptions made back in the 70s, the strange road we all took. Yuri Zarakovich, bless him, he was a good guy.

Q: What about cultural life there, from your perspective?

DU CHATEAU: Well, first of all, things were cheap. You could go to the Bolshoi for almost nothing, you know, a good seat for five dollars. Anything that's high culture that the Russians had, we had access to.

There were things going on underground that I knew less about. I was kind of a homebody, I'd be tired at the end of the day, and I wanted to be around my wife and daughter. But younger people and especially our P&C cultural folk got to know a lot of people, because there were things going on with music, with pictorial art, what have you. It was their job to know these people. I personally, I confess, had less to do with it.

Vladimir Horowitz, the pianist, he came to Moscow to play. That was a big deal, because he had his special demands and his wife had her demands. My colleague Mark Taplin was responsible for the visit. It was constant small things he had to do. Horowitz was famously demanding.

We had constant delegations coming in: former President Carter came in, the Secretary of State came in, I had to arrange the press conferences and do the transcripts. Charlie Wick, the head of USIA, came at least twice. He needed a lot of special handling. Everything he did had to be recorded and transcribed for him, he thought everything he did was important. We'd send cable the transcripts back and then they put out on USIA's Wireless File the next day. It was horrible, a total waste of time.

We would spend hours listening to the tapes and making the transcript, usually me and one other AIO or ACAO, whoever I could drag in. We'd do it by hand, as it were, transcribing, listening to the tape going over it again, and typing on a Wang word processor. It had to go out in a cable that same day and took hours to do.

Then in the summer of 1987 we had to leave our beautiful townhouse with its hand built parquet floors. It was probably the best housing we ever had. Well, maybe not, considering where we lived in Jerusalem and Helsinki, but it was wonderful all the same. In the evening I would go across the street and use the sauna. The embassy had a full swimming pool right next to the sauna. The commissary was there. It was good living, a good time after all the years of not-so-

much fun living in Soviet hotel rooms, what have you.

But it was time to go. Art and Donna Hartman had left a month or so before that summer. I'd really liked working for them. I met Ambassador Matlock out at the airport. Things were changing and we had our next assignment.

But maybe one more thing before we go, how we met some people we are still friends with today.

By 1985 or 1986, our little daughter Guzel was old enough to go to pre-school. There was an international preschool in our embassy, international because all sorts of folk from other embassies or western private companies in town had their little kids in there. I recall that the wife of the British ambassador was a teacher.

This preschool had wonderful facilities in an apartment in the embassy south wing, one floor up the stairs from P&C down. I think kids went for half a day. We'd truck little Guzel up the stairs for a good time. Actually, it was a wonderful experience for her. But perhaps more important in the long run, somehow Golnar got on the school board, and a fellow board member was Ulla Høy, the wife of Leif Davidsen, who was the Moscow correspondent for Danish Television. They had two children in the school. Their older boy, Thomas, was Guzel's good friend. He's now the correspondent for Danish Television in Japan, following in his father's profession. But more important to me, we've remained friends with the Davidsens all these years. He's now one of the most popular writers in Denmark. It's the good part about the Foreign Service, the good people you work with, the luck you can have.

JANE MILLER FLOYD
General Services Officer
Leningrad (1985-1987)

On-site Inspection Agency
Ulan Ude, Soviet Union (1988-1989)

Jane Miller Floyd was born in Washington in 1954. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Washington. She joined the Foreign Service in 1980. Her career included positions in the Former Soviet Union and Moscow. Mrs. Floyd was interviewed on December 6, 2004 by Charles S. Kennedy

Q: You were in Leningrad from 85 to 87. I think this might be a good place to stop. And I'll put at the end where we'll pick it up. We'll talk about your time as a GSO in Leningrad. 85 to 87.

Q: Today is the 16th of December 2004. You were in Leningrad 85 to 87. What was the status of American relations with the Soviets?

FLOYD: As with any good relationship, it had its ups and downs. The most notable series of

events was the cascading expulsion of diplomatic employees. It began with U.S. objection to the size of the Soviet, Ukrainian and Belarusian missions to the UN. We asked them to reduce the size. They did not. Therefore the State Department declared a number of them PNG and asked them to leave the United States.

In retaliation for that, the Soviets designated a smaller number of American diplomats in the former Soviet Union as PNG and they left. Then we kicked a few more out from the UN. And in the interesting twist, the Soviets next action was the withdrawal all Soviet local employees. Because the Soviet government is who provided our FSNs, they were able in one fell swoop, in one sweet evening, to cause all of our FSNs to cease working for the consulate, and the embassy for that matter.

Q: Hadn't some of this taken place anyway because of the Sergeant Lonetree business?

FLOYD: It is highly likely that that was mixed up in there someplace and certainly the mission in the Soviet Union had re-looked its security requirements. But what the Soviets did was took away drivers and cooks, and translators and ticket arrangers. They took everybody.

Q: How did we respond to that?

FLOYD: We initially had a remarkable group of people who pitched in and did an amazing number of things, including consul generals who shoveled snow from their own residence steps. But what we eventually did was went to an American contractor, PAE, Pacific Architects and Engineers, to provide us with support personnel. For years it had been clear that X Americans, one American, could do the work of four FSNs, or that sort of proportion. And that was somewhat the rate with which we were able to get the money to then hire cleared American contractors to do those jobs. It took several months – I would have to go back and check. I'm going to say six to eight months. – before the first PAE employee got to Leningrad.

Q: Who was the consul general when you got there?

FLOYD: Ed Hurwitz was the consul general for the vast majority of my time. Charlie McGee was there initially, but Ed was there for the majority.

Q: How did you find, the tit for tat thing through the UN and all, was at the upper level. But down at the Leningrad level, how . . .?

FLOYD: At the level of our employees, when they were finally allowed by the Soviet government to come back to the consulate to pick up the things they had left in their desks – their sewing kits, their shoes – they were in tears. They were traumatized by this level of petty reciprocity. Retaliation is how they saw it, primarily.

Q: Irrespective of work, it must have developed a sort of bitterness on the part of our American employees to the Soviet authorities.

FLOYD: Certainly to the Soviet authorities. We totally recognized that the decision to leave their

employment had nothing to do with the individuals. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall of the discussions as to what the Soviets were going to lose in intelligence access to us. But the decision was made to simply totally inconvenience us. Because the bad guy was the Soviet state – fairly large, fairly amorphous – what I found it created was an incredible camaraderie among the folks at the consulate. It was no longer send the driver to deliver invitations or pick up milk orders from Helsinki, it was okay everybody, we are all in this together and we are all going to take turns. And that's what happened.

Q: Well I would assume that being GSO, which you had never done before, had you?

FLOYD: That is correct. I'm a political officer.

Q: The GSO is the gopher, the person that does everything, and you must have become the key person in the consulate.

FLOYD: That is overstating it because I may have been the telephone person, but it was the whole group that made things happen. I may have posted the list of who is going to do the mail run, but I didn't have to do it all. Amazing cooperation from everyone. Our Marine detachment probably gets the most credit because they had been restricted, in terms of the jobs that they could take within the consulate, within any diplomatic entity, simply because the Marine Corps was worried about them being used as manual labor. And so they stepped up very nicely. Also tremendously easing my burden was the fact that a key partner for any GSO in the former Soviet Union was the Seabee folks that were around – the mechanical skills, their ability to do so many of the jobs that FSNs had done on the technical side. I had the tremendous advantage of being married to that Seabee and therefore the advantage of encouraging his cooperation. That was also aided clearly by the fact that the embassy, recognizing that certain tasks you could ask for volunteers for, but some had to be paid for, made funds available so that we could hire folks who were willing to do it – to paint apartments during staff transfers, to do some of the after hours work that simply had to be done. So it was a combination of the embassy was willing to fund, organizations willing to release their employees to do things outside of their job descriptions, and then simply amazing cooperation from a team.

Q: How about on the Soviet side, the people that handle the housing and all that? Were they sticking it to you, or were they completely out of the picture at this point?

FLOYD: The Soviet organizations within the Soviet structure, for example the Main Directorate for Servicing Consular Institutions, continued to do its job as before. The difference was that there was no one in the consulate as an intermediary, so that Americans had to go and directly do things. I had a funny advantage in that for a couple of months that I had been on leave without pay waiting for tour timing to mesh, I was at the consulate on my husband's orders. During that down time, I asked for and received permission from the person I was going to replace – the GSO who was in place – for me to hang around with the FSNs. So I had gone on the customs run. I had schmoozed with the Soviet officials. I had gone on invitation deliver rounds. So I knew the backdoors. I knew the secretaries. I knew what our FSNs did when they left the consulate. I knew where our FSN plumber kept parts because I had sat down in the basement and had tea with him. So we used to laugh and say that it couldn't have happened at a better time in

the sense that we had an American with a fair amount of exposure with what our GSO FSNs did.

Q: Did the other foreign consulates there give a hand?

FLOYD: No. Nor did we ask them to particularly. It was not unhelpful, it was just that we never identified what they could have done. We couldn't have subcontracted their Soviet employees. The Soviet government wouldn't let us use them. And we weren't going to ask the German guards to come over and shovel our snow.

Q: There was no possibility of hiring any Russian off the street?

FLOYD: Absolutely not.

Q: Were there any problems in your work? What sort of things were you doing with the Soviet authorities?

FLOYD: As you put it out, GSO keeps the water flowing, the lights on. Housing was a big issue, meaning everything from where you put people, how you move them in and out, customs lists when they were coming, packing lists when they were going, repainting apartments between occupants, airplane tickets for R&R, telexing Helsinki for milk and broccoli. Lots of time paying utility bills. Fixing hot water heaters at the consul general's residence when they blow valves in the middle of the night.

Q: At the Leningrad level there wasn't harassment? It was business as usual?

FLOYD: As I said, as soon as we reached Soviet officials in their roles within Soviet organizations, things were just fine. When you got to the customs depot at the airport to send out somebody's air freight, they were not obnoxious. Towards the end of our tour in Leningrad, I was pregnant. And when I would show up with air freight shipments and noticeably pregnant, I actually got a fair amount of attention. And the first time I tried to drive a 26 foot step van through the archway of the 18th century building that the consulate was located in, even the militia guards out front were prepared to give me a little coaching as I maneuvered that monster.

Q: 85 to 87, things were happening in the Soviet Union.

FLOYD: Absolutely.

Q: I realize that you were busy with the water heaters, but you must have been picking up quite a bit of stuff.

FLOYD: Also because I was a political cone officer – one of the people PNG'd from Leningrad was our political officer. That meant that it gave me the opportunity to pick up some of that work as well. Notably, with some of the refuseniks who were in Leningrad, which was a great source of rumor and general public information. And, as you point out, as part of the changes within the Soviet government, from glasnost to perestroika, they were increasingly getting exit permission so that they felt more free about talking about a number of things because they knew they were

getting out.

Q: What were you picking up from you contacts about – was there a change in the Soviet system? Were you seeing that coming? First place, where was Gorbachev at this point?

FLOYD: This is embarrassing. I have trouble remembering exactly when he came into the general secretary position. He was there probably for most of that time period.

Q: You were beginning to feel the . . .

FLOYD: Absolutely.

Q: This is an Earth change, wasn't it?

FLOYD: Leningrad was always a very culturally active location. Not in terms of quantity, but in terms of quality, our interaction with the cultural elite was probably higher, conceivably in part because our contact with the political elite was less because they were in Moscow. One of the events that we sponsored at this time was the visit of Vladimir Horowitz, who came to perform at the Leningrad Philharmonic. And that was a major cultural experience in which we found tickets actually available to the public instead of being solely under the control of the political or party elite. We saw a greater willingness to allow student exchanges of what we thought might have been questioned in the past. Things as simple as Americans of Russian heritage were allowed on some of the exchanges with greater frequency than in the past. Less following, less harassment. Still there, but it was more monitoring than intrusive.

Q: Were you able to get into some of the traditional way of Russian life? The sitting around a kitchen table and talking?

FLOYD: Much more so with the refuseniks, who had much less to lose. Most Russians were very confused. They did not know what was going on. They had seen lightening up decades earlier and then the clampdown. So they were a little leery. I think we discussed the last time we spoke the event that told me that this was going to work, which was our farewell gathering when people actually got to make their own choices. They got to decide something as mundane as a social appearance without having to clear it with somebody. And they got to act as individually responsible professionals, which for most was quite amazing.

It was the next wave – I would say – from the late 80s up to the 90s, which really broke down that barrier of access and personal revelation beyond the small slice of Soviets that had rejected their system earlier. We spent hours with refuseniks.

As a digression, you keep referring to the Lonetree events. In fact, it was in a subsequent time back in the former Soviet Union when my husband – being an active duty military person – had to go to Frankfurt to have a lie detector test relative to his activities. One of the questions that was difficult for him – actually difficult for the questioner – was “have you ever been alone with a Russian woman?” And he would fairly directly say “yes,” because while I was in the living room drinking tea with the men discussing exit visas and political issues, he was in the kitchen

with the lady of the house discussing eggs and teapots and . . . which was a reflection of job responsibilities and vocabulary. But for better or for worse, the good guys from NCIS just couldn't grasp that a military person might be married to a political officer whose job was contact with Russians. But that's just one of the delightful twists of American security cultures coming into contact with each other.

Q: In the Leningrad context, who were those refuseniks? Were they mostly Russian Jews?

FLOYD: Almost exclusively.

Q: What was the motivation? What were they saying? Why were they the refuseniks and not some others?

FLOYD: Many of them were very bright and very ambitious and the mere fact that one line in their Soviet passport said they were Jewish created incredible barriers to their professional and personal lives: where they could work, what they could do, where they could live.

Q: This is sort of ingrained in the system?

FLOYD: Absolutely.

Q: Were they talking about going to Israel or were they talking about the United States?

FLOYD: United States from day one. They all knew how to bail out of the processing train, usually in Rome, and run to the US.

Q: Israel was not really the . . .

FLOYD: For a very, very few of them. For the Sharanskis, yes. But for the vast majority of people that we dealt with, it was the United States. In part, mind you, because even before the mid to late 80s, there had been a trickle of departures and many of them had ended up in the United States, not unlike Irish or Swedish or any other stream of immigration. They were going to folks that they knew.

Q: Oh yeah. On the side, were you getting anything about Israel? How did they feel about Israel?

FLOYD: The vast majority of the refuseniks who we dealt with were not deeply religious. And it is my belief that they were uncomfortable about the need to exhibit a greater foundation in their religion if they were going to successfully live in Israel.

Q: How Jewish were they, would you say?

FLOYD: The best comparison that I can come up with is to parallel their degree of belief, identity and practice to what is fairly frequently seen in many other religions. The average American Lutheran goes to church on Christmas and Easter, knows what a crucifix looks like,

has some idea what a Madonna is, but if you asked them to discuss in great detail the difference between Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian and probably even Catholic, they'd be hard pressed to distinguish with much degree of specificity, particularly on a theological line.

Q: How about with the Russian Leningraders? Did you have much chance to talk with them?

FLOYD: Clearly the FSNs. Clearly the folks in the neighborhood stores where we always shopped. But never with the sense that they were revealing their souls.

Q: I was talking about whether you were picking up any feeling towards the refusniks.

FLOYD: Varied. There were those who would joke that they wish they were Jewish because at least they would then have a chance of getting out. There were others, particularly in Leningrad, who saw them as traitors for wanting to leave the motherland. Some Jews took the same approach towards refusniks. Stay here and make it better. Don't leave.

Q: Well what constitutes a refusnik?

FLOYD: Someone who had applied to emigrate from the former Soviet Union and had been refused exit permission.

Q: And what were we doing about it? What was being done about?

FLOYD: Every time we had human rights or immigration discussions, we provided lists of people who we knew that had legitimate places to go – that was one of the Soviet's frequent statements, "We can't let them go, they would be lost because there is no country that wants them." So we would constantly give them lists of people for whom we had issued entry documents, but they couldn't get out because they lacked exit documents.

Q: Was anything happening?

FLOYD: Trickle, all throughout the 80s. It opened up more once you got into 86, and by 87 a lot of the old backup was breaking through. The big flood didn't come until 88 or 89.

Q: Was there a change in the attitude of Soviet officials? Were they more forthcoming, or not?

FLOYD: Up until our departure, I would not say that I would characterize Russian officials as notably, totally opening up. If you take it from a totally closed, totally controlled, only if I'm told to, only if I'm authorized to attitude, to a total independent, empowered professional, they were probably about, maybe a third of the way. You would get a couple occasions when a couple officials would actually lean forward. But it was certainly not on their shoulders. It was still "let me check." It was still "I'll have to get permission." It was still "we're not cleared to do that."

Q: Were you picking up any reflections of ethnic divisions? I realize you are off in Leningrad, but still.

FLOYD: Well Leningrad has always been the touching off point for a lot of – even Soviet – relations with people of the far north. It's where their biggest institution is for that study. It's what took us out to Yakutsk to look at permafrost with the US Army Corps of Engineers. There are tremendous ethnic divisions in Russia today and in the former Soviet Union. The major distinction that you usually find in Leningrad is between ethnic Russians and the Balts. There are not many central Asians, who are the scapegoats for every Russian.

Q: Was Leningrad our window on the Baltic states?

FLOYD: Yes. Pretty much.

Q: Could you get over there?

FLOYD: You could drive to Estonia. You could drive to Tallinn.

Q: Was there a growing international community in Leningrad at this time?

FLOYD: There has always been a huge Finnish presence. And the consulate took huge advantage of that. Our moving company was Finnish. They were our shipping company. They were our source of paint and light bulbs and water fixtures. But they were well and thoroughly there. Germans were present a little more. It's a port. It's a big shipping center for most of northern Russia, northern Soviet Union.

Q: As a political officer, were you getting feelings about the Soviet economy and how it produced and all? Because I think this is the big thing that, in a way, the intelligence people felt that the Soviet Union would hold together forever and all – and it seemed to be that economics . . .

FLOYD: I would take it the other way and say that the Soviet economy was not going to be able to maintain its hypocrisy and continue to function either in terms of developing its military or – and here's where the falseness was displayed – in its relations in an increasingly globalized world. If they were going to depend on American wheat imports, if they were going to depend on American drill bit imports, they had to more closely approach Western accountability standards, from the beginning of the plan to its execution. The falseness of the Soviet system is what killed it.

Q: I mean, we are sitting here and you have a laptop computer sitting on the table there. The computer was just coming into its own at that point.

FLOYD: Including in the consulate.

Q: Yeah. State Department does not reflect the cutting edge of technology. Did you get any feeling that the Soviets were beginning to fall behind in this very important aspect?

FLOYD: Absolutely. Telephones alone were going to bring it down. Not only did they not feel empowered in terms of policy to communicate with each other, they could not mechanically

communicate with each other.

Q: So by the time you left there in 87, what was you feeling about things?

FLOYD: It was clear that the Soviet Union had turned a corner, that things were going to change, led in my opinion by economic changes, which I argued and in hindsight I don't think I would have seen it differently, even then, that while the Soviet Union might engage in more economic autonomy for its subdivisions, I couldn't imagine it breaking into the pieces that it has. I could not imagine Latvia wanting to try and stand up against Germany in North Sea area economic competition. I could not conceive of the Uzbeks breaking away to the extent that they were willing to stand up to China on their own. And in the end, they still retain a tight link to Moscow. But I didn't see that degree of breakup coming.

Q: What about the Finnish role there? Was there irredentism in Finland about Karelia?

FLOYD: No. I perhaps did not meet enough drunk Finns to get that to come out, but while they would talk about what went on in Vyborg, when it was Finnish, or show you where the line used to be, whether it was history, whether it was the degree of corruption – and I mean that both in terms of environment and development, and mental corruption – that had taken place in those areas, I never heard a Finn say that they wanted it back.

Q: Was Finland the place you went to get some fresh air?

FLOYD: And give birth. Yes, Finland was certainly the consulate's window on the world. It is where we went for medical and dental care. It is where we ordered a huge amount of our fresh food supplies. It is where we ordered a tremendous amount of local support material. Literally light bulbs.

Q: I remember seeing in Kyrgyzstan about ten years later where people were selling used light bulbs – I mean these were light bulbs that didn't work any more.

FLOYD: No, but you get your old light bulb, you go to work, you put the dead light bulb in, take the good one home, and the next day turn to your boss and say "My light went out." And make the boss replace it.

Q: Yeah.

FLOYD: The fact that such simple service items were not available. And also the mentality that said you can steal from your boss. That you have to go through these kinds of machinations to live your daily life. You can't run a modern economy on that level.

Q: Then nine months later, after your period of gestation in the bureau of human rights, you are off to Moscow?

FLOYD: No. To Ulan Ude, out in Siberia. To implement the INF treaty – the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty. One of those delightful bureaucratic twists and turns, I was assigned to the

Department of Defense's On-Site Inspection Agency. It was an organization that was literally just standing up. And they wanted to assign State Department and DOD folks to be diplomatic escorts at the two points of entry. Well, one was Moscow. That was easy, you had the embassy. But the eastern one was harder to staff.

The treaty was set up that you declared a random inspection at the point of entry and the host government had X hours for this kind and X hours for that kind of inspection. Well if you were sitting in Moscow and wanted to inspect Sarawak, you could not, even if they instantly put you on the airplane, you couldn't get there within the time frame. So we created an eastern entry point. It was supposed to be in Irkutsk, which is a real live city. But their airport was undergoing capital repairs and couldn't handle C-131s. So the nearest available useable airport was Ulan Ude.

Q: Can you spell that and explain where it is?

FLOYD: Ulan Ude is two words. U-L-A-N U-D-E. Ulan being Mongolian for red. And Ude being the river that flows through the city. And I'm sure it has a meaning, but we never found it out. It is a hundred plus miles east of Lake Baikal and about a hundred and fifty miles north of Mongolia. It is slam in the middle of what would be called eastern Siberia. It is also the headquarters for the eastern Siberian military district and therefore had always been a closed city. But it did have a good sized airport, including a military alternative, which was one of our requirements knowing that things happen at airports. And so the Soviets, who wanted INF to work, said okay, you can base your operations in Ulan Ude.

Q: You were there for how long?

FLOYD: We were there from September of 88 until December of 89 and then we were pulled back to Moscow. We then periodically went out to Ulan Ude until summer of 90.

Q: You say we. Now what was your husband doing there?

FLOYD: My husband was the Department of Defense representative.

Q: Sounds like somebody was cooperating there.

FLOYD: It was serendipitous. The State Department wanted to send a rep. DOD wanted to send a rep. They wanted to send married people, coming out of Lonetree.

Q: Keep from messing around.

FLOYD: Yes. And they didn't want to send a whole troop. So with some creative networking, they found the Floyds, who had just come out of Leningrad, and we were willing to go. It did ruffle a lot of feathers. My husband is reasonably convinced it is the reason he never again got promoted. It certainly got me a reputation among Soviet hands for being brave, creative and probably a little crazy. But I don't think the personnel system liked that either. My CDO went bananas because they had to break my assignment to Human Rights. And in order to not have to

do all the full advertising and recruitment and make some other provisions, they actually had to direct my assignment. Not with my opposition, but with Human Right's opposition. So they had to do a directed assignment and my CDO was not at all happy at having to do that paperwork.

Q: What was the situation in Ulan Ude? I mean, this is not a name that reverberates in the corridors of diplomacy.

FLOYD: It does not. The U.S. Government had been making due with TDY folks out there. I went out and met them prior to actually being transferred out there. We looked around the city for where a family with two kids could conceivably live. We drafted charts of hotel room reconfigurations. We looked at a couple Soviet apartments. And said, "it's not going to work." So the local official who was technically a deputy minister on the Buryat Council of Ministers took us over to the communist party guesthouse and said "Would this half of the house work for you?" And with some tolerance on everybody's part, it turned out to be a pretty nice setup. We had a two room, bath, vestibule type setup that had a door that we could lock, and that was our space. And then we used the guesthouse's kitchen. In fact we restocked it with a washer and a dryer and a freezer and a side-by-side refrigerator, and shelves and cupboards, all of which came in from Yokota Air Force Base.

Q: I assume that the communist party headquarters was delighted to have . . .

FLOYD: Absolutely, because I know that that equipment was not pulled out after we left. We were the only folks that they kept there permanently. When we left, the US representation went back to a TDY status. Partly because of where the treaty was and I also would hazard a guess partly because they couldn't find anybody adventurous enough to do so.

Q: What about living there?

FLOYD: It was the perfect time to be there in the sense that the Soviet Union still existed, which meant that there was still fairly strong central control. And the Soviets wanted the INF treaty to work. And therefore, when we identified a legitimate living need, they made it happen. On the other hand, perestroika was well and fully in place. And everybody talked to us and we talked to everybody. The actual workload was less than fifty-percent actually engaged in the INF Treaty. A goodly part of the reason for having someone there permanently was to convey the image to the Soviets that we were prepared to inspect at any time. The INF Treaty provides for twelve spot inspections a year, across the entire country, which would say if half went to Moscow and half went to Ulan Ude, it would still only be six a year. So our work was not heavy day-to-day, but what we were was the presence. The Soviets could never be sure when we might inspect.

There was also routine inspections through Ulan Ude because of where the Soviets destroyed their missiles. They launched to destroy. And those were planned, those were advertised. So essentially every morning we got up and we called Moscow and said "Is there a plane coming tomorrow?" And 200 days out of the year, they said "No." So we hung up and we were done with INF for 24 hours. But it could be Saturday, it could be Sunday. The rest of the time we did public diplomacy. We did outreach. We were there.

Q: Let's talk about the public diplomacy. Were you called up on to speak at schools?

FLOYD: Yes. I did a weekly lecture at the local pedagogical institute, so I figure that had corrupted an entire generation of teachers in Siberia. We also did spot lectures at other educational institutions and appeared at cultural events.

Q: Were you getting good questions from the audiences?

FLOYD: Of course it crossed the whole range. The most thoughtful ones were the comparative ones. You always had somebody who asked you the nice hostile ones. But one of the advantages of being an American is that you don't always have to agree with your government. You can argue their position and then you can say "But not all Americans agree," and go down that path too. And just that fact – whatever the issue – that you as a U.S. government representative could present both sides as valid was . . . You could see these gears going "Oh, that hurts."

Q: Were they reveling in the fact that they could get up and ask questions?

FLOYD: Yes. And when it was a larger group, particularly at schools, they tended to ask more logical, policy, history type questions. When it was smaller groups, or social groups, it was all about American life. And so many of them reminded me of questions that we had gotten on United States Information Agency exhibits. "How much?"

One of the advantages of living at this guesthouse was that the maids at the guesthouse also cleaned up our spaces, which was nice. And the first time one of them saw a J.C. Penney catalogue, her first question was "Who can order from here?" Because the assumption was "Do you have this because you are a government employee? Do you have this because you are a diplomat?" "No. I have this because I have dollars."

Q: Who were the people? Were these transplanted Russians?

FLOYD: They were all sorts of folks. One of the big historical sites out there was from when there were a lot of Decembrists that were exiled out there in the 1800s. An amazing number of current residents were folks who had come out to Siberia in their youths to help build the trans-Siberian railroad and stayed. Most of them fell in love with the adventure, the distance, the cowboy mentality.

Q: Like Wyoming and Idaho, or something like that.

FLOYD: And there's an indigenous population, the Buryats.

Q: How were they treated?

FLOYD: Not well.

Q: Were they essentially an Asian group?

FLOYD: Yes. They are kin to the Mongolians. In fact the languages are mutually understandable.

Q: How about the local authorities? Were they concerned about you?

FLOYD: It was the next step in being convinced that things would never go back to being as controlled as they had been. We always joked that because Ulan Ude had been a closed city, they had never been on distribution for those memos from Moscow about how to be obnoxious to foreigners. And instead, their very human Siberian warmth came out. All we had to do was mention that we might sort of like to try and do something, and they would make it happen. They set our kids up in nursery school. They got my husband into a gym. I said that I like to swim and they set me up at the airplane factory to use their swimming pool. And of course, because I was the beloved foreigner, they had to do it during the executives' hour. So I'm swimming with the director. I remember the locker room conversations with his wife.

You talked about did we ever have a chance to sit down and drink a lot of tea. In Ulan Ude I drank enough tea to float Noah's ark. In part because we had time. In part because that was a lot of what I could do. I went to English language classes and competitions, and Veterans day celebrations. And we were on the podium for the May Day parade. And all of the holidays, they thought we were pretty cool.

Q: What about the inspections?

FLOYD: We were the diplomatic air crew escorts. So our job was, when this 141 flies in, make sure that . . .

Q: C-141 is a large transport plane.

FLOYD: It's a large cargo plane coming in from the American air force base in Yokota, Japan. American air crews, an interagency group of American inspectors. We made sure that the plane was taken care of. We made sure that the crew was taken care of. We made sure that the inspectors had what they needed in Ulan Ude. And then we put them on Soviet military aircraft with Soviet escorts and they went off. We were babysitters. We did not do the inspections.

Q: Did you get any feel for the hand of Moscow there, our embassy?

FLOYD: That's who I called once a day. That was it. They were helpful, in the sense that we had to do our own accounting. I mean, we had to do all the paperwork for paying the rent. For buying the garage, for some really funny stuff. Whenever we sent in these papers, I'd say "I've done this to the best of my ability. If I've violated some rule or regulation, tell me. Or, you can always send me to Siberia."

Q: Did you ever feel the fine hand of our intelligence services wanting to know what was going on there?

FLOYD: I wouldn't even characterize it as intelligence services. I would characterize it as the

role of an American diplomat. My collection was all entirely open, from local newspapers, from local officials. While we were there, the Soviet Union had one of its first multi-candidate local elections. We talked to a number of the candidates. We went to polling places on election day. I had no classified reporting capability, so everything that I wrote back to Moscow was all unclassified. But this was a time when, for the first time, the embassy had incredible access to developments outside of Moscow and Leningrad.

Q: Was the view of America different from the middle of Siberia?

FLOYD: Oh, very much so. Because there had been so little contact with America. They knew America from those very few films that the Soviets would allow to be shown. And then they knew it from Soviet propaganda. I was always amazed at the Soviets' ability to read into second and third level effects. They would watch some horrendous movie about gang warfare in the United States - the Soviet Government let it in to show how violent, disturbed and dysfunctional American society was. But what the Soviet viewing audience would see would be the latest models of cars or that even that the crack junkie was wearing Levi jeans, which was the ultimate status symbol. They were so used to being lied to by their government.

The biggest problem was when what was shown was right. They had all along assumed that if their government said white, it was black. And if the government said black, then it was white. They were so imbued with hypocrisy that they assumed that that was the way everything worked.

Q: The old story is that at one point right after World War II - showing how awful things were - that the movie the Grapes of Wrath was shown and many of the Russians said "Look, their driving Model T Fords." It looks pretty rickety, but these are people who were able to move around in cars.

FLOYD: That they had a car, that they were able to move, and that there were government officials nominally trying to help in some minimal way. And honestly, without a bribe. So as I say, those secondary messages were sometimes pretty amazing.

Q: Was there any opening up of American movies, American TV or anything like that?

FLOYD: No. The Soviet media system was still highly government controlled and, quite frankly, from talking to my cultural affairs people back in Moscow, it was often a matter of money. They would acquire pirated material. But what you did start to see more series that the Soviets were able to buy from other countries. Cheap series.

Q: Well there was this Mexican serial. Was that going at that time, of the little girl who came from the small pueblo in Mexico? I was there some years later just for a short time, but this was hot stuff.

FLOYD: I watched much more of the news programs and not many of the serials. But that would have been the type of program that they acquired.

Q: Were you getting any reflections of dislike of Moscow and central command?

FLOYD: Always. But I know of few organizations that haven't hated the home office.

Q: He's the son of a bitch from out of town, you know. But anyway, so you were . . .

FLOYD: Wherever you go. If you are in a school system, it's always the superintendent's fault. If you are in a military system, it's always the generals. Same in Siberia. It's always Moscow.

Q: You mentioned an airplane factory and all, is this a military airplane?

FLOYD: Yes.

Q: Did that cause problems?

FLOYD: Apparently not, because they let me drive out there. They gave me the ID badge to get past the guard. Now, I didn't go wandering around. I did not abuse the hospitality that they had extended to me.

Q: By the way, did our inspectors find any hot stuff?

FLOYD: No.

Q: I suppose we had that place covered and they had us covered with satellite pictures and all that.

FLOYD: The treaty was successfully implemented.

Q: The feeling was one of cooperation?

FLOYD: Yes. Keeping people sticking to the rules – the funny one was that the inspectors were not allowed to carry personal cameras. Well every single group wanted a picture of themselves in Ulan Ude. One of its claims to fame is having the largest bust of Lenin. So they all wanted to go down to the main square and get their picture taken with Dead Fred the Head Red. But they were not allowed by the treaty to have a camera. But we were, so we took more pictures in front of that stupid statue. So the Soviets made them stick with the requirements of the treaty, but also provided all of the requirements of the treaty.

Q: How efficient did you find the airport personnel when dealing with them?

FLOYD: Spooky. One of the facts of Soviet air control operations is that they give you altitude from landing and not from sea level. And Ulan Ude is at about five thousand feet. So that the air controllers would tell our guys in the 141 to descend to 10,000 feet. Well they would descend to 10,000 feet above sea level, which was only 5,000 feet above the city. So our big green "crocodile" frequently came in very low. And when they would come out of the clouds, you could hear the crew over the tower going "-----." So we briefed crews with the initial factoid that Ulan Ude is at about 5,000 feet above sea level and you will be given instructions relative to

landing height, not sea level. So they'll land you safe, but you will have varying impressions of the height they think you think you are at.

Q: Sounds like fun. What about refueling and that sort of thing?

FLOYD: They were very good. We demanded a different standard of safety and performance, notably no smoking around fuel trucks. But they caught on that that was what they were expected to do. They were very respectful of our requests for operational safety. "You have to stand back this far. We need these kind of barriers." And for the Floyd family, we were also exceedingly appreciative of their understanding that in addition to the provisions of the treaty, these flights supported the Floyd family. So that when the cases of diapers and the cases of water and, closer to the 4th of July, when the multiple watermelons and cases of beer for the 4th of July party came off, we made provisions for a local customs official to be there and properly clear them.

Q: Did you throw a 4th of July party?

FLOYD: We had a wonderful 4th of July party.

Q: How did that go?

FLOYD: It was seventh heaven. It was amazing because we invited the full range of people that we came into contact with. We invited the general who was head of the operation. We invited the little lady from the hotel next door who gave my kids haircuts and wouldn't take money for it. We invited nursery school teachers, theater directors, customs officials, all of the military guys who worked at the airport, everybody at the airport, from the airport director to the fueling guys. And you could see them having some difficulty with the democracy of that collection. They loved our beer. When they found out that we didn't have any vodka, they went out and got some and brought it in. So we had a lot of really happy people. But it was a great success.

Q: By this time the video tape business was going. Were you able to get U.S. programs?

FLOYD: We lived on video tapes. We had regular mail service on the 141 that came it. And so our family could send us tapes. We could order tapes. We re-taped over them and sent tapes out to convince the grandparents that their grandkids were still alive.

Q: Would you have people over to see things?

FLOYD: Oh yeah. The other big parties that we had were Thanksgivings.

Q: Were you getting any reflection of people wondering what the hell was going on back on Moscow? I mean Gorbachev was doing his thing and this was such a revolution, really, that it must have made local people both happy, but pretty uncomfortable. I mean, they'd been used to one thing . . .

FLOYD: Exactly. And holding in their background the fact that one part of their heritage was

exile. They were nervous about what was coming. Excited, but still a little antsy. The first round of elections, there were a few sort-of-independent candidates who didn't do very well, but they don't do well in our country. It was the folks who came with organizations – labor unions, communist party – that won. They are the ones who had name recognition. No overwhelming amateur observations of ballot box stuffing. But the first time you do anything, you tend to lean towards the familiar.

Q: Did you have visitors from our embassy?

FLOYD: Yes. They came out regularly to exchange paperwork, to make sure we hadn't gone native. They also came out and physically stayed in our apartment so that things like, I could go to Moscow for pre-natal care. That we always had the post manned. Even when we knew there wasn't going to be an inspection, you still kept somebody there to present the ability to receive an inspection.

Q: Where was the decision made to inspect? Do you know?

FLOYD: I was never involved in that decision. But my guess is that some of those other national technical means revealed an unusual movement of trucks, or a build up of personnel, or some sort of indicator. And then my guess is that every now and then somebody just went

Q: Flipped a coin.

FLOYD: Flipped a coin.

Q: I'm sure. That's the way you do it. At this point, was there any feeling of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union?

FLOYD: No. It was a pretty good time. The tension for most Russians was internal and it was uncertainty. Not civil war type tension, but just "I think I like it, but where are we going and what else is going to change?"

Q: We're talking about seventy years of one type of rule.

FLOYD: It was uncertainty, and that meant that most of the focus was internal.

Q: Well then, you had another child. You were a real producer, weren't you? How many children do you have?

FLOYD: We have three. That was the end. I got my girl and I stopped. It was one of my frequent lecture topics because people always asked me how I could be a mother and work and all this sort of stuff. And I talked about being able to make choices and having a supportive husband, and having an economy that was developed enough to provide me disposable diapers.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop.

FLOYD: Sure. I do need to get into . . .

Q: Okay. And so we will pick this up next time. You left there when?

FLOYD: We left in December, supposedly on R&R. But our daughter was born on the 10th of January. So we came to Washington State, stayed for Christmas, had the baby, and then my husband and older son went back to Moscow in early February and the baby and our youngest son and I followed later in February.

Q: So we'll be talking about February of 90 and we'll talk about your time – you were in Moscow for how long then?

FLOYD: Again, just from February until that summer. June, July maybe. July I think. Normal summer turnover.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up there.

Q: This is tape three, side one with Jane Floyd. And we are not sure what we have covered, so we are . . . You came back from Ulan Ude, you went to Moscow and you were there for . . . ?

FLOYD: Approximately nine months. Most of 1990.

EDWARD HURWITZ
Consul General
Leningrad (1986-1988)

Edward Hurwitz was born in New York in 1931. He received his bachelor's degree from Cornell University in 1952. After serving in the US Army from 1953-1955 he entered the Foreign Service in 1956. During his career he had positions in Moscow, Seoul, Washington D.C., Afghanistan, Leningrad, and an Ambassadorship to Kyrgyzstan. Ambassador Hurwitz was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in August 1996.

HURWITZ: Yes. It was extremely useful for them. They were very interested in my experiences throughout the course.

Then I took a Russian refresher course having been assigned as consul general to Leningrad. I went out to Leningrad in September, 1986.

Q: You were in Leningrad from 1986 until when?

HURWITZ: September to end of August, 1988.

Q: When you got to the Soviet Union this 1986-88 period, what changes did you find from your previous tour?

HURWITZ: Well, I had been there in 1981 for two months as acting political counselor, and then I went back in 1982 for a month as acting political counselor, so it wasn't as if I hadn't been there since 1972 when I last left. I had also made a number of trips with congressional delegations while I was on the Soviet desk. In 1986 if you read the press carefully you could see it was much more open, but on the ground there was very little difference, if any. It did begin in Leningrad, in fact, Leningrad was the spawning ground of a movement that later became very important. What began in Leningrad was a kind of real grass roots, organizational kinds of public activity in opposition to the government in one way or another. I remember I was walking along the street one Saturday and I saw down one side street a lot of young people, a big group. There was a guy on a truck with a camera and I thought they were filming a picture, which they often do in Leningrad because it is an old city. It turned out from the press that this was a group of young people, environmentalists, architectural historians, who were demonstrating to preserve one of the old buildings that was going to be torn down. I later wrote in a cable describing this because it was so unusual in the Soviet Union. I said that this had to be organized with complete sanctions from the government, but let the group try to demonstrate on other issues. Well, it wasn't officially sanctioned. It turned out to be something that caught fire in Leningrad, the preservation of the old buildings, and spread to such issues as factories that were spewing out pollution. You found groups demonstrating around factories. There were rather large Jewish demonstrations in Leningrad. The Moscow press covered the first demonstration I had seen. In time these groups took on a life of their own. They began to be called informally, "not formal," and you began to get interviews in the press. This really did mark a change and is something that never stopped. Indeed, it went into areas that no government would be pleased about. There were anti-Semitic groups which had their own demonstrations. There was a bubbling up.

Q: Did you feel there was a lack of will on the part of the authorities for sitting on these people?

HURWITZ: No, no. It was clear that the Soviets had made a conscious decision to let this go forward. And as Gorbachev sort of defined what he was doing, it became clear that this was very conscious, and I think on his part quite calculated. He wanted to instill life into the system and he realized you can't do this by fear from above. You have to bubble up from the bottom. I believe he realized you are not going to get to where you want to go without having people be creative. Without having people bring to the public's attention issues that have to be solved. Basically the Party is not interested in solving a lot of issues, they want to let things go as they are. People are watching their own goodies, their own perks, and don't want to rock the boat. This means you are just going to fall further and further backward. He realized you have to let these problems come to the fore before you can deal with them. This process continued.

Q: Were you beginning to see an either disquiet or concern among the Soviet intellectuals by the growth of easier communications within the West, with word processing, faxes, etc.? It was rapidly changing how people do things in the Western world.

HURWITZ: It wasn't specifically put on those terms, but there was a growing realization that they were falling further and further behind. Just before I went out I read a report done by a

group of academics from the Academy of Sciences, social scientists, and they were very much aware of how much the Soviets were falling behind in terms of ideas. And this, of course, is one of the things that helped bring everything down. The Soviets realized that to go forward you had to plug into the West, you couldn't keep computers out. People would get them one way or another. The trend was not to keep things tamped down like they had for decades, but if they wanted to move forward they would just have to open up. They had no choice. The late-'80s were the beginning of this.

Q: During this time, 1986-88, which was towards the end of the Reagan administration, had you sensed a change in the administration's attitude towards the Soviet Union at all?

HURWITZ: I think Reagan sort of moved from evil empire to a fairly businesslike approach to the Soviets. I think he started, and certainly Bush carried out, a policy which I thought was very sound. That is not to jump on the Soviets at every turn, let Gorbachev develop in the way he wants to, because basically that is in our interest. As you recall, Bush took a lot of heat later that Gorbachev hadn't supported the break up of the Soviet Union fast enough. Leaping into something like that and saying, "Hurrah, go to it!" would have been dangerous I think. It could have created some concerns within the Soviet Union that what was happening was only playing into the hands of the West.

Q: How did you find our contact with the local authorities, the mayor, local parties, etc.?

HURWITZ: Oh, that was easy, with the exception of the first secretary, Solovyov, who was a candidate member of the Politburo, very high ranking. I only sat down with him when Matlock, our ambassador in Moscow, came up and called on him. But other than that it was not difficult at all. We saw the whole range of people.

Q: Were you continuing your practice of going out and going to these lectures?

HURWITZ: Yes. Sometimes I went three times a day.

Q: I have been interviewing Gary Matthews who said he picked up the idea from you. Did you see a change in the environment of these lectures?

HURWITZ: Yes. Some of them were completely public, some were not. I went into the Army Club, for example, on a number of them and finally I was asked not to come. They were quite frank, and as time went on became much more frank. For example, I went to this army lecture in the officers' club and the lecture was on discipline, the whole atmosphere in the army. What was said would never have been said unless it was really tightly controlled. They were complaining about their terrible raising system, the way the non-coms treat...

Q: It really did not help the discipline of the Soviet army to continue that....

HURWITZ: They were talking about religious activities in the army which they didn't like. There was a frankness there. At one lecture, really an open lecture, you bought tickets to it, the lecturer was complaining that attendance in church in Lenin Oblast, which is the city and the

area around it, out numbers all sporting events, all plays and theater events over the course of a year. The most eye opening lecture was by the economics editor of *Literaturnaya Gazetta* from Moscow, who came up from Leningrad and spoke at the Writers Club. It was the most incredible indictment of the Soviet system that I ever heard from a Soviet in a Soviet setting. It went from A-Z about everything they had done was wrong. Marxism is a hoax. Marxism economics is a hoax. Stalin was a criminal. The reason our army stood strong at Stalingrad was because Soviet soldiers would be shot in the back if they tried to retreat. Just A-Z. I wrote a long cable on this and got a commendation on it. People were just amazed in the Agency. But, this told you where they were going. This was December, 1986 as I recall. He talked about Sakharov. He talked about a riot that had just taken place in Kazakhstan in which two Russians were killed. And stuff that was not yet getting into the press, but within another period of time it would. So, there was a distinct change in the way they approached problems.

Q: Were you able to talk to the intellectual?

HURWITZ: Oh, yes.

Q: Were they talking about a new age or was their disquiet?

HURWITZ: There was both. I think it was very unsettling for Russians. I have been amazed that the changes happened in the Soviet Union without more turmoil than we have seen. There has been almost no turmoil, except in the Caucasus, and that sort of thing. But, when you realize that not only economically was everything pulled out from under them, but also intellectually. Jettisoning the whole ideology was beginning in 1986 and had gone pretty far by 1988. So, yes, people would talk about it. Some people would be disturbed. Most people were happy.

Q: Were you able to see much happening in the universities, where often ideas bubble up from the students?

HURWITZ: Well, you know Soviet students traditionally have not been in the forefront of the dissident movement or new ideas the way they are in most other countries.

Q: Why not?

HURWITZ: I don't know. Maybe it is a stage in their lives they have not been able to break out of. Unlike American students who break out very early, they were unable to break out of the strict discipline that they had. They always seemed to be very interested in getting ahead, like we portray now our students in the '50s. That may have changed, I don't know, but I never found in my early years in Moscow and then in Leningrad, that the students were in any way in the fore front. Students with special interests might be Jewish students for example, or those people who were very interested in architecture, who had their own interests.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Jewish intellectual group? How were they pointed? Were they pointed just to get the hell out and go to the States?

HURWITZ: There were two major concerns. The first one was that the Soviets had sort of clamped down on the Jewish people getting out. Brezhnev let an awful lot go out in the '70s, but that came pretty much to an end with the Afghan war. So, when I went there the major issue was Refuseniks. Secondly, as time went on, and I mentioned to you the sort of freeing up of the atmosphere did lead to a rise of sort of home ground anti-Semitism, a movement called Pamyat, and there was a growing fear on the part of Jews in Leningrad that anti-Semitism was bubbling up. The economy at that time was in terrible shape and they felt, as in the past in other countries, they would be the scape goat. I know when I was there we had not only Pamyat meetings, but a number of incidents in Jewish cemeteries where stones were overturned. So, we were all concerned that this might develop into something serious. It really hasn't. This is an amazing thing, a very encouraging thing. But, despite all the economic turmoil throughout the Soviet Union, we have seen only a flourishing now of Jewish life. You pick up the "New York Times" and synagogues are opening, Yiddish is being taught. If that had developed the other way it would have presented us with a major human rights problems and would have been bad for the Jewish community in Leningrad.

Q: Did you have a particular brief in Leningrad?

HURWITZ: Oh, yes. That was part and parcel of US policy since the '60s that we would follow this issue and so we did. The main thing was Refuseniks.

Q: Could you explain what a Refusenik was?

HURWITZ: A Refusenik, an English word with nik tacked on, is someone who has been refused visas to leave. In my time a number of them left. One must bare in mind that Leningrad traditionally was a hard place, very backward in political terms place. A good example was this lecture I mentioned which was a complete eye opener. That guy had to come from Moscow. In fact, I wrote something shortly thereafter because it was another example of what we noticed that whenever Gorbachev wanted to push the reform line in Leningrad he had to send somebody up from Moscow to do it because the Leningrad party line organization was very conservative. Over the years our consulate had more trouble in Leningrad with officers being PNGed or officers being roughed up, than Moscow had. When I got there the atmosphere was quite good and I can't remember any incidents like that at all. But, just before I got there somebody got roughed up. Oh, somebody was PNGed while I was there. A guy who was aggressively Jewish, he has since left the Foreign Service and is very active in Jewish affairs in the States, was PNGed. He had great contacts and great Russian. But, that was an exception.

Q: What about on just the normal consular things? This was a time when more Americans were coming in. Did you have troubles with American tourists?

HURWITZ: Lots of problems. We had a small consular section, really just one officer who did consular work. There were a lot of tourists and many the kind that just got into difficulties. I don't mean sailors and people like that, but elderly people. A number of them got sick and one or two died. The other type were student groups. Their problem was usually drinking. We had one 16 year old kid who literally drank himself to death by drinking a bottle of vodka and he died. He was the only child of a divorced woman. A real tragedy. The other one was a 18 year old girl

who committed suicide by slitting her wrists and then jumping out of a fifth floor window. We had a consular officer who handled that very well.

My view on consular work is that we really should bend over backwards because this is where the rubber hits the road, probably the only contact an American citizen has with an American embassy and State Department. We had some good people who did a good job. For example, on one woman who was in the hospital, Larry, who was a political officer who spoke good Russian and the duty officer, went to the hospital to see her. This woman sent us back an article that appeared in the St. Petersburg, Florida newspaper praising the State Department and how solicitous the people were. This is the sort of thing that really counts. Tourism was big business. Boat loads of people would come in from Scandinavia. Big tours. I would talk to groups once a week.

Q: Gary Matthews was telling me that one of the problems about Leningrad was that after there would be big meetings in Moscow of American delegations they would send them off to Leningrad to see the Hermitage and all which meant on weekends he would end up escorting them around. Did you get into that?

HURWITZ: Congressional delegations required that but not too many came through. However, the tourist groups didn't require that at all.

Q: What about dealing with the Baltic republics during this time? Any changes?

HURWITZ: Yes, something had changed and I must say that I wasn't quick enough to see it. We got a note from the Estonian foreign ministry that from now on they would like to have their visas issued by the consulate in Leningrad by simply sending a note from the Estonian foreign ministry to us asking to have a visa put into a Soviet passport. Previously the visa request had come from Moscow on a Soviet ministry of foreign affairs note. I said that I didn't like this idea because I think they were just trying to have us recognize somehow the Estonian foreign ministry when our position has always been that we don't recognize forcible cooperation. Moreover, we were never suppose to deal with anything other than the cities. We were only accredited to the cities, not to the republic. In retrospect, what was probably on the way was actually an attempt on the Estonian ministry to exercise some independence from Moscow, but you could see it both ways. I took it the conservative, negative way. A positive way would have been to bring those guys in. Of course as things developed with the Baltic states during 1989-90 with students fighting and Soviet troops marching into Lithuania, this could have been a feeler along those lines. My reaction was not to have anything to do with it and we didn't.

Q: Then you left Leningrad in August 1988. Why don't we pick it up the next time after that.

HURWITZ: Great.

GARY L. MATTHEWS
Coordinator for Soviet Union Affairs

Washington, DC (1987)

Gary L. Matthews was born in Missouri in 1938. He received a bachelor's degree from Drury College in 1960, a master's degree from Oklahoma State University in 1961, Columbia University in 1969, and a master's degree in international affairs. He served in the U.S. Army from 1955-1958 and joined the Foreign Service in 1961. His career included positions in Germany, Poland, Vietnam, Malta, and Washington, DC. Mr. Matthews was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

MATTHEWS: We are in May of 1987, well, almost June.

Q: So you went where?

MATTHEWS: Just to recap, I was closing on two years at my ambassadorial post in Malta. And over a period of some months there had been incidents at our Embassy in Moscow. Naturally, since I was basically an old Soviet hand, I had followed this in great detail, and hardly missed a word that I could pick up. There had been a series of terrible problems involving the operations of our embassy in Moscow, and as it turned out subsequently, other operating problems and other problems in Eastern Europe. But there were two biggies which had occurred. One was the big blow-up of the "discovery" that the new office building, the new chancery building, which had been under construction for years and years in Moscow down the street from the site of our long existing old building which was a fire trap, that the new building had been determined to be totally penetrated, bugged, rendered virtually useless for any purpose whatsoever. And as a result of that...

Q: We're talking about Soviet...

MATTHEWS: ...by the KGB, by Soviet intelligence. That was brought to a head by, and I forget what specific event it was, but this is something that had been building for a long time as it subsequently proved to be the case. The other companion big scandal, and scandal would certainly be an appropriate word here, was the Marine security guard scandal which took place in '86, when it came to light that a Marine security guard, Lonetree by name, had been involved in contacts with the KGB, and it was a classic sort of use of female entrapment, etc.

Q: A honey trap.

MATTHEWS: ...honey trap, they had the very expression, and this grew as the investigation unfolded, led to the discovery and revelation that other Marine security guards had been involved, at least in lax practices of various and sundry nature. So, a long way of saying, as happens in Washington, the clouds of scandal were billowing about the State Department to say the least. So in casting about for in typical State Department tradition, for a way to handle this, it was deemed appropriate to find a special coordinator to deal with the many, many problems, and the many, many movers and shakers who were interested in having something done about those problems as soon as possible. So who knows how many people they considered in their deliberations, but I got a call from George Vest who was Director General of the Foreign Service

at the time, in early spring of 1987, when I was in Malta. He asked me if I would be willing to come back to take this position on short notice which had a lot of oomph behind it as I subsequently determined, a lot of knives behind virtually every door, which was no surprise to me, since that's the way these things happen.

Just a few specifics perhaps as stage setting for the year that then ensued: you had at least three if not four, as I recall, major high level investigations of both the embassy bugging scandal, and the Marine security guard scandal. I know that former Defense Secretary Laird chaired a very high level prestigious panel that made a major report and found a number of inadequacies, to say the least, in security practices, etc., at the embassy in Moscow. Former Defense Secretary, and secretary of other things as well, Jim Schlesinger conducted a study which was focused specifically on what one might do, one might best do, to solve the problem of the bugged new embassy building. This was more of an engineering, security study. But that also had a lot of high level oomph behind it. I dealt with the consequences of that study when I got back to Washington just in time to go with Jim Schlesinger up to the Hill for briefing of Senators, Congressmen, on it. That actually wound up having a lot to do with the very frenetic year which I then undertook. There was a third major study by the PFIAB, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, whose members believed they should be properly seized of this, and I'm sure that there was at least one or more other panels, not to mention of course the Department's own internal investigations, etc.

What to say? Sort of related to this, although deriving from other antecedents, really, was the problem of local employees. The local employees as you recall, Stu, from your own service in embassy Belgrade as well as in other posts in communist countries, were by all means trying to the extent they could to find out things, to spy on the Americans. And, of course, a lot of the internal security mechanisms which we had at our post whether it was the embassy in Moscow, or the embassies in Eastern Europe, or some of the consulates, were geared very much toward insuring much as we could that they really couldn't find out anything that useful. At any rate, I can't recall quite the exact timing, but suffice to say it was generally in this time frame, the US took some measures to tighten up the access and utilization of Soviet national employees at our embassy in Moscow, and the Soviet government retaliated, or reacted, by withdrawing all, repeat all, of the local employees in the motor pool, the carpentry shop, the plumbing, and cleaning functions, and so on and on. Essentially, embassy Moscow was left totally on its own to operate all of these services which had been done by armies, if you will, of Soviet nationals, with its own rather meager American staff. I mention all this because this was all the scenery, the architecture as they like to say now about great events, that I found when I returned to Washington. Needless to say, coming back to a number of investigations, and hearings, and finger pointing by Congress...it seemed at one point to me that virtually everyone in the Congress had something going on this. Goodness knows, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the intelligence committees, corresponding committees on the House, all had their own separate fact finding missions, reports. So a lot of what I came back into immediately was being thrown up to capitol Hill to some way, somehow, try to assure these outraged members of Congress that something would be done to get a handle on this.

Q: Could you give a little background about, as you saw it at that time, the antecedents of getting a new embassy, and how we conducted that? That would be a good place to start.

MATTHEWS: I can, and the reason I can do it with some degree of precision is that one of the major things which was done, and which I also paid a lot of attention to as soon as I got back, was the need to see what the dimensions of these terrible problems were...a look back to see just what the antecedents, what the origins of all this were. It started with the agreement for the construction of new embassy sites. This of course was reciprocal. We needed a new embassy in Moscow, the Soviets needed a new embassy in Washington. The antecedents of this went back to the early summits between President Nixon and Communist Party General Secretary Brezhnev. It may have been, I believe, the 1972 summit which actually produced the agreement for the exchange of sites. There was controversy surrounding this from the very beginning because the US gave to the Soviet Union the Mount Alto site in Washington, DC, which as you know, Stu, is one of the relatively few high ground areas in Washington.

Q: For someone who doesn't know, its just below the National Cathedral on Wisconsin Boulevard. It's up high, and you'll explain why that's important.

MATTHEWS: The site for the new American embassy in Moscow was prime real estate. There was no question of that, but it was lower in elevation by some considerable degree than the Soviet site. This led to subsequent criticisms of the stupidity of the deal. And I have an anecdote in that regard. This has to do with electronic intelligence gathering which it is said was conducted by the Soviet Union in its installations, and it is alleged that US embassies engaged in this as well.

Q: At line of site of course, the higher up you are, the more you can beam at things.

MATTHEWS: And that had a lot to do with the technology of the 1960s-'70s. In more recent times as technology has become ever more sophisticated, these concerns are somewhat diminished. But at the time it was red hot. So you might say in that sense the situation, the clock started ticking way back when the ink went on that agreement before ever a spade of earth was turned in either Moscow, or Washington.

At some point in the '70s the Soviet construction organization, a totally Soviet government controlled and operated organization began to clear the site in Moscow. As I say, it was just down from where our present embassy is located. It was, and is, a large site, it was some ten to twelve acres as I recall. Much of it by the way consists of town house type units, plus a huge cafeteria, gym, storage rooms, etc., and at the very head of all of that is this massive ten-story chancery building, extremely massive in terms of size, heaviness of construction materials, etc. So Soviet workmen, including to be sure full time members of the KGB, would have been involved in the clearing and excavation of the site itself as time went on, and the actual construction began...of course, you put in your footings, bearing foundation, etc. That was all done by Soviet workmen, and indeed after the fact, investigations revealed that there was only very sporadic US counter intelligence surveillance of the site at any given time. Not that in the event that counted for very much because the thing that really caused the problem was that at some point in the construction process, there was a need, because the structure is so massive, to precast major concrete beams, members, spandrels...I became quite knowledgeable by the way on the whole range of construction issues. Those were all done off-site at the one, or several,

places around Moscow where the Soviet construction firm did such things. They basically did it and brought those huge members, trucked them over and little by little up went the structure. Suffice to say with literally no supervision as far as I am aware of the precasting process of those major members, beam spandrels, any and everything could and no doubt was inserted into them. By that time the Soviet government, in effect said, here we've completed the construction contract according to the specs as laid out. I can't remember the exact sequence, I know always in terms of new construction projects in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, we would have the governments prepare the structure up to a point, and then we would say that thereafter we will take care of handling those things that we wish to construct on our own, using our own American cleared workmen, often Seabees, and others. But the timing on everything came sensationally to light in what you might call from the standpoint of a major scandal, the most sensation timing vis-a-vis the Marine security guard scandal. And that's why the avalanches and abuse were being heaped on the State Department, and if you will on the US government more generally because of the terrible security lapses that led to these situations, they all came together at once. So they were major problems. And in the wondrous ways of the State Department bureaucracy, not to mention the many other organizations in Washington which had a role, and sometimes a significant role in these projects, there was no one entity that other agencies felt comfortable with in trying to pull it together, determine priorities, do the footwork up on Capitol Hill, oversee the implementation, or after action reports is perhaps the better term of these studies that I mentioned earlier.

Well, I had no illusions whatsoever when I got off the phone with George Vest. This was a barrel of worms even before I knew all of the gory details. Even what I knew already from reading the wireless file while I was sitting in my sunny little office in Malta was enough to tell me that this was a mess. But hey, may you live in interesting times and I was coming up on my two years, so I said, what the heck. I came back to take this on.

What can I say? It was an extremely hectic, frenetic, even ugly year, twelve months or so in terms of all the things that I was trying to do. The Department tried to be helpful to me, certainly in terms of letting me chose an able staff, and giving me the space, and the resources, and the funds that I needed to crank up this extraordinary effort. As I look back on it, and I have reflected on this many times, I believe we came out about where I thought we should come out after some months of my initial labor. There had been a number of schemes, and here I'm talking just about what to do with the building problems.

Q: Before you get to that, could you tell what the Sergeant Lonetree thing was too? Because both these come together.

MATTHEWS: The Sergeant Lonetree, corporal Lonetree, whatever he was, thing was in fact his confessing. He had finished his assignment as a Marine security guard in Moscow and I think he transferred to Vienna to the detachment there. But through whatever means that it came to light, I simply cannot recall now, there were allegations that the KGB, the secret police, had been given entry into classified areas of the American embassy in Moscow, to wit, the communications center and such places. Obviously security people from various organizations descended upon Sergeant Lonetree, and a number of other Marines who were stationed in Moscow at the time, and months and months later it's my recollection that it was concluded that in fact neither

Sergeant Lonetree nor anyone else had opened the doors of the embassy in the dead of night to let KGB folks roam throughout these classified areas. Although during the course of my very intense year with those responsibilities, that was the operating assumption that this could have happened, and that therefore we would act as if it had happened, not without reason taking a worse case scenario in that regard. So there were lots of problems. Needless to say, I was not a sole actor, nor did I have the kind of authority to go with the kind of responsibility that would have been needed to create solutions. That this and this will be done, to take care of the problem. As in typical State Department, and indeed a typical Washington fashion, I was given that post ambiguously. All titles of “tsar” which I’ve seen given to people many times, are always with the same result. The title of coordinator really means that everyone feels free to do in-runs, and use you for carom shots where it serves their purpose. But since I was somewhat a veteran of such 7th floor politics, and other such things around Washington, it probably bothered me less than it would have someone who was less knowledgeable about all of that.

Secretary of State Shultz strongly supported my operation, along with John Whitehead who was the deputy Secretary of State. As a matter of fact, I won’t say the crisis ever cooled, but it at least didn’t become the number one compelling thing for the Secretary of State every day. Whitehead was the one to whom I would normally report, although I would give Secretary Shultz an update every few weeks as well. But I was working very closely with the assistant secretary in charge of diplomatic security, of European affairs, the foreign buildings operation, FBO, and all manner of other folks in the Administrative.

Soon after I got back to Washington, and of course my attention was totally compelled by the problems of just Moscow, at some point we began at least to sort out a few priorities. Even though there was immense work to be done, I remember a meeting with Secretary Shultz where he said, I know that our posts in Eastern Europe have bad operating problems also. We hoped nothing like the Moscow thing. So in a sort of offhand way, my responsibilities, at least from Secretary Shultz, were expanded considerably to include our East European posts. In fact, it would have been beyond the ability of any human being, let alone one with a staff as small as I had, 5, 6, 7 people to try to handle everything for all these posts. But I like to think we did some good in terms of setting up coordinating mechanisms which by and large got them more attention.

Q: In a way there are two approaches of this thing. One is to find out who is at fault, and hang somebody out to dry. And the other one is, what are you going to do about it?

MATTHEWS: When I got back I said to the Secretary of State, and to everyone else, I said, I’m well aware that there all kinds of people here who want someone to hang. I’m not naive, I realized that that’s the way it is. And had I been naive, I would not have remained naive long because many members of Congress were delighted to have me come up so they could punch on me, and tell me just how much someone needed to hang for this. But, without any doubt in my mind then or now, my job was to try to do something about the problem, not to sit there and say, oh, this is terrible. I’m all for responsibility and people taking responsibility for their actions, but I saw most of my effort as geared to do something about it, and that’s where I in fact directed the staff effort.

The first time consuming thing was to follow through with Secretary Schlesinger, Jim Schlesinger, the results of his study. He came up with a study, and he used some very good intelligence analysts, and construction experts in the security field, to help him with his study. He came out with the recommendation that rather than demolish the present structure entirely, or chop half of it off, or three-quarters of it off, that you in effect construct an adjoining structure which would be constructed entirely with American cleared labor, etc. That would be the area that the ambassador and all other classified operations took place in. And, of course, there was and is immense respect in town for Jim Schlesinger. In presenting testimony before a Congressional committee, I accompanied him along with others needless to say, but I was always introduced as the person who was going to follow through and make sure these problems are taken care of, by God! Jim Schlesinger, of course, was always asked, as indeed I was, how could something like this have happened? How? And early on he quoted Napoleon, if I'm not wrong, as having said of some such terrible scandal situation back during the Napoleonic era, that there are limits to rascality, but there are no limits to stupidity. So I found this actually not a bad line to use myself subsequently. Oh, goodness sakes, there was finger pointing everywhere, and every which way between individuals, between government departments, between branches of government. But little by little, not that I had a heck of a lot of time, I set up a structure. We commissioned a very focused engineering study of options of what we could do to the existing building. This was without prejudice I hasten to add to Secretary Schlesinger's recommendation about the separate structure. But as I recall, several mover-shaker committee chairmen on Capitol Hill said look again at what we can do to the present structure. So we commissioned a very, very detailed study. I believe it was by BDM, a major Washington area contractor who has a lot of government contracts. And they came up with several options. They looked at tearing down the structure entirely, this massive ten-story building, and excavating to sever any and all cables, and then partial deconstruction. A new word appeared in our lexicon, deconstruction, we used it all the time. And in the event we made recommendations to Congressional committees, to the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, just about everyone who had any stick in this at all. And over the course of some months I managed to forge an inter-agency consensus on presenting to the Congress a recommendation that we go for something that came to be known Top Hat, which was to deconstruct the top several floors of the embassy structure, and then rebuild using state-of-the-art, state of technology methods and procedures, our own secure area. This ran into predictable opposition from those, especially in Congress...well, almost entirely in Congress, who wanted the building totally torn down, and excavated. We ran into opposition from them, and on one committee side, a very powerful committee chairman, we ran into opposition because he didn't think that we really needed to do much of anything. He didn't see why you couldn't just use the building and watch what you say, he finally characterized it that way. So there ensued an impasse which went on for several years, well past my retirement. And only in recent years, say in the last two or three years, did they finally come around, after all the passions had pretty much cooled in terms of political feelings about it...I don't mean cooling of the sense that something good needed to be done to solve the problems, they came back to the recommendation that essentially you go with Top Hat, you lop off the top floors, and rebuild.

I might add in all this, that it was extremely complicated, a complex matrix because throughout this whole period, even going well back before the scandals broke, the US side had insistently, and properly so, said that the Soviet Union could not use its new chancery site, which it had already constructed, that building was already in place on Mount Alto...

Q: With its own workers?

MATTHEWS: Partially with its own workers, but they would use American workers for some things, but they were very closely supervised. The Soviet embassy people would, of course, use American contractors for certain things, major casting, etc., the concrete trucks would come in from wherever firm, but the Soviet embassy counterintelligence security people were always very much on top of this. In other words, they were doing it the way it should have been done on the other side, you might say, by our people in Moscow. I don't know how long construction had been finished, and handsomely so I might say on the new Soviet chancery on Mount Alto. Now, most of our construction on the ten-twelve acre site in Moscow was residential, and commissary, gym, storage, etc., about which there was no controversy. You assumed that obviously they had put listening devices in that too. Similarly, the Mount Alto site contains many, many residential units. So at some point, because we had terrible space problems in Moscow, we had cut the deal that the Soviet embassy people could move into their residential units at Mount Alto, and we correspondingly moved into our residential units at that new site in Moscow. But the chanceries remained unoccupied.

So coming back to more recent times, sometime in the last two or three years, '93, '94, '95, the Russian government now, I think this is the end of the Soviet Union, in effect cut a deal that said, you, the American government can have the entire property, which is a large expanse of property which lies between the present old American embassy in Moscow, and the new ten acre site, and do with it as you wish. We said, okay in view of this we will now let you move in to your new chancery building. We, of course, are not going to move into the chancery building in Moscow because only now would they be even getting underway with the major reconstruction of that building, which will cost tens of millions of dollars.

Q: While this was going on, what was the reaction of the Soviets? I mean, during the time you were involved. Did they play any part?

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes. They were somewhat between bemused, and amused. Chortling is actually a very good description. The reason I had some insights into this is, I made some incredible like ten or eleven trips to Moscow in a nine month period, which is definitely more travel than one would care to have. And most of those trips to Moscow involved meetings with Soviet officials about what we were insisting on, etc. I mean, there was certainly never any question of their being arrogant or critical because we had essentially caught them with their hands in the cookie jar. We, however, of course were the ones responsible for making it so easy for them to put their hands in the cookie jar all the time. In effect, the exchanges with the Soviet officials came down to do whatever you feel you need to do. We delivered our part of the bargain, we constructed the embassy according to the specs, gave it to you and you say there's some problem with devices. We don't know anything about that. Obviously they weren't fessing up to...

Q: You're a child of the Eastern European Bureau, and yet you were coordinating and trying to do something, but there couldn't help but be as you got into it sort of blame going around. What was your impression of how EUR/SOV or whatever it was called in those days, responded to this

thing?

MATTHEWS: These were my friends and I'd known them for years, of course. But they were very tender about the issue of being by-passed or having blame attached to them, and goodness knows the people then in charge of the Bureau, or of Soviet affairs, the office within the Bureau, had no role in the decisions and in the actions which led to these unfortunate events. There was never any question of that. I found, as is almost always the case, that although the various bureaus in the State Department said sure, they thought it was a good thing to have a coordinator appointed to coordinate these issues... that when it came down to those things that inevitably I had to do which involved my impinging on their turf, they did not like that. I expected that. This is hardly worth mentioning. A lot of my long, long days and nights was spent in bureaucratic engagement to pull parties together to do this, to do that, to not do this, not do that, toward what I hoped was the common good. And I'd say that in all of this, needless to say there were a number of agencies involved and I spent a lot of effort coordinating with them, and I got generally quite good cooperation. If I had to characterize it looking back, I would say I got more cooperation and support in the initial blush to much of what I was doing from other agencies, including the intelligence agencies, than I often did from the respective bureaus in the State Department which were involved in this. That, of course, doesn't surprise me since that's the way the State Department has operated for a long time in terms of the fiefdoms, if you will, that prevail. I might add that in all this, I think I noted earlier, that I worked directly under the Secretary of State, George Shultz, and then some months after I got into the job, most of my at least weekly direction, came from John Whitehead, the deputy Secretary. But I was actually part of the immediate staff of the Under Secretary for Management, Ron Spiers. As I think I also noted, everyone gave me great support. I, of course, had a lot to do with the Director General's office, personnel, and others as we looked into what we could do to handle the very immediate concerns of giving our people some support and help out there at embassy Moscow, and looking a bit ahead as to whether we might want to follow that model, or something close to it elsewhere in Eastern Europe. But since the primary immediate crisis was embassy Moscow, and consulate general Leningrad, my old post, that was where we concentrated our efforts. I certainly was not the one responsible for the idea, but someone came up with the idea, which I did help implement, to go to...do you know the major engineering contractor, PA&E? They were in Vietnam.

Q: Oh yes, the Pacific Architects and Engineers, Morris & Newson were the two big ones in Vietnam.

MATTHEWS: That's right, and I remember the PA&E folks from Vietnam, they did our road graders, in fact, they were brave enough, they would actually go there and plow where we thought there were mines, and bang them off for us. A bit above and beyond..., but I digress. Suffice to say that PA&E bid on it and won a major contract to provide support people, drivers, plumbers, carpenters, electricians, you name it, to embassy Moscow. These were Americans and of course you can imagine the bumps and grinds and problems that ensued in the first part of this, but little by little over quite some months, the good people among them, including some remarkably good young people who had come out of American universities with degrees in Russian, who I guess had some affinity for sawing boards and doing plumbing tasks. They would show up on the contracts, be retained, others who were critically unsuited, God only knows what they thought they were getting into, they would be removed. So that was sort of our bridge which

worked at least as a vital Band Aid which worked until such time as, and I forget what year it was, it was some years later...well, of course, I had retired, that the two sides, the Soviet and American sides, quietly came to an agreement that there would be selective return of national employees, with appropriate safeguards. But that added a tumultuous note because it was a time that you were trying to deal with all of these other horrible things. I mean, you had dust, dirt, crud, all over embassy Moscow which until you got somebody there to wield mops...the ambassador at the time, Jack Matlock, he and embassy counselors would put in their turn as bucket brigades, swabbing down the steps of the embassy.

Q: I've heard two things, sort of in the corridors, and I didn't follow this very closely, one was the accusation that Nixon and Kissinger were in such a hurry to get some sort of an agreement going, that they sort of brushed aside security concerns when this first happened. And the other was, since it happened on Arthur Hartman's watch, particularly the Lonetree thing that he didn't do enough. Did you get involved in either of these?

MATTHEWS: I'm very aware of both, and my very firm view based on having had quite a bit to do with the issues, is that when it comes to the first, if that is correct, that political considerations rode roughshod over the terms which could and should have been made much tighter, much better, and I believe it to be the case that my dear friend, and boss on several occasions, Walter Stoessel, was the assistant secretary for European Affairs during the 1972 summit, and in particular, went to the Secretary of State and said that he did not believe that the agreement should be signed. And my understanding, based on the things to which I am privy, is that he was instructed over his protest, to sign the agreement.

Q: The Secretary at that time would have been...was it Henry Kissinger at that time?

MATTHEWS: I believe that to be the case. With regard to the second, Ambassador Hartman, and his very fine staff, I really believe that to be unfounded. Arthur Hartman and the others had all been capably managing, running, embassy Moscow. They were simply the ones there when it all broke. Certainly, when it comes to the "discovery" of the bugged new embassy building, that had been going on for years. As far as the Marine security guard thing, these kinds of problems could have happened at other posts. Obviously in the wake of this, there was a lot of pulling up of socks and what have you, etc., as there always is after a flap. But in my own view, and I have thought about this a lot, I really wouldn't consider that Ambassador Hartman and his staff deserve any blame for something that could have happened anywhere.

Q: Well, out of this episode, you obviously already had experience, but this is when your feet were put to the blow torch, what was your impression of the role of Congress in this? What did you come away with?

MATTHEWS: Oh, Congress was interested in scapegoating, Congress was interested in being seen politically to be, by God, doing something about these building and administrative things which they normally wouldn't have cared a fig for. In general, even though there were some people in Congress who were supportive and helpful, I mean who wanted to be supportive and helpful, many of them were posturing. Most of them were posturing. That particularly was the case with respect to virtually all of the key committee chairmen who were involved. There were

a couple of exceptions to that. But that was clearly the case. For years before that, and God knows for years since that, the State Department has often had poor relationships with members of Congress, and with Congress as an institution. And clearly a lot of the hostility and downright meanness that I observed and encountered while I was doing this job was part of that larger neuralgia.

Q: So, why don't we stop at this point, and we'll pick this up after you left this coordinating job. Unless there is anything else you want to add, we can put it on here, and you can talk about it the next time. Is there anything else we should talk about do you think?

MATTHEWS: That's probably about it. About all that's left to talk about is my retirement. I did like someone once advised us to do in Vietnam, I declared victory and left.

PHILIP C. BROWN
Counselor for Press & Cultural Affairs, USIS
Moscow (1987-1990)

Mr. Brown was born in Massachusetts and raised primarily in Pennsylvania. He was educated at College of Wooster (Ohio) and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving with the Voice of America, in 1965 he joined the United States Information Agency Foreign Service (USIS), where he served several assignments at its headquarters in Washington DC. His foreign posts include Dakar, Douala, Yaoundé, Paris, Vienna and Moscow, where he served twice. At these posts his assignments ranged from Assistant Branch Public Affairs Officer to Counselor for Information, Press and Cultural Affairs. Mr. Brown was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012.

Q: You went to the Soviet Union from when to when?

BROWN: My first tour was 1978 to 1981. So this was the summer of 1987.

We drove down to Italy, visited our daughter who was in school in Florence and doing a summer program there. When we said good bye to her, we basically headed off by road to Moscow. We drove all the way across Germany, visited friends in Lubeck and took a boat from Travemunde across the Baltic Sea to Helsinki. It was mid-summer, a lot of daylight in the summer. Drove from Helsinki across the border. With that we were back in the Soviet Union. It was symbolically meaningful for us getting back in the Soviet Union. Stopped in Leningrad, met with people at the consulate there.

We met with a young USIA officer. There was a branch public affairs officer in Leningrad and an assistant branch public affairs officer, a young fellow named Ian Kelly, who was there with his wife and small children. It wasn't too long after that that Ian Kelly was transferred to Moscow and became a key member of my staff there. Today Ian Kelly is the ambassador in Vienna to CSCE. It didn't take much brain power early on to see that Ian Kelly was a rising star.

Then we drove from Leningrad to Moscow. I remember stopping along the way. There was a lady along the road selling flowers or tomatoes or something. We stopped and had a little chat with her, told her we were diplomats, how astounded she was. She was of a certain age, her saying to us “no more war, no more war” in Russian. It was that spontaneous emotion that came from Russians out in the villages. We arrived at the embassy as I had timed it late on a Friday afternoon. I wanted to get there on the weekend so I didn’t have to go to work the next day. I would get in the swing of things but not right in the office.

One of the members of the P&C staff came down and saw me because I had called to say I was there. She thought I was one of the contract employees that had been hired to replace the Foreign Service nationals. She was very apologetic.

Thus we would begin our second three year assignment in Moscow, 1987 to 1990.

The question is always “how was it different, how did it compare?” It is a daunting task to try to answer that question. More generally, as I have been going through my notes, it has been a daunting task. How am I going to summarize this experience? The first three year assignment was full of activities, full of memories. The second was even more so. It was the nature of the times and it was the activity level imposed on us. I don’t have a simple checklist of items of how to compare.

Early on, we went out with some friends to a restaurant which wasn’t something you did very often there but by 1987, some little restaurants, they were called coops, were opening. At the end of the meal, we were down on Red Square and there was a demonstration by Crimean Tartars. Not a violent demonstration but people were out protesting and they were being allowed to protest. That was something we had never seen before; a protest of any sort let alone on Red Square. It set the tone and for three years and in varying ways, frequently at the embassy staff meeting the next morning, you or someone else would say “you can’t believe what I saw, what I read, the play I went to, the conversation I heard.” It was a transformative period, no question about it.

This was especially true for someone with the perspective of having been there ten years earlier and who saw people harassed and arrested. By the time we returned in 1987, André Sakharov had returned from internal exile in Gorky. He was back in Moscow. If you didn’t have perspective, things probably still looked pretty grim physically. Moscow was still a pretty dirty city; people lined up for food. The newspapers all printed the same articles especially about political subjects. Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were jammed. People did not have the freedom to travel. We had wonderful Jewish refusenik friends whom we were very close to on our first tour. They were still there waiting and their prospects for emigrating seemed little better in 1987 than they did in 1981 when we had last seen them.

Q: What was there at that time when you got back, what was their relationship to the powers that be?

BROWN: Our Jewish refusenik friends?

It was pretty much the same it had always been. Yuri was still working as a janitor at a maternity hospital, hired just because they needed those kinds of people and his wife would teach English at home. Their daughter, whom we had known as a very small girl, was now 11 years old. We quickly set about pushing their case. We had a lot of friends in the press corps and we would say to them, "Would you like to meet an interesting Jewish refusenik family?"

That was too good an offer to turn down and one woman in particular, Ann Blackman who worked for Time magazine, reported regularly on them. Her husband, Mike Putzel, was bureau chief for the Associated Press. Ann did a lot of stories with these particular friends. It was a year later, right after the Reagan visit, that they received permission to emigrate.

Back to your question, when we returned in 1987, there were many refuseniks and many people who wanted to change their lifestyle but couldn't. So I use the old cliché about glass half full, glass half empty. It depended a little bit upon what you were comparing it to; for the most part, right from the beginning, the comparisons that we made were "wow, gee. Something has really changed here. Things are changing."

I will say right away if anyone ever tells you that he knew at that point that the Soviet Union's days were numbered and that in four years the Soviet Union would exist no longer, ask them to show you where they put that down in writing in 1987.

Q: You are the public affairs officer. What did you see as your priorities or opportunities at the time of your arrival?

BROWN: Let me go to one little detail here. Moscow was the only place in the Foreign Service world where we didn't use the term USIS, U.S. Information Service. We referred to the section as press and culture or P&C.

I was replacing Ray Benson. Ray had had two four-year tours as public affairs officer. He was completing his four-year assignment and one of the last big activities on Ray's watch was a visit by Charles Wick, USIA director. This was symbolic of what was happening.

Mr. Wick had called on I don't know how many people in the Soviet hierarchy, in government, radio and television and the rest, and he had gone back and written follow up letters and now action had to be taken on those follow up letters. I think there were a dozen of them.

You asked me what my assignment was. One major part of my assignment was following up and implementing the ideas in Mr. Wick's letters. We were working on those letters for much of my three years or much of the time that Mr. Wick was still in office.

For another, I was working for Jack Matlock. Ambassador Jack Matlock had been back for about a year. He saw the enormous opportunities and he was a demanding taskmaster. He had his own agenda so I had Mr. Wick's letters and Ambassador Matlock's agenda. He wanted, for example, to set up a monthly lecture at Spaso House. This would involve bringing a noted figure from Washington, having that person lecture around a dinner. This was modeled on something he had

seen elsewhere.

Mind you too, we were doing all of this without any Foreign Service nationals. They had all been withdrawn, gotten rid of and they were only gradually being replaced by contractors under the title Pacific Architect and Engineers, PAE.

Q: I knew them in Vietnam when I was there.

BROWN: They were doing a few of the little tasks. We had none in our operation.

My title was Counselor of Embassy for Press and Cultural Affairs. By the way, it translated easily into Russian. I had responsibility for the whole press operation and all of the cultural activities.

I had previously been press attaché. I determined that I was not going to be a super press attaché. I had enjoyed that job very much in both Moscow and Paris but I was going to let the information officer/press attaché do that job and not constantly look over his shoulder. The model for me was Paris. When I went there as press attaché, the PAO was Jack Hedges and Jack in a previous assignment had been press attaché. I very much appreciated that he let me do the job rather than looking over my shoulder all the time.

I also mentioned last time that USIA had created a special office, D/R, which was Russia reporting directly to the director headed by a fellow named Greg Guroff. Greg had serviced in Moscow as cultural affairs officer and he had his own agenda, his own programs that he was pushing over and above those that normally came out of USIA -- exhibits, America magazine, speakers, cultural exchanges, IV program.

So we had an unending list of assignments. This was 1987. That year, Gorbachev would go to Washington and in 1988 Reagan would come to Moscow. A presidential visit, especially given my familiarity with the White House press office and the fact that they knew me, was also going to be a very time consuming activity.

We not only had a presidential visit but just about anybody and everybody in Washington wanted to come to Moscow to see what was going on; not only government officials but people in the private sector as well. So we had an unending stream of prominent personalities.

An example of the expanding area of activity was something called the Chautauqua exchange. This had begun in Jurmala, Latvia a couple of years earlier as a meeting of citizens from both countries. It was stimulated by the program in Chautauqua, New York. It was blossoming and was going to become an annual affair. I had been back in Moscow less than two months when I returned to the U.S. with a huge Soviet delegation to Chautauqua for the meeting there. Some people in the embassy questioned our involvement. "Do you really want to get that close? Remember, these are still Soviets, still Communist Party members." I argued that it was an opportunity I should not miss to accompany a cross-section of 250 Soviets going to the United States on a charter flight. So I did. I went back with them. So did Rebecca Matlock, the ambassador's wife.

I remember the flight on a Soviet-built Ilyushin-86 aircraft. You fly from Moscow to Shannon, Ireland. You refuel, you fly from Shannon to Gander, Newfoundland and you refuel and you fly from there to New York City.

We were hosted that evening at the apartment of George Soros on the Upper East Side of New York. We were a pretty tired group but I went. There must have been 200 people, more than even George Soros' apartment could comfortably accommodate. I was seated at a table for theater people including some Russian actors and Americans such as Colleen Dewhurst and the wife of Jason Robards.

After a full day in New York City, where I was joined by both of my daughters, we went to Chautauqua for five days of meetings – ABC did its Good Morning America show live from Chautauqua -- and then on to Washington and a barbecue at the home of Esther Coopersmith.

Many of the contacts I made were long lasting. I remember talking to a man who was in the information department of the Central Committee. I said "I hope we will be able to continue this contact when we get back to Moscow." He said, "Well, of course. Why not?"

I will give you several reasons why not, I said. I know from my past experience, I have had contact with Russians outside the Soviet Union but when we go back, you are operating under very different rules. I was recalling the Vienna summit meeting of 1979 where I talked to journalists and party officials who said "let's talk now because when we go back to Moscow, I won't be able." They were that candid about it.

This was a man named Leonid Dobrohotov. He said in so many words, test me and I did. He became an invaluable contact in the information department of the CPSU.

Back to Moscow (another Aeroflot charter with stops in Gander and Shannon), I could go on and on about my duties and my responsibilities. What we lacked were the resources. We simply didn't have the tools to do all the things that were being asked to do. People would come out and say "I've got an idea." I would respond: "We have no shortage of ideas. What we need is help in implementing ideas and perhaps weeding out the good ideas from the bad ones."

The one thing I had was a really outstanding staff of younger officers. I sometimes say it was as if P&C Moscow had had about six or seven first round draft picks in the NFL.

I may as well name several of them and I want to make sure I don't forget people. Every one had some previous involvement with Russia, either living there as a child, studying there or whatever. In the press office, there were two assistant information officers, Margo Squire and Mike Hurley. In the cultural section, we had assistant cultural affairs officers Rosemary DiCarlo, Ian Kelly, Susan Robinson and a young woman who came out for a year named Ann Lowendahl.

These people were devoted, hardworking and so capable. I am happy to say all of them went on to very successful careers.

What I did best of all was to give them the freedom to do their jobs. I was able to stand between them and the ambassador and the other people who had ideas on how they should do their jobs, to provide a buffer. I represented our section to the ambassador, to Washington, to the visiting firemen and let my youngest staff, the assistant cultural affairs officers and assistant information officers do their jobs and they did them extremely well.

Q: Let's sort of take apart some of the elements. What about the press? How had it changed or had it changed?

BROWN: When I was there the first time as information officer/press attaché, it was much different from what I would experience in Paris. Paris was a much more representative press attaché job. By 1987, we were still spending a lot of time with the American press corps and to some extent still defending their working rights under the Helsinki Convention, looking out for working conditions for journalists.

The Soviets, however, were beginning to loosen up a bit, not in a Western sense. We could work with the Soviet media. One of the first activities I recall was the editor of Ogonyok magazine, Vitaly Korotich, doing an interview with Ambassador Matlock. It was an interview that was fairly done. Ogonyok was a weekly magazine that was doing some very interesting stuff. They were publishing materials on the Stalin era and all of a sudden, people were lining up on the day of the week when Ogonyok came out. For them to do an interview with Ambassador Matlock was symbolically important. Little by little, both the press and the audio visual media gave us opportunities to get our point across.

Mr. Wick was responsible for something called U.S./USSR information talks. We had bilateral meetings in Washington and Moscow on an annual basis. Those talks and the preparation for them was also extremely time consuming, extremely labor intensive. We, of course, would push the argument to the Soviets that there was still an imbalance, that you have so much more access to American public opinion than we have to public opinion in the Soviet Union.

That was the case but notwithstanding, we were getting an increasing number of opportunities to have our point of view put across in the press. I myself did some interviews, not on high political subjects but quite often on the life of a diplomat.

But it was up to the political section, I didn't get involved, to sit down every day and read the press and analyze it for nuance.

Let me turn to something I did right after Moscow when I went to the Fletcher School as a diplomat-in-residence. I asked myself: "When I look back on my Moscow experience, what jumps out at me? What really strong memories do I have?"

They certainly included the visit by Ronald Reagan. The President of the United States comes and you are at the airport and shake his hand or you're in the Kremlin when he says goodbye to Gorbachev. That's an indelible memory. Or when your wonderful Jewish friends finally get permission to emigrate, that's an indelible memory. I traveled, continued to travel; went to all the republic capitals. Those are very strong memories.

But the common theme that jumped out at me -- and I thought I might talk about it today -- was music, particularly events that left indelible memories not simply for the music but for what they seemed to be saying about politics and the changing climate. So I thought I would highlight some of those moments.

Even before I got to Moscow, I heard that someone named Billy Joel was going to be performing there so I went to my daughters and said "who is Billy Joel?" I remember my daughter Sarah saying, "Dad. You don't know who Billy Joel is?"

So I went out and got an audio cassette of this rock performer named Billy Joel. Indeed he was giving two concerts in Moscow right after we got there, within a week of our arrival. I went to the ambassador and asked if he wanted to go to the July 27 concert?

I don't think Ambassador Matlock ever said no to anything as quickly as he did to that. He said, "No. You go. You represent us. I do not want to be involved."

I went and it was an experience. Billy Joel performing in one of the stadiums built for the 1980 Olympics, 20,000 people, packed. The Russians knew who Billy Joel was and it didn't take much advertising, a few posters and word of mouth to attract an audience. When we got there, we had a couple of extra tickets. I remember giving them to some teenage girls and they were delighted.

The thing I recall about the concert is not so much the music, although that was part of it, but Billy Joel's ability to master an audience with a little hand-held microphone. He walked around the place, amidst 20,000 people and a lot of security; by the way, they were a little nervous when he got off the stage and walked around. I think a lot of the Soviets were as impressed by the technology as they were by the music. But I will never forget Billy Joel singing "For the Longest Time," one of his signature tunes. Anytime I hear Billy Joel singing, I am transported back to that concert.

It was loud. I remember my wife put cotton in her ears. We were sitting way in the back. I was representing the embassy but hardly. I wasn't in any prominent position. Billy Joel was there with his wife, Christie Brinkley. The second night, I think, he was unable to really rev up the audience the way he wanted to and he started smashing the piano. You read some newspaper articles and you will see that was picked up by the American press more than the concert itself.

The important thing was that Russians were allowing in an American rock performer. Up to that point, rock was considered decadent. The other part of it was that 20,000 people filled that hall each of two nights for Billy Joel. To me that was as much of a barometer as anything of change.

Less than two months later, September of 1987, the Empire Brass Quintet out of Boston came, a really high quality cultural musical group, five brass musicians. Their first stop was Vilnius, Lithuania. This was one of the first, if not the first, American performing arts group to go to the Baltic States. I arranged with the assistant cultural affairs officer, Rosemary DiCarlo, that we would attend the concert. But on Friday afternoon, we got a call from the Foreign Ministry

saying we couldn't go because there were no hotel rooms. We had permission, we had the plane tickets. I said, "Rosemary, we are going" so we got up early Saturday morning, flew to Vilnius and went to the hotel. No, there weren't any rooms but by the end of the day we had worked it out.

This concert wasn't 20,000 people; this was maybe 200 people in a small hall but they were just blown away, to coin a phrase, by the skills of the Empire Brass quintet. The scene afterwards was remarkable. Young musicians came up and wanted to see instruments. The Russians and the Lithuanians have a great history of music but they didn't have access to this quality instruments; the trombone, tuba. The American musicians were very, very accommodating, signing autographs, giving out scores and that kind of thing.

A week later, they arrived in Moscow and they were pretty worn out. They had been to various cities on an itinerary put together by a Soviet concert agency, Goskoncert, and were now in a dreary Soviet hotel. We were living on the compound in a very nice townhouse that had three levels. I asked the group if they would like to come by on Friday night for pizza and beer. I hardly had the words out of our mouth; were they ever happy to come by for pizza and beer.

And we said if they needed a place to practice, they could use our place. So they came and from our three level townhouse, you could hear tuba on one floor, trombone on another, trumpet from another floor. I loved it. We saw them here in Boston several years later and they remembered us well and favorably. They did a couple of other great concerts in Moscow. It was one of the first times we did a reception on the compound.

Because of the Lonetree scandal and the spying scandal, it was pretty obvious we were not going to be working in the new office building. We were going to be consigned to the wretched old converted apartment building up on the Ring Road for all three years, terrible working conditions. Right outside our bedroom, they were doing constant work of some sort, looking for microphones in what should have been a modern new office building. And the work would go on all night with noise and bright lights.

But we did have the compound which included the snack bar, the school, an auditorium, a garage, apartments and the townhouses, much better living arrangements. On the first assignment, we were happy to be away from the embassy in a Soviet apartment building. This time it was much to my advantage to be within walking distance of my office and to have a townhouse where I could invite visitors to stay.

By now we had a young woman, Sara Fenander, living with us. We called her a nanny but she wasn't there to take care of small children. She was there to help us out with representational events. I'll talk more about her later.

The big question now was how we would get Soviets to our townhouse for representational events. Things had so totally turned around. It used to be you had to escort Soviets into your apartment building past their militia man. Now it seemed I was going to have to check with American security if I wanted to bring Russians onto the compound. The Soviet militia would let them come in but was I going to be violating rules, our own security rules?

Fortunately it wasn't a long distance from the gate to our front door and we were able to escort people in pretty easily.

The Empire Brass provided the first occasion for us to invite some Soviets guests after the concert. We did and they came. Eventually, we hosted many, many events, they came in great numbers and we were able to manage. But initially, it was nerve wracking for us to think that all these years, we had been fighting the Soviets so we could have Russians in to our apartment. Were we now going to be fighting American security? We won the battle.

By the way, another American who happened to be in town at the time the Empire Brass Quintet was Fred Rogers who did the programs on television for kids, Mr. Rogers. Mr. Rogers was there on his own and my wife ran into him and went swimming with him.

Mr. Fred Rogers and staff people came to our reception that night with the Empire Brass Quintet. I have to guess that he was out there because he saw and heard that things were opening up in the Soviet Union. They had always had excellent programs on TV for children. It was a very non-political area to exploit and that is probably what brought him to Moscow at that time.

In November of 1987, we got the word the famous violinist, Yehudi Menuhin would be performing in Moscow. He had Russian Jewish connections. He had performed in Moscow a few years earlier and had raised eyebrows there because he criticized the human rights record and here he was coming back in 1987, performing.

We went to the concert at Tchaikovsky Hall. Americans have trouble understanding that in the Soviet Union, a poet could fill a stadium of 20,000 people and there would still be people outside struggling to get tickets. That was the nature of society there. This Menuhin concert was sold out. I got tickets through connections. I went back stage afterwards to greet him in the name of the American Embassy and he handed me a list and said these were people he would like to have at a reception.

I went to the ambassador and even though he was going to be in Geneva and there was some question about whether Menuhin was an American, a Swiss or a British citizen, he agreed that we could host a reception at Spaso House nine days later.

The only way to get these invitations delivered was to spend half of Saturday driving around Moscow personally delivering them to people like the sister of Rostropovich, to the ballet dancer Maya Plisetskaya and her husband Rodion Shchedrin. A colleague of mine in the embassy delivered the invitation to Andrei Sakharov and his wife.

Then there were people whose names I didn't recognize, the parents of a young Russian named Mikhail Rud; he had emigrated and was playing piano in Paris at the time. I finally found their apartment in some distant part of Moscow and knocked on the door. A lady came and then a man came wearing only an undershirt over his pants and I said, in Russian of course, "Lidya Petrovna, My name is Philip Brown. I'm from the American Embassy." I remember she stepped back as if she had been struck by a bolt of lightning saying "*Bozha Moy*" or "My God." I

explained the circumstances. When they picked themselves up off the floor and I handed them the invitation, they actually believed it.

That Sunday evening, these well known figures from the Moscow musical world along with André Sakharov and Elena Bonner and the British, Swiss and Dutch ambassadors came to Spaso House. For Sakharov it was the first time, perhaps the only time, he was ever at the American ambassador's residence.

There was a couple named Oleg Kagan and Natasha Gutman; one was a violinist and the other a cellist. We knew them from their performances. They walked into the room and Menuhin was sitting on the couch. They got down on the floor, sat there like children at his knee and talked about how they had heard his performances, his records when they were growing up and studying music and it was as if they were in the presence of their mentor and role model.

Before the evening was over, the African American singer Barbara Hendricks and the composer Sarah Caldwell also showed up. It was really a very touching and memorable evening.

Q: This sort of thing must have really touched you, didn't it?

BROWN: It did. We walked out of that evening with a special feeling, knowing that this was one of the events we would never forget. And by the way, from the reception, we went to the second half of a concert at Tchaikovsky Hall featuring the violist Yuri Bashmet playing a new work by a Russian composer named Edison Denisov. An artist friend of ours, Boris Birger, introduced us to Denisov afterward. It sometimes seemed as if it was non-stop but it was rewarding.

I knew that events such as the Menuhin reception were having an impact on the elite, the cultural elite; the people who attended had all gone out and talked about this evening, this experience. And I would have an opportunity to mention it to my official contacts.

In April, 1988, we had a visit from Yo-Yo Ma, who was even then a world famous cellist. He gave a special concert at Spaso House. This again was where Ambassador Matlock was such a wonderful ambassador to have because he would offer Spaso House. We would invite in an elite group of people to hear Yo-Yo Ma perform. Then he did a couple of public concerts.

You think of the Soviet Union as being isolated, cut off from the rest of the world but you didn't have to explain to people who Yo-Yo Ma was. They knew he was one of the world's great cellists even back then.

What I especially remember about his visit was that he was there on Russian Easter weekend and after his concert, he went with us to one of the cathedrals just to be part of the mass of people outside or inside the church observing the Russian Orthodox Easter.

My wife mentioned to him that we had a daughter in school in Boston and that she would be there in the spring. Yo-Yo Ma lives in Winchester. I don't have the details but when she went there in the spring and there was a concert, there were two tickets waiting for her thanks to Yo-Yo Ma. He was, and still is, a genuinely gracious, friendly human being.

President Reagan came in June of 1988. One little vignette in connection with President Reagan's visit. Anyplace where he was going to be making an appearance, whether it was the university, the Writers' Club or Red Square, the White House had a team assigned to that location. My staff was all divided up and I was working with the White House press office.

We had an assistant cultural affairs officer, a woman named Susan Robinson married to the consul general and I assigned her to work with Mrs. Reagan's people. Susan came to me one day saying this was sexism, that just because she was a woman working in cultural section didn't mean that she should work with the First Lady, that she should be out among the guys in one of these other spots, the Writers' Union or whatever.

I said, "Susan, I hear what you are saying but really it is not sexism and we have to have somebody work with Mrs. Reagan's staff and you will have opportunities that you won't believe."

Well, the visit came and went and a lot of us who were assigned to various spots did a lot of standing around and were upstaged as always by the White House staff. By contrast, Susan Robinson told me she got to go to the bowels of the Tretyakov Museum to see art works and icons that were never made available to the general public. She got to go to musical and theater events that were specially put on for Mrs. Reagan. Her ego was assuaged and she had opportunities the rest of us didn't have.

They did a special gala ballet at the Bolshoi for President Reagan but it coincided with a meeting arranged by the State Committee on Education and Mr. Wick sent me to it to represent him. I did manage to put my ticker in my wife's hands.

Right after the Reagan visit, the New York Philharmonic conducted by Zubin Mehta came to Moscow and did an opening concert in a concert hall. Then they were scheduled to do an open air concert in Gorky Park. Reagan had gone so the embassy staff cleared out. The ambassador was in Germany, the DCM had gone to the States for his son's graduation and I was the ranking person in the embassy.

For a week, I was the chargé and I went to a few cocktail parties and such. I asked the ambassador what should I do and he said "you act as if you are the chief of mission" so I rode around in the Cadillac with the flag flying, including to Gorky Park for the New York Philharmonic concert, feeling somewhat self conscious, I must say. I didn't take to the role too comfortably.

It was an outdoor concert with a little bit of rain at the beginning but by the time they played the Stars and Stripes Forever at the end, the rain had stopped symbolically. It was another big splashy American presentation with Zubin Mehta conducting half the program and a Soviet conductor, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, doing the other half. I did not get to speak to Mehta or make my presence known but I did make sure the car was there with the flag flying so they knew somebody important was in attendance.

That week was also the millennium of Christianity in Russia; 1,000 years since Christianity had come to Russia and there was a gala concert at the Bolshoi. I still have the program from that and since I was the chargé, I represented the U.S. The invitation from His Holiness Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow and all of Russia and the Holy Synod inviting us to the festival jubilee meeting on the occasion of the millennium of the baptism in Russia at the Bolshoi Theater. It was a wonderful concert that ended up with the 1812 Overture, cannons, bells and all of that.

Leading religious figures from all over the world came for this event. Billy Graham was on stage. The church had never been entirely suppressed despite what we heard about the lack of religious freedom. The hierarchy of the church was probably on pretty good terms with the hierarchy of the KGB but still, the fact that they had this splashy event was another example of the changing times. Raisa Gorbachev was in attendance.

A year later, June of 1989, Paul Simon came through on his Graceland tour. This was something he was doing with African artists including Miriam Makeba and they did a big outdoor concert in Moscow. Graceland was the name he had given to this series of concerts featuring African music.

A month later, returning for the first time in 31 years for what he called a sentimental visit, was Van Cliburn who had won the Tchaikovsky competition back in the worst days of the Cold War. He was there because in 1987, when Gorbachev came to the White House, Van Cliburn came out of retirement and did the something at the White House as part of the Gorbachev visit to the United States so Gorbachev expressed the desire that Van Cliburn would come to Moscow. His name was still very well known there.

On July 2, I went to the concert. Our house guest that night was a woman named Madeleine Albright. She was there on a USIA-sponsored speaking tour. At the time, she was a professor at Georgetown and I don't recall why but she ended up as our house guest. There was always an extra bedroom. I still have the thank you note from Madeleine Albright. The ambassador was in attendance as was Gorbachev.

This was one of these theaters that was not well maintained and before the music began, right above where Gorbachev was sitting, there was this terrific explosion. If these had been American secret service people, they would probably have thrown their bodies over him. A light bulb had blown out but other thoughts went through our mind.

At the end of the concert, the ambassador was invited back stage to talk briefly to Gorbachev, not for courtesy sake but to be informed of the death of André Gromyko, the Soviet foreign minister. Word had just come to Gorbachev that night that André Gromyko had died. Gorbachev simply referred to Andrei Andreyevich but it was clear who he was talking about.

So you had all these elements -- Van Cliburn, Van Cliburn of 31 years earlier, Van Cliburn of the Gorbachev visit to Washington, Madeleine Albright and the death of Andrei Gromyko. There were a lot of things at once.

Q: Did you get any feel from your Soviet contacts that the times were changing for them. This

must have been every disconcerting for some.

BROWN: I think for some of the older generation, we could see people who were fearful or who felt threatened by the changes. Take the case of one family we knew quite well. The oldest generation, one generation older than ourselves, were shaking their heads in disbelief and wondering if this wasn't a little bit too much too fast. But the grandson was already jumping at the opportunities for interaction with Americans and new opportunities. If it were today's world, he would be writing an app for the iPhone but then he was envisioning going into business, being an entrepreneur.

The great masses probably didn't see any great benefit. Their living conditions were still not that much improved. They were still standing in line to get food. Housing hadn't improved.

Q: This brings to mind one of the things about Russia is considered a great power but when I think about it is there anything that comes out of Russia that I would want to buy? The answer is no. Maybe if I wanted to buy a fighter plane or something like that but it just isn't an industrial power in the advanced sense but yet these are people with this tremendous mathematical and science ability. You would think that something would start stirring there.

BROWN: That has always been one of the mysteries for me. No one ever questioned their innate intelligence. They produced mathematicians and chemists, great writers, ballet dancers, sports figures but they have never manufactured a product you wanted to go out and buy. That was certainly very much the case at this time. If we had extra rubles, we'd go to the art market and buy little paintings or some of the stacking dolls or a samovar or something that might have a little bit of artistic value but there wasn't a product that I can think of that you would go and buy for its mechanical qualities.

Q: What about on the cultural side? My wife was taking Russian literature and there was a series of books that were coming out, this was in the '50s and earlier. I mean big books on Russian life and all and they were considered very good but since that time I haven't been aware of any major writer or writers. Were the Dostoyevskys only working under because they had the ___ or whatever on top of them or what?

BROWN: I am embarrassed to say I don't know much about what is happening in Russian literature these days. Whether there is a Dostoyevsky or not.

During the time we were there, there was not to my knowledge any explosion of great writing. There was a lot of stuff being produced. People were writing stuff for the theater. They were publishing in magazines but whether any of it is of lasting quality or being thought of today as having particular artistic merit, I am not sure.

Q: There is no particular reason for them to be suppressed. I think some of the so-called top writers of the somewhat earlier period mainly because their books were smuggled out and they had that cache.

BROWN: I can think of people we associated with at the time and who we thought of as quality

writers. Some of them have ended up at George Mason University or various places in the West but where they really stand in the world of literature these days, I don't know. Were we simply giving them more credit than they deserved at the time because they were having an opportunity?

Back to the year 1989. The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra came out and offered several concerts. They were very well received. They were conducted by Lorin Maazel. Talk about a controversial figure in the world of conducting. Their accompanying artist was the famous Irish flutist, James Galloway. He wowed the audience with his abilities on the flute.

The orchestra was staying in the Sovietskaya hotel which wasn't very fancy. I was hosting a lunch on a given day for a bunch of educators and people from Washington. Fortunately, for some reason, the lunch wasn't to start at 2 o'clock. It was going to be at my townhouse. Late morning, I got a phone call saying Lorin Maazel and James Galloway were sick of the food in the hotel. Could they come by for lunch?

My secretary was a wonderful woman named Anne Edwards. She was born in Wales and a naturalized American citizen and she loved music. I said, "Anne, drop everything you are doing. You and I are hosting Lorin Maazel and James Galloway for lunch."

Well, she couldn't believe I was serious. But she had been to one of the concerts; she knew they were in town and sure enough, we managed to escort the two of them and a couple of others. We ended up paying for these guys, which we shouldn't have done, but it was worth it for the conversation.

Lorin Maazel, a very haughty and somewhat controversial figure in the world of conducting. There were not a lot of tears when he left Pittsburgh because he was didn't associate much with the musicians himself. But on this day, he was dependent upon me for his lunch and Anne Edwards, my Welsh- born secretary was walking on air to be sitting at the lunch table with James Galloway.

We Americans were not the only ones bringing cultural presentations. La Scala, the famous opera company from Italy, did several operas at the Bolshoi. They also did a performance of the Verdi Requiem at the Conservatory and that was a tough ticket to get. You'd go down there and people were swarming around, trying to get in. My wife and I had tickets but there was such a large crowd it was even hard to get in the building. As we were caught up in this mass of people, we saw people in uniform, Russians of course, saying "make way for academician Sakharov." We turned around and sure enough, escorted by two big militia men, were Sakharov and Elena Bonner looking very small behind him.

The crowd did part and let them come through but then you had the same phenomenon as when a fire truck is coming down the street and the cars all go aside to let the fire truck go by. As soon as the fire truck is gone, everyone tries to get behind and make it through the next several lights. All of us went swarming in, including a lot of people who didn't have tickets. I remember because it was the last time I saw Sakharov alive. It was a couple of months later he died. He was such a frail figure.

That night, our guest was a man named Paul Plishka who recently retired after many years at the Metropolitan Opera and who had Ukrainian roots and had been singing in Kiev and came by Moscow and stayed with us a couple of nights.

A month later, in November, 1989, my wife and I went to Yerevan, Armenia, for the opening of a USIA-organized children's book exhibit. Ambassador and Mrs. Matlock went along with Tom Graham from the political section. This was one year after the terrible earthquake in Armenia that had caused massive destruction and led Gorbachev to cut short a visit to the United States. At the time, that earthquake symbolized a lot of things. Instead of asking for visas to come in to cover the event, journalists just went across the border between Armenia and Turkey without visas. Aid agencies brought in materials that way. A lot of standard procedures went by the way in 1988 at the time of the earthquake in Armenia.

The ambassador didn't want to go down there in the immediate aftermath, wisely feeling he didn't want resources devoted to him that should be going to the earthquake recovery, so it wasn't until a year later that he took advantage of this book exhibit to go to Yerevan. We were staying in guest quarters there. This was the occasion when I heard the news on the radio that the Berlin Wall had been breached. On this particular night, the ambassador was torn because he was being invited to a concert but he was also invited to a dinner hosted by the hierarchy of the Armenian government.

So Phil, never wanting to miss an opportunity said, "Mr. Ambassador, could Bobbi and I represent you at that concert?" "Oh, perfect idea", he says. "Please you go represent us at the concert." It was perfect from my point of view because I would much rather go to music than to another official dinner.

We went to the concert. It was the Armenian symphony orchestra conducted by an American named Loris Tjeknavorian and we were seated up in a very nice box. At the intermission, we went downstairs and I introduced myself to the conductor and explained the circumstances, that the ambassador could not attend but that my wife and I were representing him and we were delighted to be here on this evening and probably we should leave now and go back to this dinner.

He said, "Oh, you can't leave. You must stay." It didn't take too much work to twist my arm to stay. We went back up to our box. After the intermission, the conductor came out and said a few words in Armenian and the next thing I knew, he was pointing to us and we were being asked to stand and everyone in the audience was giving us this enormous round of applause. It was explained to me that he was saying "our guests are from the American Embassy and we want to thank them for all that America has done to help us with earthquake recovery." It was a moving moment. I have never felt more than on that night that I was representing my country, that I was being thanked for all we had done to help them recover from the earthquake.

The conductor himself had amassed the funds so the orchestra could play this concert. He was providing them with the wherewithal, not only the conducting but many of the instruments they used to play the concert. Some of the music they did that night had roots in Armenian musical history. It was a very memorable evening.

Another memorable musical evening came in February, 1990, when the National Symphony Orchestra came to Moscow and returning as their conductor was Mstislav Rostropovich. It was the first time he had been back in the Soviet Union since he had been exiled. Years earlier, when he and his wife Galina were traveling abroad, his passport and his citizenship had been taken away but during that period, he had done well. He was now the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra.

So his return was an event. I went to the airport with the ambassador and the minister of culture for his arrival and it was a mass of journalists and well wishers. I knew his sister and her husband quite well so we were swept up in the arrival of the orchestra. There were press conferences and luncheons in his honor and two concerts.

At the first concert, he conducted the same program as the last time he had conducted on that stage before he went into exile – Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 and Shostakovich. Shostakovich was one of his mentors so there was symbolism all over the place. The audience included in a special box Raisa Gorbachev. He did a number of encores.

All of the encores were by Russian composers until the very last which he didn't introduce at all. He simply turned, picked up his baton and conducted the orchestra in "Stars and Stripes Forever." The message was clear. All the other music was Russian. That's where he came from. What he knew best was Russian music. But the final encore said something about where he was now. Politically he was now an American, Stars and Stripes Forever. People stood and clapped rhythmically. It was a moving event.

The next night, he not only conducted but he played the Dvorak Cello Concerto, one of the pieces he has recorded and one of the most famous pieces for cello. Then he went on to Leningrad and did another performance there. If you didn't know it before, you knew by then that things were changing in the political world and what better medium to express it than music?

Finally, just a month before we left in 1990, they had the quadrennial Tchaikovsky competition. This is the same competition that Van Cliburn had won in 1958. For all our years in Moscow, this was the first time we had been there when the Tchaikovsky competition took place. So we went to several of the performances and knew that one particular American woman was really outstanding.

We were not at all surprised when Deborah Voigt received the first prize in the soprano competition; Deborah Voigt is today a staple at the Metropolitan Opera, one of the leading figures in the world of opera. I did see her one time in Washington and again in Pittsburgh and I said to her on both occasions, "I heard you when you sang in the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow." She smiled and remembered; it was a stepping stone for her.

So I have gone through my major Moscow musical memories. There are plenty of other lesser Moscow musical memories but you get the gist.

Q: I think all of this is extremely important and as one talks about Russia, music is important.

BROWN: The point I am trying to make is these weren't simply concerts. These were concerts that said something about what was going on at that time. They had political symbolism that conveyed to the Russians that times had changed.

Q: Did you have American visitors come and say what the hell is this all about? In other words, being rather skeptical? Did you find yourself saying things really are happening?

BROWN: I didn't find Americans were skeptical about the musical events or any of the other activities that we were involved in. Whether it was a concert or a book fair or a speaker or an exhibit, it was quite easy if you had a particular visitor in town to say "hey, do you want to go out to one of these?"

It was both fun and instructive to include your visitors, whether it was Madeleine Albright or a foot soldier from Washington. There were people who were maybe a little more sober about the changes and who said "yes, but." That wasn't bad to have people come say "let's keep this in perspective. Let's keep their feet to the fire." I think Mr. Wick did that in a funny way through his information talks. There were a lot of people saying "they are just like us; they are just people." Sure, they are just people. That was not a great discovery but the system was still based on very different ideas.

I had an excellent desk officer in USIA named Rick Ruth. He had been an exhibit guide. He didn't stay in the Foreign Service. When I came back for that first Chautauqua Conference, we had these pins that somebody had produced with the joint Soviet and American flags and we had given them out on the airplane. The Russians loved these flags and I was wearing one and Rick called me on it and said he wouldn't be comfortable wearing an American/Soviet flag pin. I thought about it and concluded Rick was right; that Soviet flag still stands for a lot of things that I do not believe and am not comfortable with. It was good to have reminders from time to time that there were still a lot of differences.

Q: As you were doing this were you able to see or place or one way or the other more favorable treatment of the United States in the media?

BROWN: By and large, not only in the media but in almost all aspects of our bilateral relationship, things were improving. The way we communicated with each other officially, the number of visitors in both directions, things like the Chautauqua exchanges which involved hundreds of people both ways, the number of people getting visas to emigrate and by and large press coverage. It was still controlled but it was much more favorable especially in connection with the Gorbachev trip to the United States in December of 1987 and Reagan's visit to Moscow in 1988.

Somebody will say to me that I am forgetting that along the way there were bumps in the road. There were issues that still arose, though there weren't major roadblocks. For most part it was a pretty harmonious period.

Q: I almost had the feeling you had almost a separate entity being the KGB which tried to screw

things up from time to time such as taking a correspondent like Daniloff and others. You could almost count on it.

BROWN: Yes, as we've discussed before, there was the Daniloff arrest in 1986 right before the Reykjavik summit and right after the Reykjavik summit, with the Daniloff episode sort of resolved, you had the mutual expulsion of diplomats. We didn't have during my time there anything comparable to that. We didn't have mutual expulsion of diplomats or symbolic arrests of people. There were annoyances and issues would pop up but by and large, this was a period of good, improving relations and of people continually talking about that.

Q: Did you have a positive feeling toward Gorbachev or not? Did you really feel he was behind making this change or at least the person who was?

BROWN: I think people pretty much did associate it with Gorbachev and also with his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze. James Baker and Shevardnadze developed a very close working relationship so it was personalized to that extent. Not only could you contrast Gorbachev to his predecessors, who were just stumble bums. Gorbachev was out there, active, speaking. Margaret Thatcher said it better than anybody else, "a man we can work with" so yes, it was associated with Gorbachev. He was accessible. I think the ambassador, if he needed to, could get to Gorbachev. He certainly could get to Shevardnadze.

Q: How did you find Matlock as someone to work with?

BROWN: I always begin by saying I was very privileged to have Jack Matlock as ambassador during my three years in Moscow. He was there for a few months before we arrived and was there for a full year afterwards. He was the only ambassador we had on our second tour. Outstanding, professional, good Russian, knew the history of the country, had served there at various different levels. He was not an easy man to work with. He was a difficult taskmaster, he could be cutting in his criticisms, he could really squash people's morale but he was a first-class professional.

I used to laugh because he did as much chest thumping as anybody about how we could get along without local employees. "We can do it on our own," he would say and then he would also ask why there weren't more activities at Spaso House. He wanted these monthly seminars. He wanted us to get a whole new group of people into Spaso House.

Then he would come in some morning grumbling because we were doing so much at Spaso House and they didn't have local employees to help out. "We are doing this with our very limited resources," he would say. Don't we know? Aren't we all operating under that kind of situation where we have more on our platter than we can handle? We don't even have the human resources to deliver invitations.

Q: I would think that on the information side of diplomatic business you relied heavily on the local employees with their connections. You usually get an extremely high caliber; the niece of prime minister or what have you. It was a sought after job and we benefited tremendously.

BROWN: I remember people who had been our Foreign Service national employees from my first assignment. On my first tour, Yuri Zarakhovich was the chief FSN for the press section, working with me. I earlier recalled some of our experiences together. By my second tour, Yuri was working first for the Associated Press and then Time magazine. When he died a few years ago, Time featured him in their inside cover page for all that he had contributed to their coverage of the Soviet Union.

People used to fret that the Soviet employees were a threat to our security and were nosing around, finding out what we were doing. That to me reflected badly on the American supervision, if that was the case. You used these people where you could and you didn't get them involved if you didn't want to. Sure, if you were working in the defense attaché office or certain other parts of the embassy, you didn't use FSNs directly. In our business, it would have been extremely useful if we had had some of them just to help us out with some of the mechanical things, drivers to deliver invitations and that sort of thing, but we didn't have them and we managed.

Back to Ambassador Matlock, he was a most willing participant in any of our programs. When we had an exhibit opening, he always wanted to go out and deliver a speech. He, of course, would do it in Russian or even try his hand at some other language.

He counted on us to provide the speakers and make the arrangements for what we called Spaso House seminars. Ambassador Matlock wanted to have a once-a-month evening at Spaso House, each event with a whole new guest list, not the same old people, a dinner, a lecture by a prominent American, preferably in Russian but if not in Russian, we would use simultaneous interpreters. We would get find people in Washington and elsewhere, pay their way and bring them out to lecture.

At one of those events, the speaker was a woman who had been on Jack Matlock's staff when he was at the NSC and who he saw as a bright, upcoming, future high ranking official in our government; her name was Condoleezza Rice. We brought her out as the featured speaker at a Spaso House seminar.

Q: Were these speakers all government people?

BROWN: Government, non-government. Matlock felt there were enough resources in Washington that we could get someone out there once a month. We'd have people in economics, politics, occasionally in a cultural field. The other thing was he didn't want us, quite legitimately, to be inviting the old reliables, people we already knew. He wanted new faces. It was a little hard sometimes because there were people who had come reliably to our film shows or whatever during the toughest times and they were no longer on the guest list because we were trying to expand, get new people.

A partial list of those who appeared would include Murray Feshbach from the Commerce Department, an eminent scholar on Soviet demographics. A professor from Princeton named Steve Cohen who was writing a biography of Nikolai Bukharin; this was a subject that would

have been completely off bounds a few years earlier. We had Alan Greenspan. I don't know what hat he was wearing at the time.

We also had Marshal Goldman, the Soviet scholar at Harvard. Speaking of Marshall Goldman, during those three years his son, Seth Goldman, came to Moscow to work for a family there as what was called a "manny," a young man to come out to help with the family and that kind of thing. Seth didn't have mail privileges so his dad sent things to me and I passed them on to Seth.

A few years later, I was teaching at the Fletcher School and I went down to Harvard to an event chaired by Marshall Goldman at Harvard. We went around the table introducing ourselves. I introduced myself and said, "The most important role I played in Moscow was to deliver mail to Seth Goldman." At that point, eyebrows went up as he remembered who I was. Seth Goldman, in his 20s then, is today the owner of the very popular product called Honest Tea. He did not follow in his father's footsteps of being a Harvard professor but he has done well.

Q: Were we trying to spread the word of American culture, Tom Sawyer?

BROWN: The Soviets did a lot of Mark Twain because again, Mark Twain stuff did not depict us in the best possible light, race relations and that kind of thing, so a lot of Russian kids grew up reading Tom Sawyer.

We were spreading American culture more broadly, as through the exhibits. Anyone who doesn't know about the exhibits might not know what I am talking about but you'd take a theme like agriculture or design and around that you would build an entire mini expo. Thousands of visitors would walk through the large exhibit area seeing aspects of design in the United States. At each stop along the way, American guides would answer questions and interact with the visitors. There would be brochures and souvenirs handed out at the end. People would line up by the hundreds and thousands and these were not only for Moscow and Leningrad. These were for places like Rostov, Dushanbe, Magnitogorsk and cities that had never before been exposed to Americans and American cultural life.

Q: We are right on the cusp of the Soviet Union disintegrating and all these various republics, the 'stans' and all coming up. Were we getting out to Dushanbe and the Bishkek and Almaty and all and were we also seeing anything there, the seeds of discontent or disunion?

BROWN: Yes, we were getting out and no section got out any more than the press and cultural section partly because we had the mandate, partly because we had the tools, for example, a book exhibit in Novosibirsk.

On my first tour, as I mentioned before, I traveled to every republic capital except the Baltics states. I made multiple trips to Tbilisi, Georgia. We had the mandate to go to Central Asia and I traveled to republic capitals like Tashkent, Dushanbe, Frunze and Alma Ata, as they were then called. I went to Khabarovsk and Nakhodka in the Soviet Far East.

The area I didn't go to on my first tour but that I did visit multiple times on my second tour was the Baltics and it was here, more than any other area, where you began to see the seeds of

disintegration of the Soviet Union. In the Baltics, more than any other area, they were talking about independence. Not in 1987 but by 1990, Lithuania and other areas were talking seriously about breaking away from the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you sort of feel you were in the middle of a historic moment?

BROWN: Yes, I did. I was smart enough to know that this was a sweep of history. Things were really happening there. There was no country that had a higher priority in American foreign policy during this time than the Soviet Union. There was no place where the changes were more revolutionary, where the stakes were higher, where the opportunities were greater than Moscow during this period.

My wife and I regularly discussed whether we should stay on for a fourth year. We didn't but I was not alone. I think many of us in the embassy knew this was a historic period. And again, no one was more aware of this than Ambassador Matlock. He authored a book, Autopsy on an Empire, which is a definitive work for scholars and journalists on what happened during this period. David Remnick likewise wrote an excellent book covering this period so it has been very well documented in a scholarly fashion.

Q: How did you view events in East Germany and Czechoslovakia that were, when that started?

BROWN: I guess it was part of the pattern, part of what was happening.

Q: When the Berlin Wall collapsed, was that seen as well, there goes the ballgame or something like that?

BROWN: I clearly remember where I was at that moment. We (my wife and I) were in Armenia with the ambassador in November of 1989 and I heard on the Voice of America that the wall had been breached and that people were freely moving back and forth by the thousands. I brought that news to him at breakfast. He first looked at me skeptically but it was then confirmed. It was confirmed through the Voice of America broadcasts.

You knew that things were happening, that historic events were occurring but every new event seemed to outdo the other by such a degree that it still amazed you. On that morning, if I had said within two years the Soviet Union would no longer exist, I don't think anyone, including Ambassador Matlock, would have believed me. It was happening so fast and each new phase was so revolutionary it was really hard to believe it was occurring.

When you think of the fall of the Berlin Wall or what was happening in Czechoslovakia, the question was always the contagion. How were the Soviets going to control this? Change was happening within the Soviet Union but it was still controlled change.

Q: Did you have someone somewhere within the Soviet government, an official, not a secret source but someone go and talk to and say what the hell is going on?

BROWN: This man I mentioned earlier, Leonid Dobrohotov in the Information Department of

the Central Committee, was someone we could talk to about what was happening; you could get an honest answer to a question if you needed to for business purposes.

I think better sources were people like Vitaly Korotich, the editor of *Ogonyok* magazine or people in the intellectual, creative intelligentsia, because there wasn't that much of a gap between them and the people in the Kremlin. For a big country, there was a relatively small group of insiders.

Just as Obama can name all the basketball players in the NBA or NCAA playoffs, people in the Kremlin knew all the movers and shakers in the media world or in the theater. All you had to do was talk to those people and they could tell you that.

Q: When you were there were American entrepreneurs, missionaries flooding into the country or did this come later?

BROWN: If by missionaries you mean purely religious?

Q: Yes.

BROWN: No, I am not aware of that. But missionaries in a broader sense, people coming in with ideas.

My notes say something about Frank Perdue, the chicken man. At one point, someone in Washington suggested I might facilitate his entrepreneurial interests in Russia.

Q: I would think that would be a natural.

BROWN: It would be a natural but I managed to persuade people in Washington it was not for me to do. We had any numbers of people coming out with ideas.

Q: I am a film buff. Anything about films one way or the other?

BROWN: I went quite often to Dom Kino to see movies and quite often at the invitation of a producer but I am not enough of a film buff to be able to remember the movies that I saw. The excuse that I can use is that a lot of them I saw were not terribly memorable.

A visitor we did have during that time was Robert Redford. He came out in May, 1988, to show his film called "Milagro Beanfield War." There was a special showing and enough people knew Robert Redford that he attracted quite a crowd.

The next night, after a reception for Redford at Spaso House, we asked Redford and his party if they would like to go to a special theater event. It was at the Taganka Theater which was then directed by a man named Nikolai Gubenko, who later became the minister of culture. The show had to do with the life of the singer/songwriter Vladimir Vysotsky. At the end of the performance, there was an appearance on stage by Yuri Lyubimov, who had founded the Taganka Theater. He had been forced into exile and this was his return. He was greeted by

applause, cheers, tears and flowers.

It was an experience for Redford not simply to see the play but to see how Russians adored theater and how Lyubimov was being rehabilitated, reintegrated into the world of theater. We went to Lyubimov's office. I remember Robert Redford adding his name to signatures on the wall. Famous people had written all over the walls of Lyubimov's office.

The Redford party was being escorted. I got back in their vehicle and as we were driving back to the hotel, Redford said, "Where can I get a beer?" I said, "Why don't you come by my place?" So we went by my place and Robert Redford came in with me and picked up a couple of beers and I said, "Well, why doesn't everyone come in and have drinks here?" He said, "We'll go back to the hotel" so he took my beer and went back to the hotel. I can never claim that he was in my house for drinks but he did drink my beer.

And then there was a very special night at the House of Cinema. All of the various artists or members of the creative intelligentsia had their own clubs. There was the Writers' Union, the Composers' Union, the Journalists' Union, the Cineastes' Union and with it, the Dom Kino or House of Cinema. They invited the ambassador and members of his staff to come for an evening, to be on stage, talk and answer questions. So the ambassador put out the call. I am proud to say I was the only counselor who accepted the invitation. There were four other guys, three of them mid-level Foreign Service officers, all with beards, plus the Ambassador's special assistant. I have a picture. That hall must have been filled with several hundred people and many of them asked questions.

We were on that stage for a couple of hours. The ambassador with his excellent Russian answered 90% of the questions because a lot of them were political. At some point, someone wisely said "tell us a little bit about yourselves. Tell us what you do. Tell us something personal about yourself." That is where I made my biggest contribution because I humanized things a little bit.

I said, "I am 47 years old." I told them my birthday was November 7th which, of course, is the anniversary of the great October Revolution and that produced laughter and amusement. I told them I had recently seen on Soviet TV video of events on Red Square on November 7th, 1941, during the war. That happened to be the day I was born and I explained how I looked with great interest and respect at that video of what was going on in Russia on the day I was born. I think they appreciated that.

It was all done in Russian and we got a lot of compliments from the ambassador. He was very pleased with the evening, that he didn't have to carry the entire load. Of course, he wanted to carry the ball but he appreciated the rest of us coming along and participating in the evening. It was one of my more memorable public diplomacy opportunities.

Q: Today is the 29th of May, 2012 with Phil Brown. And Phil, I will let you pick it up where we left off.

BROWN: I spent from 1977 to 1990 overseas, a period of 13 consecutive years, a little longer than normal. As I look back on it, I was really fortunate. I was in interesting places at interesting times.

We are now covering the last phase, 1987 to 1990. I returned to the Soviet Union for my second tour there. In preparing for these interviews, it has been a daunting task figuring out how to approach that period when we were amazingly active. We were very fortunate to be in the Soviet Union during a period of great change. I think even among people who don't have a great sweep of history, if you talk to them now about the Soviet Union and Gorbachev, a light will go on. People remember that period.

The last time, I talked about an exercise where I just blue skied. I recalled the things I really remember from that period and there was a link to them; it happened to be music so I treated you last time to a baker's dozen of different events ranging from Billy Joel to Mstislav Rostropovich. That is a pretty wide spectrum. It wasn't just the music, it was music in a political context that struck me but I left out a lot of other things.

Going through my notes this week, I happened upon a newspaper article that really captures what I have been trying to say, what an amazing period it was. It was an article written by my friend Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. The first time I was in Moscow, I was the press attaché and we had about 25 American journalists including Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. Dan and I had the normal kind of relationship you have with a journalist, a very professional relationship, but we were also good friends. We played paddle tennis together. Dan and his wife, Candy, came to our apartment for Thanksgiving with their three daughters, roughly the same ages as our two daughters. We were good friends.

So Dan came back to Moscow. I am not sure if he was on an overseas assignment somewhere, had been in Poland or Israel or came from the States. I don't know but he looked around the Soviet Union he saw in 1989 and he had the same impression everybody else had. My goodness, this place has changed. He wrote an article that captures so much of what I have been talking about. I want to quote a little bit from it.

Q: Please do.

BROWN: The headline (Los Angeles Times, January 29, 1989) was "Friendly Soviets Roll out Red Carpet for Americans" and it referred right in the first paragraph to the different world of journalists because Dan knew what it had been like being a journalist roughly ten years earlier. He talked about the changing environment for businessmen and then he referred to the U.S. Embassy saying it has become the hub of a busy bilateral social life. He wrote: "All this reflects the 'new thinking in Kremlin foreign policy' and the change this has wrought in the day to day life for Americans here."

Then he quoted me: "Four-fifths of what I do wasn't even in the job description three years ago," said Philip C. Brown, the press and cultural affairs counselor. He is back in Moscow for a second tour after having served here in the late 1970s."

I distinctly remember sitting down with Dan for that interview. It was a relaxed interview. I knew I could be completely open with Dan as I talked about how much things had changed. I made up the quote on the spot but it was entirely accurate. Four-fifths of what I was being called on to do wasn't even in the job description three years earlier.

To quote more from the article, Dan wrote, "Just last week, for example, most of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra showed up at the embassy's theater for the premier of 'Maestros in Moscow,' a video concert of American Soviet compositions and the video is narrated by actor Gregory Peck. Such an evening would have been inconceivable a few years ago, conductor Dmitri Kitayenko said.

"The next night, Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr., an accomplished linguist and expert in Soviet literature was host at a poetry meeting reading for Soviet and other guests at Spaso house, the ambassador's residence. And the day afterward, Matlock gave an unprecedented background briefing, in Russian, for the Soviet press.

"At the famous Tretyakov Gallery, Soviets flocked to see a photo exhibit marking the centennial of America's National Geographic Society. It all adds up, Matlock has said, to 'the most intense relationship since the (World War II) alliance'."

I thought that article really hit the nail on the head. This is what it was like halfway through my second three-year tour so I thought I would take off from there.

Q: At some point I wonder if you could touch on the other Russia and that's the village Russia. I have talked to people and I go back to my little experience of five years in Yugoslavia. Their transportation often was an ox drawn cart. In the world there is a difference between village and city. Were we trying to reach them and frankly, did it make any difference?

BROWN: If you talk purely about village Russia, we were restricted to the area 40 kilometers around Moscow. I do have a distinct memory of going out with our very good Russian friends one day for a picnic in the woods. Not too far from where we were having this picnic, there was a little pond, a natural pond, and boys sitting there with fishing poles that were not much more than sticks with a line on the end. I thought to myself: "This is the 19th century. This could be Mark Twain" and if you multiplied that by thousands of little villages each with a couple of thousand people, you would describe much of Russia at that time.

Were we trying to reach those people? No, I don't think so. I don't think that most of them were all that concerned about the bilateral U.S./Soviet relationship. They were pretty much concerned with what people in villages are concerned about, their daily routine.

Were they poor? By some standards, yes. I don't think the medical care was good. The teaching may have been pretty good in their schools. Teachers were probably very committed. It was certainly not a big city environment.

In 2006, my wife and I went back to Russia and we took a cruise between Moscow and St. Petersburg. I joked I had never before been to St. Petersburg; I had been many times to Leningrad but his would be my first visit to St. Petersburg.

I was looking the other day of that map of that cruise. We went through some eleven different bodies of water -- rivers, lakes, canals, reservoirs. I would be hard pressed today to name even four or five of them. It is such a complex water route from Moscow to St. Petersburg. On the way, we stopped in a couple of villages. We had left behind the Moscow, the glittery Moscow that you see today with Gucci and all the other luxury stores within a stone's throw of the Kremlin.

You get out to these villages and it doesn't look as if a whole lot has changed. I think the way of life is much as it has been for a long time, both for good and bad. On the good side, relationships are probably simple. Families are close. But in other ways, it is not a wealthy life and a lot of young kids are probably anxious to get out of the villages just as they are in many other countries of the world.

But during the period of 1987 to 1990, I did not make many trips to villages. I went to some cities that were really pretty remote, places where I wouldn't want to live. Two that come to mind are Magnitogorsk and Donetsk, both industrial towns, both a couple hours' flying time from Moscow. They struck me as grim places in which to live.

BROWN: Back to the article which quotes Ambassador Matlock. I talked about Ambassador Matlock last time. He was a tough taskmaster and at times he was too tough, unnecessarily critical of a very hard working staff. But it was a privilege to be there at a time when he was ambassador. No one was more qualified for that position -- as a career Foreign Service officer, as a gifted linguist, as a political analyst, as a full time participant in just about anything (except a Billy Joel concert) and as, we learned later, on as a scholar.

Dan Fisher's article referred to a press briefing. The first time I was in Moscow, as press attaché, we had weekly press briefings done by Ambassador Toon and they were *de rigueur* for the American press because you didn't have many other sources and you might pick up some little tidbits from Mack Toon.

On my second tour, Jack Matlock started out doing press briefings for the American press but interest diminished. It didn't have anything to do with the quality of the briefing; there were simply a lot more sources of news apart from the embassy. So we reached the point where we did them on an *ad hoc* basis. That was a very excellent evolution.

Related to that, I remember the case of an American official -- governor, mayor or someone like that -- who made a visit to the American school. He was talking to kids and he asked somebody at the school, "aren't there aren't any journalists?" They laughed and said no. Once upon a time, when an American governor or mayor came to the American school, there would be journalists, American press, but it became so ordinary that no one was interested.

But Matlock did do background briefings and even on-the-record interviews for the Soviet press. That was interesting on several different levels: one, that the Soviet press would come; two, that we had an ambassador who felt comfortable doing it in Russian, though there were times when he was careful and might prefer to say something for the sake of record in English. That, I think, says a whole lot about the change.

Getting back to Dan Fisher's article he wrote, "American correspondents who were much derided here as 'bourgeois scribblers' are today (1989) being invited to write guest columns for the government newspaper." That was very definitely the case. We and U.S. government officials had access to the Soviet media.

But I want to talk about some other particularly memorable moments from this period.

1988 marked the 30th anniversary of the U.S./Soviet cultural exchange agreement. It dated back to the Eisenhower period and his granddaughter, Susan Eisenhower, came to Moscow for the anniversary. Susan Eisenhower was a fairly regular visitor, very interested in the Soviet Union. There was a ceremony at the Hall of Columns in Moscow. Jack Matlock was on stage. From the Soviet side, someone delivered remarks from Gorbachev and Matlock asked me, "Do we have Reagan's remarks?"

I said, "No, we don't." I didn't know that there were supposed to be Reagan remarks for this occasion.

So I scrambled. My counterpart Aleksandr Churlin from the foreign ministry got on the telephone and took down a dictation in Russian of President Reagan's remarks. Meanwhile, the ceremony was going on. We found a secretary who typed the remarks in Russian. I passed the text to Ambassador Matlock with a note saying here are President Reagan's remarks in Russian. He took them, walked over to the podium and delivered them even though he hadn't had a chance to read them beforehand.

This was an act of faith that the Russians were on our side, that they weren't coming up with their own distorted version of Reagan's remarks. We could hand the text to Jack Matlock and know he could pull this off.

I used to joke that Ambassador Matlock -- who went to Moscow first as a young consular officer in the 1960's, went back as DCM in the 1970's, returned briefly as chargé in 1981, then went back as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary (and he certainly was that) in 1986 for four years -- should really go back to Moscow one more time as cultural affairs officer. He should have done so both because that's where his interests lay and because it would have been good for him to get his hands dirty and see how much work went into putting together some of the programs. He knew his Russian literature, opera and theater. He kept us on our toes.

In addition to the ambassador, we also worked for USIA Director Wick. This was the heyday of Charles Wick's directorship. We felt it in many different ways, not least of which via something called U.S./Soviet information talks. These were annuals talks involving on the Soviet side the head of state television and radio, state publishing and certain counterparts in the United States to

try, from the American point of view, to make sure we had more access to Soviet audiences and that we could call them on issues of disinformation when they were putting out something we felt was not honest.

We had several rounds of talks, both in Washington and in Moscow. The Moscow meetings in 1988 marked what I described as the busiest programming week in the history of P&C Moscow. We had virtually every senior USIA official in Moscow at that time, mostly because of the information talks, but because the talks coincided with the Chautauqua exchange in Tbilisi, and the opening of the exhibit that we called Information, USA in Leningrad. And oh, by the way, we had a musical group, the Cleveland Quartet and the musical, *Sophisticated Lady*; all in the course of one week.

As I have mentioned before, these exhibits were not just pieces of paper on a wall. These were multifaceted, three-dimensional displays of American life complete with young Russian-speaking guides. Sometimes it wasn't only Russian; for non-Russian cities, we tried to recruit people who spoke those languages.

Under the Cultural Exchange Agreement, we took these exhibits to six cities around the Soviet Union and the Soviets had the right to go to six cities in the United States. They never came close to matching our programs. For anyone not familiar with these exhibits, the best point of reference would be the Nixon kitchen debate with Khrushchev back in the '50s. That same program was still going strong in the late 1980's.

Over the three years 1987 to 1990, I went to every one of the cities in which the exhibit was staged. I went to a city called Rostov, south of Moscow. What I distinctly remember from that trip was that the person who came out from Washington for the opening was our deputy director, Marvin Stone. Marvin Stone's was formerly editor in chief of *US News and World Report*. He was a strong anti-Communist and told me that he could never have imagined coming to the Soviet Union under these circumstances. But I heard him on the phone one night with his wife saying that he wished she had come with him. He called it a real eye-opener of an experience. It was an experience that far surpassed what he thought it was going to be.

This was October of 1988. It coincided with the stock market crash. I told Marvin Stone the Dow Jones had gone down more than 500 points in one day and he said what? He was quite convinced I was wrong and would only believe it when I had a better source. That drop in the stock market crash was going to affect his portfolio pretty seriously.

I went to Tashkent, Central Asia, for the opening of the exhibit there. We were going to go to Tashkent for the opening and then on to Samarkand and Bukhara. The guy who came out was not the most scintillating personality. But I went. It wasn't the first time I had been to Samarkand and Bukhara but now that I think back, what an exciting place to visit. These were Silk Road cities with wonderful architecture, wonderful history.

I was trying to describe Samarkand to this man who came out from Washington. Goods would travel east and west and people would come to Samarkand to tie up their camels and get refreshed. He said, "Oh, yes. I know what you are talking about. It's like Breezewood." He was

referring to a place that I know well on the Pennsylvania Turnpike where people come from north and south and east and west, tie up their “camels,” get gasoline and go on their way. I thought that was a perfect analogy; Breezewood on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Samarkand on the Silk Road in Central Asia.

I mentioned two other cities I went to for an exhibit opening. One was Magnitogorsk and the other was Donetsk, two of the grimmest and grimiest cities I can recall. Magnitogorsk is east of Moscow a couple of hours. There was a sign that pointed in two directions; one said Europe, the other Asia. It was true. It was in the Urals and a pretty much the dividing line between European Russia and Asian Russia.

Donetsk was down in the coal basin. Both cities were described as the Pittsburgh of their region. Magnitogorsk because back in the ‘20s and ‘30s, moguls from Pittsburgh went there to help them establish their steel industry and Donetsk because it was a coal mining area. Having grown up in Pittsburgh, I didn’t really see much of my hometown in either Magnitogorsk or Donetsk.

We also went to Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia for the exhibit opening or, if not for the opening, to visit with the guides and see how things were going. Minsk is a city that got wiped off the map by the Nazis. They have Napoleon and Hitler to thank for the lack of any architecture there. That visit coincided with the earthquake in Armenia in December of 1988.

I recall clearly at the time that Gorbachev was in the United States meeting the president-elect, George Bush. He cut short his visit and returned to Moscow to be back home for the recovery efforts following the earthquake in Armenia. It said something at the time. The head of the country was personally involved in this terrible tragedy in Armenia.

Charles Wick was succeeded by Bruce Gelb as Director of USIA and Bruce Gelb and his wife came to Moscow for an exhibit opening. They were with us for an entire week so we needed a variety of activities. We decided he should visit Tbilisi. I had been to Tbilisi many times and so I proposed that we do something different. Despite objections and questions from a number of quarters, I got my way. We flew to a city called Vladikavkaz and from there, we took the Georgian military highway to Tbilisi. I had heard about this route from someone years earlier and it fascinated me.

My counterpart in the foreign minister, Mr. Churlin, was not keen on this at all. I think that he felt it was dangerous, and maybe he was right. We were picked up at the airport in Vladikavkaz and driven at breakneck speed down the old Georgian military highway to Tbilisi, getting out just once or twice for the view. It was really an exciting trip.

Q: How well was it maintained?

BROWN: The road was maintained but what I think they were concerned about was even then, there was unrest in this area. At one point when we stopped to take pictures. I stood so that it looked as if I was standing right on the edge of this cliff though I wasn’t; people were concerned. It was an exciting addition to the trip to Tbilisi.

For the exhibit in Moscow, I asked Mr. Gelb, who was traveling with his wife Lueza, how he would like to visit it. It was in Sokolniki Park, one of the parks outside the center of the city and Gelb was staying at the ambassador's residence. I said: "There are two ways we can go there on Saturday. We can get in a vehicle, the ambassador's vehicle and drive out there with all the comfort or we can do it the way an ordinary Russian would do it; we can go over and get on the subway."

He said, "I'd love to go on the subway" and so Mr. Gelb, his wife and I walked to the subway, made our connections and arrived with the general public. I think he really appreciated it. It gave him a better feel for Moscow and, when we got there, for the big crowds. This wasn't the formal opening but there was a big crowd and long lines. He stood in line a while just to get a feel for things.

We also took Mr. Gelb and his wife to visit friends of ours, Misha and Flora Litvinov, in their apartment. Misha was the son of Maxim Litvinov, one of Stalin's foreign ministers and also Ambassador to the United States during the war. It was just a personal call but a chance to meet someone with an interesting personal experience.

Q: He's Jewish, isn't he?

BROWN: Yes.

And there were two other cities I went to in connection with the exhibit. One was Kishinev, the capital of Moldova. The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic at the time. Today, the capital is called Chisinau.

Q: Did you feel a division there between Romania

BROWN: I guess because we were told that this was a country that was ethnically closer to Romania than it was to the rest of the Soviet Union. I remember it as quite a poor city.

These days, in my current role accompanying international visitors, we occasionally get people from Moldova. There is no reason to be surprised but I would note that some of them are very capable, very committed people.

Q: We had an intern here from the university. She is very good.

BROWN: I think of some of these countries like Albania and Moldova, what we used to think were the dark side of the moon. Sure, they are still poor but I think one of the things we can be most satisfied about is that with the end of the Cold War, a generation later, there are good, capable, committed people.

Then I went to Almaty, then the capital of Kazakhstan. Ambassador Matlock went along. We had a senior official from USIA named Michael Pistor. Ambassador Matlock was willing to take a couple, three days to go out there because he saw the exhibit as a catalyst, a way to call on local officials.

I should say parenthetically that on an early trip I took with him, he called on local officials; when we came back, he realized there had been no note taker. We in P&C had our hands full with the exhibit and everything else we were doing and were really not in the role of note taking so from there on, he would add someone from the political section to go along and be a note taker.

I remember one time hearing him boast that he had reached the stage where he would be a note taker only for the president. Even for the Secretary of State, he would not be the note taker. Somebody else would. Here's a guy who grew up on the mother's milk of a junior Foreign Service officer's note taking. He had now reached the level where he would be the note taker only for the President of the United States.

I think that was the occasion where at some meal we were served the entire head of a beast, perhaps a goat or a cow, which included the tongue and the eyeballs and everything else. Jack Matlock played along with this in his toast, likening the body parts to our relationship. Whatever he said, it was vintage Jack Matlock.

There were many other facets of USIA/USIS programming. To mention a couple of them, we used books in several different ways. We participated in book fairs in Moscow. I remember going one time to the University of Tartu in Estonia and making a special book presentation at the university there; we had a nice little ceremony as we gave a book donation to the director. I went to Novosibirsk in Siberia and to the adjacent city of Akademgorodok, this created scientific center, for a book exhibit.

We also brought out or facilitated the visits of individual artists, speakers, specialists. My list here shows the name of clarinetist Charles Neidich, the Dance Theater of Harlem, the Louisiana Repertory Jazz Ensemble, the Beaux Arts Trio, pianist Ruth Laredo, the Aspen Wind Quintet, the Verdehr Trio, Disney Gillespie, Joshua Bell. All these individual artists and groups performed in the Soviet Union during this time. If we were not the entire sponsor, we were facilitating. We were very involved in their presence.

We had an evening at Spaso House featuring the U.S. poet laureate, Howard Nemerov and the eminent Russian poet, Bella Akhmadulina. She and Nemerov shared the stage. You have to know how seriously the Russians took poetry to understand the impact an evening like that would have.

The eminent architect Richard Meier came out and met with counterparts.

We also inaugurated a high school exchange program. This is something that had the blessing of President Reagan. Somewhere along the line, he had said he wanted to see thousands of high school students exchanged every year. One of the first schools to participate was Bethesda/Chevy Chase High School, which is just up the street from where I live right now.

Let me mention the visit of Voice of America Director, Richard Carlson. He was another of these persons whose visit it would have been hard to imagine. The director of the Voice of America,

Peter Strauss, came out on my first tour but by my second tour, it was a totally different relationship. By now, the Voice of America was not being jammed and Richard Carlson could have meetings with Soviets.

Even more interesting was the fact that the Voice of America assigned its first full time correspondent to Moscow and they could not have picked a better person than André de Nesnera. André was a fluent Russian speaker and a delightful guy. He and his wife and three young boys lived in a hotel for quite a while and I remember inviting his wife one day to come over and use our washing machine for their laundry. She did and was so grateful; little things like that you could do for people but if you are living in a hotel with three small boys, you really appreciate it.

Q: When you are talking about the Voice of America there was a man who for years ran the jazz program. He was quite a hero. You might explain what he did.

BROWN: Yes.

In connection with Voice of America and long before jamming was ended, the name of Willis Conover was better known in the Soviet Union than it was in the United States because he did a jazz program on the Voice of America. For many Russians, everything they knew about jazz was through Willis Conover, his programs. I dare say the jamming was less intense when his program was on.

To clarify, what the Russians jammed were language programs. They didn't jam Voice of America in English. Willis Conover's programs would have been on VOA English broadcasts. In any case, the important thing is that Willis Conover was a household word in Russia.

So by the late 1980's, we had a full time VOA correspondent, André de Nesnera, in Moscow. André, I think, was the first person to report the death of André Sakharov. At least that was where I first heard the news.

A footnote: The same year I retired, in 1996, I became a licensed tour guide in Washington, DC. For a number of years, working for Meridian International Center, I led any number of Russians on three-hour tours of Washington; they were here as part of the international visitor program. So I used to point out the Capitol or the Smithsonian, they would take their pictures.

But when I'd say, "Over here on Independence Avenue is the headquarters of Voice of America, *Golos Ameriki*," that got their attention. They wanted to go in and quite often they would do so later and meet some of the people whose names they had gotten to know over the years. It was just as if a radio station we regularly listened to for years had been off limits and suddenly we could go in and meet those people. It was pretty interesting.

Q: In my walking I have often found Russians speaking tourists around the Einstein statue. Was this popular?

BROWN: It is a nice spot for a group photo, yes. Sometimes if the group is on its way to State Department, we will stop there. I don't know if it had a particular connection with Russian visitors.

Another spot that Ukrainians like to visit is the Shevchenko statue over on 23rd street. Likewise with the Russian Orthodox Church on Massachusetts Avenue, the Soviet embassy and various other landmarks.

Q: The visitors exchange and all, were we breaking away from we were sending young people to study architecture and they were sending middle aged scientists?

BROWN: Yes, we were breaking away from that. I think it was probably always a little bit overdrawn. In the first place, we really didn't accept all their people going off to study nuclear technology and submarine warfare and that kind of thing. I don't recall it being much of an issue in my second tour.

If anything, and how quickly we forget; I don't want to overdraw this, but people started to ask if we need exchanges anymore? People can travel so freely now and that kind of thing. This is something I felt less than ten years later in my last overseas assignment.

One of the issues that came up on my second tour in Moscow was a cultural center in Moscow, an agreement for reciprocal cultural centers. We had long, lengthy negotiations and an agreement, if I recall correctly, was signed in 1990 at the Bush/Gorbachev summit meeting in Washington. There were a lot of negotiations about the diplomatic status of the building and the people working there. We all felt it was important that we have a cultural center in Moscow.

Six or seven years later, when we had carte blanche throughout Eastern Europe, the feeling among some was we don't need cultural centers now. They are wide open societies. Why are we spending all this money on bricks and mortar? I don't know what the status is these days of libraries and cultural centers.

Q: Big mistake.

BROWN: It is true they are expensive and in some countries they can become targets but there was this other element at work, the idea that we had won the Cold war. We didn't need to worry about any of these things anymore.

But let me go back to some of the other people who came out to Moscow during that time. In some cases, it was the place to be and so we had a continuous stream of either high level people or people who'd always somehow wanted to get involved in activities there and now had the opportunity.

In 1988, an American theater director was invited for the first time to direct a play on a Soviet stage. It may not seem like a big deal; perhaps it wasn't but at the time, it was looked upon as a very interesting breakthrough. His name was Mark Lamos. He came out to direct Eugene O'Neil's play called *Desire Under the Elms*.

What I especially recall is that we hosted a reception afterwards at our townhouse and I had no idea how many people were going to come. It seems everyone involved in the project came in our door that night. We pulled out everything we had in the refrigerator and people scarfed it up. It was heady. You had the feeling you were part of something.

There was a Neil Simon play called *Biloxi Blues*. There were new productions on Soviet stages. Again, I use the word Soviet deliberately because they were dealing with issues that had not been touched on before. These weren't your classic Russian plays.

A journalist for *The New York Times*, Felicity Barringer, was sufficiently impressed by this that she wrote an article about this phenomenon of American theater coming to Moscow. She called it a "milestone" and used phrases like "Broadway on the Moskva" and "the Soviet theatrical world . . . speaking with an American accent."

You have to understand culture in the Soviet Union to understand why theater was such a barometer. I don't have the memory right now to go over all the specifics but I can tell we went to a lot of plays. We were conscious of what a barometer this was of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, that this was the real reworking of Soviet society. This was a new openness. There was no area where that was more evident than theater.

Some more names: Ted Turner. I don't know what brought Ted Turner of CNN out but Ted Turner and all his retinue coming. I remember being invited to a reception for him. Father Hesburgh of Notre Dame came for a human rights meeting and we had an opportunity to brief him, have lunch with him. The artist Robert Rauschenberg was there for an exhibit. In Brezhnev's time, Rauschenberg's works would not have been tolerated in the Soviet Union but now he was on a world tour, a peace tour going to countries like Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Jeanne Kennedy Smith, the sister of President Kennedy, came out to plug the very special arts program for disabled, handicapped athletes. Walter Cronkite, whom I had seen in Normandy on the 40th anniversary of D-Day, came out for an event in Leningrad.

Bob Hope came back. Bob Hope was there on my first tour and I talked earlier about how I walked across Red Square with him, helped him buy blue suede shoes, enjoyed his special show at Spaso House for the embassy community. He came back the second time in the late 1980's. This was a commercial production that they did on the new embassy compound with lights and cameras. I couldn't get close to him. It involved gags held up on a big card that he would read. Very disappointing.

Q: What about missionaries, do-gooders? They were all over the place.

BROWN: I don't recall that. Many of the people I mention had an agenda of their own. They were there for a reason. They were pushing some project and they thought this would be to their own benefit. Sara Caldwell came out from Boston and wanted to create a festival of American music. It went nowhere and the Russians, as I recall, were rather disappointed. It would have been great to have a musical exchange but Sara Caldwell did not manage it very well.

Leon Uris, the author of Exodus, came out in connection with Jewish literature, is the way I want to say it. He gave me a signed copy of Mitla Pass.

Q: Did you get any feel from your cultural friends concern about the hemorrhaging of very talented Jewish Russians going to the United States from the Soviet Union?

BROWN: No, I don't remember people expressing that as a concern. They may have thought about it but I think that would only be people who had a think tank view of the world. What's this going to mean to us when all these really good people leave? I can't tell you that my Soviet contacts ever once said "gee, we are losing our good people." More likely, they were wondering if perhaps they should do the same thing.

Q: I can't help looking at Germany today and the horrors of Holocaust. The other thing it did to Germany was it took out a tremendous cultural collection of talent. Either dead or who left. Hollywood and the United States has benefited tremendously by this.

BROWN: No question. America, Israel and a few other countries have benefited greatly from Russian Jewish immigration. The country is much poorer intellectually and otherwise from this loss. No question about it in my mind but I never sensed that people were frightened. In fact, they were probably saying "be gone if you want to leave." I don't think they felt it was ever going to affect them adversely.

What is interesting, and Rostropovich comes to mind, are the cases of those who found fame in the West but wanted to be buried on Russian soil. There are also people who symbolically took a little bit of Russian soil when they left. The talent is gone.

In addition to the steady stream of eminent Americans, we had an unending series of high level visits. I came back to Washington for Gorbachev's visit to Washington in 1987. President Reagan came to Moscow in 1988.

In 1990, Gorbachev went to Washington again. I did not go back for that visit. We had any number of visits by Secretaries of State Shultz and Baker. In 1988, before the Reagan visit, the consul general, Max Robinson, who lived a few doors up, invited us to a reception for some of the human rights dissidents, refuseniks and other people who were trying to emigrate; we made sure our Russian Jewish friends got to that reception. George Shultz was there, Colin Powell was there. I kidded my friends later they were not Jewish enough, they were not pushy enough. "You gotta get in there and introduce yourselves" to Colin Powell and others, I said. Let them know who you are. One way or another, they became very well known and were at the top of the Reagan list when he came out to Moscow a few months later.

We had any number of congressional delegations and many of them were groups of senators. Senator Bradley of New Jersey is the one whom I remember best. I would have to go back and see how many times he came out but he made the most favorable impression. He did not come out for show and I am not saying all CODELS came for show. But he really came for substance and he was particularly interested in economic issues. We did have him one time at our

townhouse for lunch with our Russian Jewish friends but he wanted to know about things like Soviet demographics and the whole economic situation.

Despite his interest in economics, I was quite often the control officer, partly because his point of contact in Washington before he came out was my friend Greg Guroff at USIA. I did not travel with Bill Bradley when he went to Central Asia. People from the economic section did but I did go with him on any number of appointments and these were really substantive. He asked deep, probing questions. He came back with a lot of information.

We had other senators such as George Mitchell and John Glenn. Senator Glenn met with the first woman cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova, and they talked about space flight. But it was Senator Bradley whom I remember most prominently.

I don't think that any USIS post anywhere in the world was busier or was receiving more attention during this time than Moscow. But not everyone understood that. There was something called the USIA Advisory Commission and in June of 1988, they had a meeting in Berlin, right after the Reagan visit to Moscow. They invited the PAOs from London, Paris, Bonn, Rome, all the traditional West European posts with senior PAOs who were mostly ten years older than I was.

I said to people back in Washington "don't you think they should have the PAO from Moscow? There is no other post that has more going on from the USIA point of view right now. We just had the President of the United States. We have all these programs and issues." So at the last minute, they invited me to attend that meeting in Berlin. It wasn't for my ego that I wanted to go. I had plenty of chances to travel but I felt they were trapped in old thinking. These guys had to be reminded you might want to have the PAO, not just from Moscow but from Warsaw and a few other places.

I have another category here in my notes called *perestroika* and *glasnost*, different ways in which those concepts came to life. I mentioned earlier that soon after we returned to Moscow in 1987, we went out to dinner at a place near Red Square. When we came out, we observed a demonstration by Crimean Tatars on Red Square. Demonstrations of any sort were unheard of at one time, let alone on Red Square.

On November 7th, 1987, I was one of two people who represented the embassy at Red Square. We were in the grandstands next to Lenin's Tomb for the parade. As I stood there, I thought of the contrast with my first tour when, on this great public holiday when you think people come out to cheer and watch the tanks go by, several of us from the embassy decided to see what it was really like. What we found was that streets were blocked and you really had to be approved to go anywhere, not only to Red Square but blocks away to watch the parade go by. It was anything but a public kind of event.

In 1987, I had my own pass. I could go down there and sit on the bleachers next to Lenin's tomb. On the other side was a very attractive young woman, Gorbachev's daughter. Raisa Gorbacheva was also there working the crowd. I couldn't get over to talk with her but for me, it was instructive to see the general secretary's family.

A photograph that always made an impression on me was Gorbachev at the funeral of his wife, dissolved in tears. Many of us will be in tears when our beloved spouse passes away but as I looked at that picture, he seemed so very human to me.

Q: What did she die of?

BROWN: I think she had cancer of some sort. She died in 1999, premature, in her sixties. To me, the man, Gorbachev, had humanity and does to this day.

Q: I was in Washington in the '80s and was walking down the street. They had Soviet flags up and Hugo Chavez was making a visit but I wasn't paying much attention. All of sudden the crowd split an awful lot and people waving and all. Up pulled this limousine and there was Gorbachev and we were about five feet apart waving out the window, a world leader

BROWN: Did he actually get out of the vehicle at that point?

Q: He may have somewhere else but

BROWN: It was on that visit in 1987 that he actually got out of the vehicle on Connecticut Avenue and worked the crowd. That was one of those transformational moments.

Q: When you were at the embassy were people coming up with their thoughts about Yeltsin?

BROWN: Yes. I can remember seeing Yeltsin at the July 14, 1990, Bastille Day reception at the French embassy. He showed up there and people were interested in him. By then, he was a well known personality and he probably had had quite a bit to drink already. This was well before he basically pulled Gorbachev's fate out of the fire by getting up on the tank but you can imagine this man getting up on a tank. He was a larger than life personality. I think at the time nobody really knew the role he was going to play but you did know he was a force to be reckoned with.

Q: There was a time, looking at it from the Washington point of view, Yeltsin was being denigrated as a drunk and a fool. It is usually at the lower level, sort of the munchkins of the White House and all were sort of knocking Yeltsin.

BROWN: Even at the time, Yeltsin had a reputation for being a drinker and for being pretty unpredictable. Nobody at the time could foresee what a major role he would play. I stayed in Moscow until the summer of 1990. This was still the Soviet Union. I didn't know anybody at that time who said within a year the Soviet Union will collapse and this whole thing will come apart. We were still very much talking about evolution.

Q: Were we looking at all, was anybody at all sort of sounding the independent republics' temperature?

BROWN: I think in the Baltics. The Baltics was where it was first felt. These were people who were the most ready to talk not necessarily about independence but about something more than just evolution.

The December 2011 issue of the Foreign Service Journal was devoted entirely to the Soviet Union during my second tour. The cover read “When the USSR Fell: The Foreign Service on the Front Lines” and the lead article was by Ambassador Matlock. Other articles quote from some now-released telegrams that they did analyzing what was going on. Even if they were sending back highly classified telegrams, nobody in mid-1990 would have come out and said flatly -- or did come out and say flatly -- this Soviet Union will not last. We were still thinking in terms of evolution and still casting our fate with Gorbachev entirely.

Q: Knowing human nature, particularly human nature in a bureaucracy, there is a tendency to straight line to predict things. This is the way it is; this is the way it always will be.

BROWN: We were not dealing with someone we disliked at the time. We were dealing with someone who gave us the opportunities for an accord we could never have imagined.

Q: Could you give a definition of perestroika and glasnost?

BROWN: At the time people were using these terms, *glasnost* was probably the easier one. Openness, transparency. *Perestroika* would be restructuring with the prefix “*pere*” meaning to redo, to change. It would be the more fundamental restructuring. It didn’t mean getting rid of the Soviet Union.

Perestroika is easy to illustrate through examples such as the biography of Bukharin that American professor Steve Cohen wrote. He was given a forum to talk about this biography and Bukharin’s widow came. This name would not even have been mentioned earlier.

Such as the staging of a play that in Russian we called *Bretski Mir*. The English title is something like Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Names like Trotsky were referred to in the play itself.

There was a week of conscience to honor the victims of Stalin (this may have been the occasion for the visit by Father Hesburgh). It would have been in the same context of looking back at the Stalinist period and the horrors of that time.

Some other miscellaneous memories:

My wife and I went for a weekend in Tallinn, Estonia. We got in touch with a Lutheran pastor there and he invited us to come to his church on Sunday morning. We accepted and the next thing I know, I am being invited to come up to the pulpit and say a few things which I did spontaneously. I tried to make them appropriate to a church service. I also talked a bit about my country. They were translated and apparently well received.

We were invited that evening to the pastor's home, where we enjoyed a simple but wonderful meal with their family and children. The pastor pointed out that that morning in the pulpit, he had been wearing a blue shirt. He had on a white clerical collar and his coat was black, fairly standard dress for a cleric. But he explained, "A few months ago I could have been arrested for wearing this outfit."

Those were the colors of the Estonian flag. Every time I see the Estonian flag, black, blue and white, I think of that pastor wearing the Estonian flag. He was a man of God in the pulpit preaching his message and wearing the garb of a cleric but he was also very proud of wearing an outfit that could have gotten him arrested a few months earlier.

I mentioned the writer Vladimir Voinovich who wrote any number of satires in the Soviet Union. We had been fortunate enough to meet him in Garmisch the year before we went back to Moscow. During our tour, he came back and there was a whole night devoted to him at the Writers' Union. He could come back and bring his satirical literature to the Writers' Union.

A man named Edward Lozansky – he was born in Ukraine but by 1990 he was living in the U.S. -- came out along with Senator Phil Gramm of Texas. They were going to establish an independent American university in Moscow. I imagined it as a university that would preach capitalism and all the virtues of capitalism.

What I especially remember is that Senator Gramm at some point said that the only reason people go to work in governments is to wield power. I decided I'd had enough of this. I had to bow and scrape for CODELs but I said to him, "That's not why I went into government service. I went into government work because President Kennedy inspired me to do public service." I basically let him know that I was disagreeing with him and was offended by what he had to say. He harrumphed.

Q: At some point Phil Graham in Congress had made some remark about American diplomats living in marble halls and drinking champagne or something like that just at the time that two of our diplomats were killed in Sarajevo. Not only Foreign Service officers but also the press spoke out against it.

BROWN: Then there was that morning, December 15, 1989, when I turned on the radio and heard that Sakharov had died. It was a moving moment. On the following Sunday morning, there was a public viewing in a building a little outside the center of downtown Moscow. My wife and I went. We could have shown our diplomatic cards and gone to the front of the line but chose not to. It was a bitter cold day. I did what Russians sometimes do. I took newspaper and stuck it in my shoes just to keep my feet a little farther away from the cold. We stood in line a couple of hours just to walk respectfully, silently past the open casket as friends of ours played appropriate string music.

I wanted to walk past Sakharov's casket after having done it the way Russians did it and then I stepped aside and stood there watching other mourners pass by. The estimates on the number of people there were relatively small but the line was extremely long. It was a fitting farewell to a great man.

It was bitter cold that day. The weather the next day changed radically. It was raining as they took his coffin to a grave outside Moscow.

On our first tour, we went frequently to the old American dacha. By now we had a new dacha. We didn't go to it quite as often. It was closer. There was also an international dacha that we went to more often on the Volga River. We would go there and if the weather was cold enough, we would go cross-country skiing on the frozen Volga.

We'd also go out to a place called Ismaylovo outside Moscow where every Sunday the artists would come. They didn't have to be approved. They could sell their wares. There was a lot of junk but occasionally if you had a good eye, you could pick up some really nice souvenirs.

Then there was the February day in 1988, Wednesday the 17th. We had a tie line to Washington, a 24-hour telephone line. We could use it also for personal calls but during the day it was limited to official calls. If I recall correctly, P&C was allotted from 2 to 3 so if I wasn't out of town or at some other activity, I would get on the phone at 2 o'clock and talk to my desk officer back in Washington where it was 6 in the morning. Yes, we had telegrams but this afternoon phone call was a very useful tool.

On this particular day I was talking to him, Rick Ruth, and there was a knock on the door and a woman on our staff named Laura Hodges opened the door and said "Phil, there's a fire on the fifth floor." I relayed the information to Rick, told him I needed to check and put down the phone. I stepped out of my office and I heard one of the information officers, Mike Hurley saying "yeah, I smell the smoke."

I told Rick there was a fire, hung up the phone, put away some papers, locked my safe, grabbed my hat and coat and headed out.

Sure enough, we made our way down one stairwell and I kept hoping we wouldn't come to a door that was locked for some "security" reasons. When we reached the courtyard, we had a view of a raging blaze on the fifth floor and a column of black smoke that went up higher than the roof of the building. Soviet fire trucks arrived and the firemen were allowed into the courtyard; they put out the fire quickly and as it turned out with minimal damage.

That night, we hosted a reception for IREX students and the next day, we went back to work. It was business as usual except for the smell of smoke and the fact that we were invited to wear old clothes.

Somebody could write a small, or not so small, book on fires at or fires related to AmEmbassy Moscow. The building was a horrible fire trap. Everybody got out safely that day. As one of my colleagues said, "After everyone was safe, I was cheering for the fire." He and others would have liked to see the whole building go up in smoke.

It was a fire trap; it was hot, so dirty. We didn't have anybody to come in and clean our offices, even empty the wastebaskets, that kind of thing. It was a wretched place to work. It was one of the many physical challenges of working in Moscow.

President Reagan's visit in 1988 memorable. There were concerts. Charles Wick was there. President Reagan made a public appearance on Red Square. I missed my daughter's college graduation to be in Moscow for the visit. "Sorry. I'd love to come to your college graduation from Tufts but the President of the United States is here." I don't put it in the category of sacrifice but it was one of those little prices you pay.

A few months later, we went with our wonderful Russian friends, Yuri and Tanya Zieman and their daughter Vera, for a last picnic out in the woods before they were able to leave; at last, they had received exit visas. Less than a year before that, during the Gorbachev visit, I was in Washington and picked up a copy of the Washington Post; there on page one was a picture of Yuri's older daughter, Galina, who had received permission to emigrate, a picture of her on the front page of the Post holding up a poster saying 'Let My Parents Emigrate'. You look at the picture and you have to pinch yourself for a moment to remember this is someone whom you know very well.

I did come home for Christmas in December of 1988. I flew one day after the Pan Am bombing. If I recall correctly, every embassy received a notice, an alert from Washington that there might be an incident or be alert or something. Our embassy was one of the few that took that and put it in the form of a memo to the staff. As a result of that, a lot of people thought we knew more than we did. I think it was just coincidental but there were questions raised about whether AmEmbassy Moscow knew something.

Q: Oh, yes. It became quite an issue.

BROWN: I flew from Moscow to Frankfurt and on to JFK and I had a copy of the International Herald Tribune that had the famous picture of the fuselage on the ground in Scotland.

Q: Lockerbie.

BROWN: The flight attendant asked me to turn it over so people couldn't see it. And then coming back to me later and asking to see the article. It was haunting.

From 1987 to 1989, we had a young woman named Sara Fenander working for us and living with us. We didn't have small children but nevertheless, it was very useful to have someone who would help out at receptions and do a little bit of the housework. She had just received a Master's in Russian from Stanford. A very attractive young woman, particularly to the Marines, who picked her out. But Sara was at arm's length with the Marines. She had no interest in that world at all. We gave her a great deal of liberty, far more than we were allowed to under the restrictions at the time, to go out with friends and have interaction with Russians just because we had a great deal of confidence in her. She had excellent Russian.

We were fortunate that by the time she came, there were any number of people in their 20's who were recruited as nannies or under the PA&E contract. Many of them were very bright, wonderfully outgoing young people. I remember one fellow who I realized was the great-grandson of Robert Frost.

Sometime in 1988, Sara and a group of these people went to a part of the Soviet Union, a part of Russia, that to this day very few people visit; Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk at the southern part of the Kamchatka Peninsula. It is that peninsula where the Korean airliner was shot down. They came back with the stories, amazing stories about salmon and people who had seldom met anyone from outside their own villages. It was a tribute to these people to go out and explore but it was also another example of what you could do at that time.

We attended the wedding of Susan Eisenhower and Roald Sagdeev, one of the Soviet Union's eminent scientists. A nice wedding at Spaso house on the same weekend that Secretary of State Baker was in town but we managed to find time in that high level visit.

I went back to Paris for the dedication of a new organ at the American Church in Paris. I sang in the choir (what a wonderful balance that was to my busy life in Paris) and to go back for the organ dedication; Ambassador Rodgers had been very "instrumental" in fundraising.

We found time even when the USIA inspectors were coming to make a weeklong trip to Ireland. I was pretty casual at that time about travel; I had so many opportunities to travel and I said to my wife that I would make this trip only if we simply winged it, no advance planning. So we got on this midnight Aeroflot flight from Moscow to Shannon. All the Russian planes refueled in Shannon and if there were 150 of us on the plane, 148 went on to Havana. My wife and I got off, rented a car and had a wonderful week completely spontaneous, unplanned, just going from one B&B to the next and then flew back to Moscow.

The Aeroflot return flight began in Lima, went from Lima to Havana, from Havana to Gander to refuel, from Gander to Shannon, from Shannon to Luxemburg and from Luxemburg to Moscow. If you had boarded in Lima on Friday, you would not get back to Moscow until Sunday. It was not an atypical Aeroflot connection. Even when it landed in Ireland, it was accompanied by some fire trucks.

I mentioned that Ambassador Matlock wrote a masterful book on the Soviet Union as did David Remnick of the Washington Post. We were privileged to be in the company of outstanding American journalists. One night, we were invited to a party for Bill Keller of The New York Times. He had just won the Pulitzer Prize for his reporting from Moscow.

P&C finally was assigned a couple of these young Americans under the PA&E contract. I was fortunate enough to pull away from Spaso House a young woman named Nancy Carney. She came and worked for me for the last six months of my assignment. She was so enthusiastic and so delighted to move away from the situation which she was serving drinks to actually come over and do something of substance. It seemed like the more assignments I gave to her, the more she thrived.

As I thought about saying farewell to people, I recalled that you could actually rent for a night an entire boat, a large boat, and do it with rubles. You could use it as a party boat for a night and I said, “Nancy, could you help me with this?”

She did help me. We did it on two separate nights, once for my official contacts and again for friends. It was summer so the days lasted long and we went out for several hours on the Moscow River to a big, wide bay. You had drinks and food. Even my Soviet contacts were awestruck by the fact that I could arrange this. What a nice way it was to say farewell to people rather than just another cocktail party.

Our tour ended on a weekend and on Sunday, we were invited to the Rostropovich dacha. He was not living there anymore but we were friends with his sister and her husband and they said, “Come out to the dacha” and we did. What a lovely place it was, the furnishings, the furniture, the hangings on the wall.

I have two distinct memories of that day. First was how relaxed I felt. I had a great job but I was pushing all the way for three years and that weekend, I knew I didn’t have to go to a country team meeting the next morning. I was totally relaxed.

The other recollection was that out in a corner of the garden was where Solzhenitsyn, with Rostropovich providing him refuge, sat and wrote Cancer Ward. I found it inspiring.

The next day, before we flew Aeroflot to Beijing, we had a meal at the newly-opened McDonald’s on Gorky Street. McDonald’s was attracting a huge crowd of Russians just because it was the first McDonald’s in Moscow. It was like a vicarious trip to the United States. McDonald’s soon learned they couldn’t put out trays because the trays walked out the door real fast but Russians were lined up outside for the McDonald’s experience.

My wife and I had decided we’d come home via China. We flew to Beijing and spent the better part of two weeks there and in Hong Kong. It was great to be able to look at China and think about the Moscow we had left behind. We had a hotel in Beijing that ran circles around any hotel we ever experienced in Moscow.

We had made the arrangements for our trip through American Express in Moscow. We got to Beijing and were escorted up to our room. There was a bowl of fruit on the table. I called American Express and said we are here for our tour. The man said, “Tour? The only tours we have here are going to Singapore” or something like that. I explained how I had made the reservation through American Express in Moscow and his tone changed. He said, “Oh, Mr. Brown, you are the tour.” This was one year after Tiananmen Square. There were no American tourists. So for ten days or more, my wife and I had a driver and a guide and we were it.

GREG THIELMANN
Russian Language Training, FSI
Washington, DC (1987-1988)

**Political/Military Affairs Officer
Moscow (1988-1990)**

Mr. Thielmann was born and raised in Iowa and was educated at Grinnell College and Princeton University. A specialist in Political-Military Affairs, he held a number of positions dealing with such matters as Strategic Proliferation, Arms Control and Missile Programs. He also served abroad at several posts in the capacity of Political Officer and Consular Officer. His last position was Chief, Office of Analysis for Strategic Proliferation and Military Affairs in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Mr. Thielmann was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004

THIELMANN: In '87 I went to Russian language training. So that was one of the nice things about my year on the Hill that I knew from the first that I would be entering Russian language training a year hence and then going to Moscow two years from the time I started on the Hill. That certainty about the future certainly helped me order things better. So in '87 I entered Russian language training in a ten-month program, realizing early on that I was at a certain disadvantage because so many of my classmates had either studied Russian in college or they were coming back from a tour in Yugoslavia with at least three-three Serbo-Croatian or they knew Polish or something like that. So I was really in the minority that had to struggle from scratch -- no Slavic languages. Some unexpected marginal benefits were knowing German and having other foreign languages. I mean, as the saying goes, the second foreign language is easier to learn than the first. I found out that interestingly Russian has a whole slew of words and expressions that come directly from German, mostly in the areas of science and war. So there were a few bonus words thrown in at the beginning that I already knew. But it was tough, and I didn't quite make it up to three-three at the end of the ten months. I got that six months into my tour. But the language was a frustration, because, while I got a minimum level of fluency that would allow me to do business in my area in the language, I never achieved the kind of fluency that I would've liked and I think that would've been possible if on the Russian side the security situation would've been different so that there would've been an easier way for me to plug into the society in which I was living. Diplomatic security in Moscow kept us from receiving any Russian television, for example. They wouldn't allow any cables to go into the embassy compound. We had our antennas, but it was very hard to get any kind of reception of Russian television. So we didn't have that opportunity to enhance our language. There was a conspiracy between the KGB and U.S. diplomatic security to prevent us from knowing any Russian. I say that somewhat facetiously. But in the real world that was a double barrier. Even our Russian language teachers at post at one point were sort of expelled from the embassy. I was going to a Department of Commerce office outside the embassy where we were sort of unwelcome. Then for a while diplomatic security told us we should meet in a little sort of Pizza Hut-like building through which we passed to go into our compound, which was totally inadequate. It seemed at one point when we were literally or at least figuratively told, well, just meet in the snow banks somewhere because we don't want you anywhere near embassy property. So that made it very hard to both solidify and improve the fluency level in Russian.

Q: You were there from eighty—what '88?

THIELMANN: '88 to 1990.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

THIELMANN: The ambassador was Jack Matlock. He arrived a few months before I did and then served another year after I left.

Q: Well, what was the, in '88 when you got there, what was the sort of Soviet-American situation?

THIELMANN: It was a fascinating time to be there because in general our relations were improving with the Soviet Union. Gorbachev was in charge. He was sort of solidifying his power base at the time, much less tentative than when he first took over in nineteen, as head of the Communist Party in 1985. It was, in 1988 the CIA was still fighting a rearguard action to say that Gorbachev was just like all the others. There was nothing new here. He was just a little bit smarter. Our evidence on the ground from Moscow I think showed a different picture that there were a lot of very encouraging and interesting things going on in the Soviet Union. I was right in the middle of one of the most promising changes in Soviet arms control policy.

Q: You're job, what was your job?

THIELMANN: My job, I was the political section's political military affairs officer. So interestingly that portfolio for a number of years before had been handled by one person. It was handled by one person when I was there. Although during the time when I was there, there was also a new office opening up to run the new arms control implementation functions of having inspectors coming into the Soviet Union and everything. So they had several people on that staff, but it was still one person to engage the Soviets on arms control matters to report on what Soviet thinking was both official thinking and in the institutes that wrote on policy and from which some of the ideas derived. It was an overwhelmingly heavy burden. I mean, early on when I arrived there I said we've got to have at least two officers here to take advantage of the new opportunities that were opening up. Because it was only shortly before I arrived that if the embassy political officer wanted to make a demarche on his counterpart on the Soviet foreign ministry, you would write a letter, say what you wanted to talk about, send it over and then wait for days or weeks for a response. There were all kinds of other meetings that you would arrange with similar difficulty or you couldn't arrange them at all. But during that two years that I was there, everything opened up. I mean, when I was there, it was much like in the arms control it was much like serving in a western European embassy. I would call up the phone, ask to talk with my Soviet foreign ministry counterpart, request a meeting, often get it the same day, walk down the street, go into the office and conduct business.

Q: I mean there's a story that I've heard from several sources at some of these arms control meetings between the Soviets and the United States that we would say well, we understand that you have so many war heads and you have this and that. The Soviet military would sort of get

white and basically go over and say, “look, our people, these civilians over here, aren’t cleared to have this information” even though we had gotten it. They weren’t passing it on. So my question is how well plugged into the Soviet military affairs were your counterparts in the foreign ministry?

THIELMANN: This evolved over time. It’s certainly true that it was frustrating from the point of view of a military specialist at the State Department because we knew so much more about both our own military force posture and the Soviet military force posture than our Soviet diplomatic counterparts did. So in a lot of ways it was the military that was the more interesting to talk to about these issues. Yet there is a big cultural divide there. The Soviet military did not feel comfortable talking to American diplomats for the most part. They felt much more comfortable talking to their U.S. military counterparts. So we were going through a period of time when one could actually talk with a relative degree of quality from a same general vantage point talking to one of the members of the institutes like Alexei or Bartov, one of the defense specialists.

Q: This is Canadian-American Institute.

THIELMANN: USA and Canada, and then there was another one, ENEMO (European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations?). I can’t even remember now what that Soviet acronym stands for, but there were basically two different institutes that had kind of well rounded staffs on a number of foreign policy and international theater questions. Those people would study our own literature pretty extensively. So they knew a lot about Soviet military forces through our literature. Then through their own means they would buttress that with a little bit of knowledge of the Soviet order of battle. But it was a very fascinating time because of all the new things opening, the new possibilities. As a mid-level foreign service officer, much of our work was made more interesting and new opportunities created by both Matlock’s efforts as ambassador and also the high level officials coming from the United States, like Defense Secretary Aspen who came to the Soviet Union when I was there. He came actually from the East as I recall, going to Soviet test site in Kazakhstan as well as the space launch Cosmodrome, gaining access to ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missiles) sites, all kinds of things that the U.S. had never done before. I also went with Ambassador Matlock to the Crimea for the first visit of U.S. war ships since World War II to a Soviet port. So all those sort of new experiences were there to be reported on and chronicled by political officers.

Q: What role did the military attachés play? Were you both working on the same thing or how did that work?

THIELMANN: It actually worked very well in Embassy Moscow. I served enough that I’ve seen that defense attachés sometimes don’t work very well with their political section counterparts. The embassy in Moscow at least during my two year window seemed to get some of the most impressive officers. There were two generals who were head of the defense unit in Moscow when I was there, first General Rock and then General Gavin, very different kind of individuals with different kinds of strengths but both very impressive representatives of the military who had good contacts, who were respected by their Soviet counterparts and who would have access to a different kind of things than we would have access to. So once we gained mutual respect, I thought it was a very smooth working relationship in which we both sort of specialized even

though the overall subject matter was very similar. We both specialized in making our own individual contributions, and I think I feel pretty good about reporting coming out of Embassy Moscow on the Defense side and the State Department side during that period.

Q: My impression of that period is "trust but verify," Things were really changing in attitude. But the whole idea is okay, but we'll go out there and take a look on the ground. I think this would be very difficult for Soviet officials to adjust to.

THIELMANN: Very difficult. It was a completely different way of life for them. I mean, they were much more indoctrinated with secrecy and secrecy from their own society. I mean the spending amounts, none of those things were anyone's business except the Soviet military. That meant that when later on, when the Duma was introduced, it was an enormous hurdle to get over the idea that members of Congress should know something about what the Soviet military wanted to do or actually fund it. That was really revolutionary.

Q: Well, when you arrived there in 1988, was there any feeling about what would happen in the end of 1989? I mean, the Berlin Wall going and essentially the Soviet bloc falling apart. Was anybody saying oh boy, they're on the brink? What were you getting?

THIELMANN: I think Ambassador Matlock was probably a better authority on this because of his senior position and the kind of correspondence he would have with the top level of the State Department and his being privy to meetings with high level Soviet figures. Not all of that stuff was transparent to us at the time as I've seen from reading some of the things Matlock has written since. I would have to say in general that we did not have a sense of imminent collapse. We had a sense that very important, very significant changes were taking place and that there was some tectonic shifts going on, and I was amazed at the time. I remember being amazed contemporaneously at the kind of things that Shevardnadze would say as Soviet foreign minister. I mean he would say things, he would kind of ridicule the notion, which was really the official Soviet propaganda line, that the NATO countries were looking for opportunities to invade the Soviet Union. I mean, he would more or less say, "Why would they want to do that? There's nothing we have here for them." He would talk fairly openly about the disaster represented by Afghanistan and the deployment of SS-20 missiles as being things which showed the bankruptcy of the Soviet decision making process. Well, this was incredibly sharp and open criticism. This would be quite sharp for a democratic society let alone the kind of the Soviet society represented. So all that was actually going on at the time, and I think a lot of us were saying that because of all that there were more real opportunities here for making arrangements with and dealing differently with the Soviet Union than we had before. I don't think very many people envisioned the speed with which this would happen and what happened in Eastern Europe in the couple months leading up to the fall of the wall. One can certainly point to memos and other things being done only months before the fall of the wall to document that feeling that this really did come out of the blue.

Q: Was there a feeling of comfort with President Reagan at the end of his time and a feeling that here is a man who'd come out of the quite far right in the American political spectrum dealing with the Soviet Union. I'm talking about among you officers there and all that. How did you feel about all this?

THIELMANN: Well, just speaking personally, I mean I was disconcerted from early on at how little interest Reagan had in the details of defense and foreign policy. So I saw him as representing a profound sort of bottomless pit of ignorance which left me feeling very insecure. The thing that made me feel much more calm about Reagan--and I think this extended to many of my colleagues--was that, once he did develop a personal relationship with Gorbachev, after his own demonization of the Soviets as simply being part of an evil empire and as some sort of broodish automatons as part of this Soviet monolith or whatever, Reagan himself developed a different mental image of his negotiating partners. That made a big difference because one got the feeling that now this Administration at the highest level actually wanted to establish a modus vivendi with the Soviet Union, whereas before it seemed like the administration wanted only to intimidate and vanquish this country. So I think the IMF agreement, the signing of that agreement, and the personal relationship that Reagan and Gorbachev developed made everyone feel a little safer and a little more hopeful about the future directions of policy.

Q: Well, now the foreign ministry of any country usually consists of more sophisticated people particularly in a totalitarian, closed society like the Soviets because they've had to deal with the outside. Did you find sort of a relaxation and kind of a sense of fun and enjoyment of doing the job there among your equivalents in the Foreign Ministry?

THIELMANN: I really did. That was one of the most pleasant and satisfying parts of the job. Obviously in the back of my mind was the knowledge about the great divide between the Soviet Union and America. The ideological hostility, the sort of the zero sum notion about U.S.-Soviet relations and all of that very heavy Cold War baggage was in the back of my mind. So it was a special thrill when you thought that you were actually connecting with a Soviet diplomat and that together you were actually advancing the relationship in a way that would benefit both countries and third parties. That was really among the most satisfying parts of my career. I had the good fortune to be dealing with a portfolio that allowed me to engage with some of the most Americanized of all the Soviet diplomats, people who had been engaged with the United States and arms control negotiations previously, some of whom who had served in the United States. Those who had both a good command of English but also -- I wouldn't want to overstate this -- a more western way of thinking than some of the other diplomats. So I actually went through that time with close contacts with, well, people like Pavel Polischenko the bald-headed face you would see as Gorbachev's interpreter everywhere he went.

Q: Oh yes, the moustache.

THIELMANN: He was actually a Soviet diplomat as well. I would be able to talk to them. With these people I developed a level of trust, which I think is really the prerequisite for effective relations between diplomats. Not to say that one would share all of ones secrets but enough understanding and information that you could rely on what they were saying about making arrangements, or if you could get insight into what the real reasons for a country doing something was going beyond what you were reading in the paper, that kind of relationship. So that was something that I really treasured from the experience, and then of course there was what we would call the "institutniki," the people at the institute, Alexei Bartov, Andrei (inaudible) who were more or less contemporaries in terms of age and had similar professional interests.

That too made it a special relationship. I had my fortieth birthday party in Moscow and was able to invite professional contacts to a birthday party in the American embassy compound. I actually felt I was inviting friends who were representing the Soviet government as well as people who were important for me to have as contacts. That just is a little parenthetical aside. That party apparently created fits for the diplomatic security because they were very worried about any Soviet visitors committing a technical attack on the American compound even though our instructions were that we should assume that everything from our bedrooms to our houses was all bugged on the compound. So I don't know if they were worried if the Soviets were going to change their batteries or something, but we actually had to escort them to the bathroom and everything.

Q: This sounds like in a way you were almost viewing the diplomatic security as the equivalent to the KGB. I mean it was almost the enemy.

THIELMANN: They were working for us, and I did at least have sympathy for what they were trying to do. But I didn't have much sympathy for the way they executed it or their degree of sophistication. I mean we got the strong feeling that diplomatic security would be most happy if we would just shut down the embassy and go home or else that we would never leave the embassy. That is, you didn't get a very strong sense that they understood what we were there for, what our mission was. Obviously their mission was to protect our safety and protect our secrets from migrating to the Soviets, but I would argue an important part of their job too was to remember the prime reason we were there. So yeah, it was at times a not terribly cooperative relationship. I spent a lot of time arguing over who should pay the extra guards hired for my birthday party, and diplomatic security wanted to represent it as something that I had requested. I didn't request it at all. They're the ones who insisted that there be special guards hired and paid overtime to protect the bathrooms while this party was going on and to keep the Soviets from going to the Saint Patrick's Day dance that was just a few feet away in another area of the embassy compound. So we sent memos back and forth about who should pay for this for a long time. It was quite an episode.

Q: I served five years in Belgrade where probably the degree of observance was not as heavy, but it was still there. At a certain point you get to realize how little of what you do really, I mean our phone was tapped and I must say the Serb security service learned a great deal about organizing a Girl Scout troop by my wife in the international community. Most of what we do really is trying to communicate our ideas anyway.

THIELMANN: That's right. If you're having an affair with someone or you have some deep family problem, that's obviously the kind of thing that can be exploited by the other side. But, I don't think that if, as diplomatic security requests of us, any time you want to discuss finances you must be sure to do it in the bubble of the embassy. I think that's going a little bit overboard, and I noticed that, whenever we would want to schedule the bubble, it seemed like diplomatic security was always in it meeting. It was kind of hard to find time. So you have to use some commonsense in these things and realize that, as you say, most of your business is not sensitive at all and not really of use to the other side. Part of being a professional is understanding what is really sensitive and where you have to be careful, talking at home to your wife and others about it. So I think the reminders that many of our conversations were vulnerable to interception were

good, but we weren't really given as much credit as we should have been for our professionalism and our ability to use commonsense.

Q: Well, was this security a result of the Sergeant Lonetree affair?

THIELMANN: Much of it was. That was the whole other element of our life in Moscow, which was much more difficult because of the events that started with Lonetree. The combination of the penetration of the Soviet embassy.

Q: You mean the American embassy.

THIELMANN: Yes, I'm sorry. The American embassy. The facts of this are still sort of murky. I don't really know to this day how much of it was penetrated, but clearly there had been some connivance between some of the Marines, and some Soviets did get to places in the American embassy they were not supposed to. So the consequence of that and the discovery that the new chancellery had been wired in a way that our technical experts had not anticipated or understood -- those two things together left a very sort of heavy security cloud over the embassy and much more stringent demands on us than there would have been otherwise. Then to add to all of that, we had expelled Soviet diplomats from the mission in New York in great numbers a couple of years before I arrived there -- at least one year before I arrived. So the Soviets then retaliated by pulling out all of their Soviet employees from our embassy, which meant for a while there we were the only embassy in the world that had no nationals from the host country working in the embassy. Because labor is very cheap in the Soviet Union and there was much to be done, of course there was a lot of work that all of a sudden American embassy members had to worry about. So the year before I arrived there were all kinds of horror stories about diplomats maintaining boilers and doing a lot of manual labor whether it was snow removal or other things that significantly kept them away from doing the jobs for which they had been sent to Moscow. By the time I had gotten there, the U.S. had started hiring contract Americans to come and do some of these critical tasks. For example we had a few American embassy drivers who had some minimal Russian language training. So they were considered secure and could take us around town unlike the previous Soviet drivers that we had to assume were working for the KGB. The problem here was there were very few, and so as a first secretary in the embassy, I always had to drive myself everywhere. This meant, if I had to make a demarche or go to a reception or to one of the institutes, I had to get out my CIA-made Moscow map and get in my Sputnik, my Russian car and drive on roads, which were usually not cleared during blizzards and had inadequate signage and bizarre Stalin-era traffic rules. This required a significant skill and caused stress. That of course only added to some of the other things like even cleaning the political section. We were the ones who had to vacuum, clean windows or whatever else needed cleaning. These private contractors couldn't bother doing something like that.

Q: We're talking about the working conditions. What was happening while you were there in the political-military section?

THIELMANN: Because of the inspections opened up under the INF treaty and some other ...

Q: This is prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall and all that.

THIELMANN: That's right. When I arrived the INF treaty was already being implemented. It was a 1987 treaty. So the unit in the embassy that was interfacing with the Soviets was up and running. We had a port of entry at Ulan-Ude deep in Siberia, and there were American military personnel and other inspectors going in and out and a whole series of exchanges with the Soviet military, which were a new thing. I mentioned the Sixth Fleet visit to Sevastopol, homeport of the Soviet Black Sea fleet. There was a lot of interaction with members of the Soviet military that had not occurred before, and they would be receiving high level delegations in ways that they had not done before.

Q: Did you talk to the Soviet military too? I mean was this--

THIELMANN: I did some, but even though we had access, I probably wasn't able to exploit it quite as well because I was not in the military myself, not in the U.S. military. My Russian, while adequate was not at the level of fluency that would allow me to, let's say, easily develop a rapport with Soviet military that was already disconcerted by talking to American diplomats and most of whom had no English or no serviceable English. This would all be in Russian.

Q: Were you there when Admiral Crowe made a visit, I mean with the head of the Soviet military. I can't think of his name? He committed suicide.

THIELMANN: Sergei Akhromeyev.

Q: Yes.

THIELMANN: I don't think so. I'm not quite sure.

Q: I'm not sure when that happened.

THIELMANN: I'm drawing a blank on that right now. I was there, I mean, I was recalling the other day in connection with an op ed I was writing about Condi Rice. Before saying some not so nice things about Dr. Rice, I was recalling my accompanying her as a member of the NSC in 1990 to a meeting with Akhromeyev in the Kremlin on a Saturday, a one-on-one meeting, in which I was very impressed by Rice. She was speaking fluent Russian, dealing with Akhromeyev who was in uniform but at that time a special advisor to President Gorbachev. I remember being somewhat amazed that for this sixty-six year old World War Two veteran that he was doing business in Russian with an African American, a young African American woman talking about Soviet military policy. To me it was a credit to Condi Rice that she could establish that level of professional respect by someone representing a macho, racist cultural perspective.

Q: And generational.

THIELMANN: And generational. That's right. So I was very favorably impressed and increasingly less impressed with Condi Rice as the years have gone by.

Q: Did you go down to the Sevastopol visit?

THIELMANN: Yes.

Q: How did that go?

THIELMANN: That was an incredible experience. It was incredible because it was not a Moscow event. It was in an enclosed military area. It was an area that had never seen -- I mean most of these people down there had never seen -- an American in their life. All of a sudden there were hundreds of sailors in white uniforms walking the streets. Then there was even General Greg Govan in a green uniform, a U.S. Army general. Govan was very fluent in Russian. He had a politician's manner. He would walk down the streets of Sevastopol surrounded by Russian kids, and he was clowning with them and joking with them, and it was an amazing spectacle. There were some organized exchanges, I think some sports contests, but just sort of Americans walking the streets and you'd hear these Sixth Fleet sailors saying this was the best port visit they'd ever had. I thought, "What? These guys who sail around Greece and Italy, and this is the best port visit." I think it was simply because the Soviets were so friendly, and it was such a novel experience. It was like a carnival atmosphere. Of course the U.S. naval attaché had to do a special video for the Sixth Fleet members reminding them about the no fraternization policy, and we heard at the time that there were hundreds of prostitutes coming down to the Crimea for the occasion. Then I did notice late at night as I was going back to my headquarters, there seemed to be at least a couple of American sailors who were walking alone with a woman on each arm. So I'm not sure if the policy was adhered to completely.

Q: Well, we've gone through that one before a number of times with complete lack of success.

THIELMANN: Yes.

Q: How did the events of 1989, because this was a cumulative thing, hit you from the vantage point of Moscow. I mean, was this sort of something, you understood that things were happening. I mean this was going to be a year that would shape the world more or less. Were you understanding the significance of it all?

THIELMANN: I think -- and again my specific beat was arms control and not sort of what was going on in Eastern Europe -- but I think as those unusual events occurred in Czechoslovakia and Germany, we certainly took note and this is very significant. But even then one or two months beforehand the breaching of the Berlin Wall came as a real shock. I remember getting a call from my wife in my office in our splendid isolation. Of course we didn't have CNN. Only the Soviet foreign ministry had CNN. My wife said something like the Berlin Wall is falling, but there were people crossing over on the wall and it was so electrifying. It was just an incredible piece of news, and then to see the way it played out from the Moscow point of view was also fascinating. I think that month after that was one of the most interesting of my career because for one thing the political officer who was responsible for following German-Soviet relations was gone. I was his backup. So I was the one who went around to the people in the Soviet foreign ministry who were responsible for relations with East Germany. I would go to events where the East German military attachés were invited to our defense attachés. There were good contacts with the Germany embassy, which I maintained. So to see that from all these different perspectives of

people whose countries were not only intimately affected by all this but whose lives were intimately affected. I mean, East German diplomat or an East German general officer -- I mean these people -- their lives as they had known it were coming to an end. So it was an incredible perspective. Then also to realize, again no particular insight here, but to realize how worried the British and the French were about unification. I mean the three parties that seemed to be the most worried were our World War Two partners. The Soviet government, the British and the French were deeply worried about what this would mean. To get that sort of firsthand kind of emotional impression about that -- this is something that I think was very important that we reported at the time, to get a sense of how the Soviet people were much less worried than the Soviet government about the consequences of unification. I mean one would have thought from an American perspective that this nation so traumatized by the German invasion and Nazi atrocities would rise as one in opposition and fear to seeing a unified Germany. But I think for us from a Moscow perspective it was much more the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the highest and oldest levels of the government -- they were the ones who were panicky. My counterparts of my age and others who grew up in the post-World War Two era, they were not traumatized by a united Germany. A lot of these people had seen Germans too, post-World War Two Germans. The images of Germany as the evil empire were already significantly altered by the reality before the fall of the Wall.

Q: Leading up to this time was there any occasion where things were beginning to get wobbly to use a term. Were you, was there concern that maybe the Soviets would move into East Germany because it's really a matter of, will the Soviets move or won't they?

THIELMANN: I think there was definitely real concern about that. That's one of the things, which I think made everyone's pulse go up a little bit. There were huge numbers of Soviet troops in place. There was always the possibility of some unscripted incident occurring between the German population and Soviet troops. Looking back on it, that was something we were very lucky about. All of those hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers heavily armed, sitting surrounded by not so friendly populations and all these countries of Eastern Europe, and we managed to escape the whole thing with not only no incidents, but the Soviet Army withdrew on schedule. I mean that's an amazing thing. So I think we remained tense for quite a while after the fall of the wall.

Q: Well, were we looking at the Baltic States? Was this also a place that was a concern to us? I mean what was happening there?

THIELMANN: As I remember at the time we weren't quite as concerned about the Baltic States as we became later because the Soviet Union was still intact at that time. The Baltics were fairly well integrated into the Soviet Union -- I mean integrated in a sense that an awful lot of Russians lived there. An awful lot of powerful Soviets would have vacation plans in the Baltic. Even at that time it was still hard to imagine the Baltics becoming independent countries when the Berlin Wall fell. I had a trip to Riga, Latvia in my last few months. I think this would have been the summer of 1990. A couple of things came out of that experience. One is just to be reminded again that Latvia was a very different kind of place than the Soviet Union. I mean the manicured lawns, the art deco architecture of the city, the overall Hanseatic League flavor of the city that remained after all this time was so palpable that I remember thinking at the time that with

economic opening that whether this country was independent or not, this was going to be the kind of place which exploits the opening and takes advantage of new possibilities here much faster than other places. But to my memory I don't think even at the time I left in 1990, that we were looking at the Baltic States as soon to be independent.

Q: Was anybody within the embassy, political officers, economic officers, looking and saying, Kazakhstan and all the other stans and the Ukraine, might split up or not? Was anybody even contemplating that?

THIELMANN: We were certainly watching things at the time. There were some bloody protests in Georgia that were put down fairly brutally. There were movements in Kazakhstan, anti-nuclear testing movements. There were other things which were clearly creating serious problems for the Soviet center and control problems and manifestations of ethnic and cultural identities that we hadn't seen manifested in a long time. Of course we didn't know where that was going to end either. But again I'm trying to remember what was in our minds when I left in 1990, and I'm not sure then that we had any idea. I don't think a lot of us saw in the immediate future the break up of the Soviet Union. That was still kind of an unfeasible thought even after the Berlin Wall.

Q: Well, this was your first time there, wasn't it?

THIELMANN: Yes.

Q: Did you also come away with a feeling that God this place doesn't work or did you feel that maybe economically it may not work, but it's certainly a strong, strongly held society through military force, political force, that sort of thing? How did you feel about it?

THIELMANN: I definitely had the feeling that this is a very dysfunctional country. This is sort of a pathetic place that even in the summertime can't come up with decent produce. What kind of a place is it that we bought our vegetables all year round at the Polish frozen food store or ordered things from Stockman's in Helsinki to be delivered on the train. I mean, a city of Moscow's size, a city where there were just starting to be some co-op restaurants where you could get some decent food. It was just starting. But it was still the kind of place where, when we went to Leningrad our first fall there in 1988, the city still had a lot of the decaying splendor of Catherine the Great who built most of the building that remained and the canals and everything, a great potential for beauty and a candy for the eye. But the whole city was just extremely hostile to tourists and had no place to sit and have a tea, no place to walk and get in out of the cold, just that sort of a feeling of just barren wasteland where all these millions of people are living. Then there was a kind of brutality of society. One of my favorite metaphors is right outside the U.S. embassy there was a ring road there with like seventeen lanes of traffic. They had the pedestrian stoplights timed so that people literally had to run across the street. To see like old babushkas with grocery bags in both hands walking who knows how many miles sort of slipping and sliding on the ice across the street before the completely unforgiving huge trucks would gun their way through this intersection. I thought, what a society this is! Then in spite of the fact that there were little pockets of great beauty from the past, there was the incredible ugliness of the housing stock, the decay of everything. I mean the average apartment building's door, the sort of decrepit

condition of the entryways, all of this stuff was depressing to the spirit, and one got the feeling that hardly anything really works very well in this whole country.

Yet one remembers World War Two and the German underestimation of the determination of the Soviet people. One remember the space program. I mean they did beat us in putting a cosmonaut into orbit. They beat us in landing a robot on the moon, I think, or at least the far side of the moon. There were some aspects of the space race that the Soviets did first, and then of course they developed ICBM missiles before the United States and to this day have a record of reliability in their space launch vehicles which exceeds our own. So what a contrast and how hard it was to put the evidence of incompetence and lethargy and decay together with those genuine achievements in the society.

Q: Well, then Greg, it's probably a good place to stop. You left there when, in 1990?

THIELMANN: Summer of 1990.

WILLIAM BROOKS
Office of the Legal Advisor: Moscow Embassy Arbitration Case
Washington, DC (1988-1989)

Mr. Brooks was born in Wisconsin and raised in Michigan. He received his advanced education at the University of Michigan and Wayne State University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1980, Mr. Brooks served several tours of duty at the State Department in Washington, D.C., and abroad at Toronto, Khartoum and Brussels. In his assignments Mr. Brooks dealt primarily with economic and trade matters as well those concerning Anti-terrorism and Nuclear Risk Reduction. Mr. Brooks was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: So you then went to the Moscow arbitration case. This was when?

BROOKS: It probably would have been '88.

Q: What is the Moscow arbitration business?

BROOKS: It was an international arbitration case against the Soviet Union over the construction of the new embassy building in Moscow, which had a number of problems, including ordinary construction delay and shoddy construction issues and the rather unique issue of having bugs implanted throughout it.

Q: You were doing this for how long?

BROOKS: I was on a detail assignment to the Legal Advisor's office for one year.

Q: Now what was the state of play when you got there? This was in ...

BROOKS: I think we decided in '88. We already filed claims. During the year that I was there we revised our claims to make them more specific, especially in quantifying the monetary damages. I prepared a memo while I was there on the chain of custody of the evidence of the bugging that we were removing from the embassy and did some other tasks as well. However, things were moving rather slowly at the time. Part of the problem was that the old Soviet Union, the evil empire, was becoming our new best friend, sort of, and there were some doubts within the administration as to how we wanted to proceed. That continued after I was gone. The new administration did a study and I think in the end the arbitration case just went away, and we made whatever decisions we made with regard to the embassy building based upon other considerations.

Q: What was the state, again, when you got there, of the embassy building?

BROOKS: It was built but it was not occupied. There was also a housing complex that went along with it and we did begin to move into that, but because of the evidence of the bugging that we found we stayed in the old embassy and didn't move into the building.

Q: At one point, Ambassador Robert Strauss was handed, by the then-head of the KGB, the so-called plans of all the bugging, as things were changing rapidly. Was that during your watch?

BROOKS: No, that would have been after.

Q: What were you supposed to do?

BROOKS: What were we supposed to do? We were supposed to proceed with this arbitration case and hopefully get a decision from the arbitrators that the Soviet Union was responsible for all of our claims and collect monetary damages so that we could use those to reconstruct or build a new embassy.

Q: Who was the arbitrator?

BROOKS: The arbitrators hadn't been chosen.

Q: Where would they come from in something like this?

BROOKS: There are international arbitrators. International arbitration cases are not unusual and there are people who do this more or less for a living. There were procedures in place for choosing the arbitrator. The United States was to choose one. There would have been three. The Soviet Union would choose another one and then the two of them would choose a third.

Q: What about the workmanship? All of us are familiar with these huge apartment complexes in Moscow that are falling apart before they're even occupied over the years. Was there anything different? Did you get a feel that we had made extra, even extraordinary efforts to get good construction?

BROOKS: It didn't seem so. I was never on this team, but I heard stories that during the construction process ... Whereas we do a construction project here in the United States involving concrete — you're familiar with the big trucks that turn and mix the concrete? There are none of those. They pour concrete and mix it by hand at the site and frequently you get problems with hardening before you get it in place.

Q: And well-mixed, too?

BROOKS: Well-mixed, too? Certainly. I've also heard stories about little old women in babushkas digging in the dirt, where we would use cranes.

Q: While you were doing this, was there a feeling this was a futile effort, wasn't going anywhere?

BROOKS: I think we tended to reject that idea but at least in the beginning, the first six months or so, we felt that we had gone to great lengths to build a timeline for the construction project, how it was supposed to proceed and all the elements of it to be delivered on time. We used the same process to construct a timeline for our arbitration case. When I first arrived we were more or less on schedule. A year later we hadn't made much progress and it was clear we'd fallen behind schedule. By the time I left there it was pretty clear that it wasn't moving forward very vigorously.

RICHARD M. MILES
Consul General
Leningrad (1988-1991)

Ambassador Miles was born in Arkansas in 1937. He earned an associate degree from Bakersfield College, Bachelor's degree from University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign service in 1966. His overseas posts include Oslo, Belgrade, Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia. Ambassador Miles was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

MILES: I already had the assignment to Leningrad as Consul General. When I was offered the assignment I was told I could either go to Moscow as Political Counselor or Leningrad as Consul General—what did I want to do? My inclination was to go to Moscow because it's the capital and consuls general in Leningrad had tended to die an early career death and also frankly to be rather bored. I mean, you can only go to the ballet and the opera so many times. But Sharon convinced me that the times were changing and that it would be a lot of fun to be out there and to be a big fish in a small pond rather than to be lost in Embassy Moscow where, whenever anything really sexy would come along, the Ambassador or the DCM would snap it up and the Political Counselor and his people would just be expected to provide them the back-up that they needed. So it didn't take much convincing and we went off to Leningrad. I have often thought about it—I have been a principal officer five times since then, and I must say the Leningrad

assignment was the best assignment I ever had. It was a fascinating time, I had an excellent team and we really covered the waterfront.

Q: You were there from?

MILES: Eighty-eight to '91.

Q: Eighty-eight to '91, which is—did you leave Leningrad or did you leave St. Petersburg?

MILES: It was still Leningrad. I left in June 1991. It only changed later that year after I left.

Q: Okay. When you got there in '88 how would you describe the situation in the Soviet Union?

MILES: Well, it certainly was different from when I had last been there on my first assignment to Moscow, '76 to '79. The economic conditions had gotten much worse. Leningrad is a city of over four million people; it's bigger than many countries and it's the second largest city in the Soviet Union—or now, in Russia. I was appalled by the deterioration of the infrastructure in the city. The streetcar tracks, for example, had not been repaired in such a long time that they would suddenly give way and street cars would fall over on their sides. Street lights were often burned out and not replaced. And when you would go into anything except the highest class museum, like the Hermitage or the Russian Museum, you'd be appalled at the fact that the walls needed painting or the floor needed shellacking or the windows needed repair. I mean, it was just incredibly shabby.

And then on the personal front, there were actually food shortages in Leningrad at that time. When we first went there people—Soviet citizens—would complain to us, and it was clear that the large variety of things which had been available to the ordinary consumer in the 1970s had been severely diminished. The example which the Russians used to use all the time was salami. Before, they would say, we used to have a choice of 10 or 15 different kinds of salami and now we get our choice of one or two if it's available at all. And that was quite true. Then later, around 1989, they actually had to introduce food rationing all over Russia but, again, Leningrad is a city of over four million people. That's a lot of people to feed. And so you had to have ration coupons in order to go and buy things like meat, milk, eggs, cheese and butter. In other words, the key items that you need to survive, with the exception of bread. You could usually find bread. And in the state stores where prices were set by the government, it was almost impossible to find basic staples—potatoes, cabbage, onions, and carrots. They were only available in the outdoor markets where prices were less controlled. The communist system was beginning to break down right in front of our eyes. We diplomats were given as many ration coupons as we wanted. There was no limit on the number that we could have, so we used to share them with our Russian friends, you know, to help them buy things. But then you had to find things to buy because the stores themselves were not supplied with a sufficient quantity of goods to meet consumer demands, even with rationing. Corruption became a big issue and at times you could get these grocery items only under the table, you know, by paying more than the going price and then your coupons didn't help very much. Our daughter Elizabeth was a student at Leningrad State University. She's a vegetarian and she relied on cheese and other dairy products for protein. Every day after classes, she would scour the city looking for cheese, yogurt and kefir;

she would queue up in long lines only to find maybe one kind of cheese, if that. Fortunately, we were able to supplement our diet with food ordered from Finland, so we were not in any way suffering as the Soviet people were at that time.

Q: This was before the real collapse of the Soviet system, but what was our analysis? Why after all these years? What was happening?

MILES: Well, we didn't know where this was going to lead. We could see clearly deterioration in the power at the center. The center was no longer holding. And by the way, while these conditions in Leningrad were bad, they were even worse in the military and on the naval ships. Sharon and I developed rather warm and friendly relations with the Soviet military in Leningrad. In general, U.S.-Soviet relations were not bad at that time; the Soviets had announced that they were going to withdraw from Afghanistan and this helped ease the tension between our two countries. Sharon and I and the staff of the Consulate General worked hard to develop relations across the board including with the local military there. Leningrad has always been an important military town. There is an air force base nearby, the naval base has a very long history going back several hundred years and Leningrad was home, as St. Petersburg is today, to the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District.

Q: This is tape five, side one, with Dick Miles. You were talking about the Soviet military?

MILES: Well, if I may say so, we got to know them pretty well, maybe, partly because of the absence of defense attachés. The only military people attached to the Consulate General were the six Marine security guards. The Soviet military didn't feel like we were trying to pry secrets out of them or anything. And after we did get to know them better, when we were in a position to have smaller meetings or to chat with the senior officers at a reception or an event of some sort, they would admit that they were having great difficulties feeding and housing their people. And even though the military establishments in the Soviet Union—and I think they still do this in Russia—actually have their own farms and their own dairies and so on, they were having trouble feeding their people and giving them an adequate diet, let alone housing them properly. Keep in mind, this was about the time that the Soviet forces in Germany, what was then called the Western Group of Forces, were beginning to come back to the Soviet Union. So, in north-west Russia, where the quality of life for the military people was already deteriorating, another several hundred thousand people were coming back from Germany and had to be housed and fed.

Q: Well, at the Embassy and the Consulate General, were we taking a look—was there the feeling that this whole place might implode or something like that? Or had this been going on for so long that the attitude was this was just the Soviet Union?

MILES: We could see a loss of control by the center and a great deterioration in the ability of the center to manipulate the economic system the way it had for the last 70 years but I don't think we foresaw, even at that late point, the pending collapse of the Soviet Union. We saw perhaps a kind of power struggle developing in which another strongman would rise and would use firmer measures to restore order and force people to improve the deliveries of food and other goods. The five year plans were still in operation and the linear economic system they had where X enterprise is supposed to make Y deliveries to Z enterprise at such and such a time—that was all

still in place, but it just wasn't working. It was breaking down. For example, let's say you're in a factory that has—this is a real example that I witnessed with my own eyes— you're in a small factory that manufactured pots and pans for kitchen use. Well, the workers would be paid in pots and pans and on “payday” they would each take a cart full of pots and pans out on the highway and try to sell them to passersby. I mean, this was pretty damn pathetic. It was a breakdown of the system and that was not so clear politically as it was economically, but politically it began to be clear also.

There was a democratic opposition that grew and later we can talk about the Baltic States, which we also covered out of Leningrad, but in Leningrad itself, there had been an ecological movement which had been tolerated because in a sense it was politically neutral. The authorities underestimated its political potential. That ecological movement grew into a more organized democratic opposition involving different factions. It was not a terribly unified thing but the people involved were able to talk to each other and to work together. The authorities would sometimes allow them to meet and have their discussions and present their petitions, and sometimes the authorities would try to break up their public rallies and demonstrations, so it was kind of a tug of war that went on.

The first sign that things were changing in a serious, political sense came with the elections for the Supreme Soviet in the spring of 1989. Traditionally the First Secretary of the Leningrad Obkom [the Regional Party Committee], the Commander of the Leningrad Military District and people of that ilk would be elected as People's Deputies. They would then go off to the Supreme Soviet and vote as they were told and so on. Well, to make a long story short, and pretty much to everyone's surprise, they were not re-elected to the Supreme Soviet in that election.

I remember very well how I was called that day by a journalist, an American journalist from Moscow, who said that she had heard that some informal exit polling indicated that these big shots had not been re-elected to their positions in the Supreme Soviet. And with stereotypical State Department arrogance I said, “Well, I can assure you that even in the unlikely event that that has actually happened, the authorities will not allow it to be reported and these people will in fact be returned to the Supreme Soviet.” And the next day, I had to call her back and eat humble pie because it had been announced that these people had in fact not been returned to the Supreme Soviet and that members of the democratic opposition had been elected. It was an amazing thing, followed shortly by the forced resignation of the First Secretary of the Obkom, Yuriy Solovyev. I still can't believe that an honest election, and one on that scale, took place in the Soviet Union—but there you are!

Then that was followed about a year later by the election of the Leningrad City Soviet, the Leningrad city assembly. The leaders of many of the democratic organizations sometimes would meet in my residence in Leningrad. We had a palatial residence, really a lot of space, and they said that this is the only place big enough where all could come, and they said they also liked it because it was reasonably free of surveillance. Now, I'm sure there were bugs in the walls and all that, but there weren't KGB goons hanging around. They weren't in danger of being hassled by the police while they were there, so they liked to meet in our residence. They worked hard and they were certainly all over the place, holding election meetings, putting up posters, handing out leaflets and our people were in touch with them and giving them mild encouragement and

more just trying to stay in touch with what was going on so we could make reasonable predictions to the Embassy in Moscow and to Washington, because the Consulate General had the authority to report directly to Washington. And lo and behold, the democrats took control of the City Soviet. It was an amazing thing really, less of a shock than the previous year's upset election of the Supreme Soviet deputies, but still startling enough.

And then the democrats had a problem because they couldn't agree among themselves about who should head the City Soviet. In other words, who should become the Mayor of Leningrad, a fairly important position? There was a prominent lawyer who taught at the Law Faculty, Anatoly Sobchak. I think he met Putin at Leningrad University because Putin, just back from his KGB assignment in Germany, had been assigned to the International Relations Office of the University. I met Putin at that time myself, when I enrolled our daughter Elizabeth as a student at LGU. I still have his business card with his name and title in that capacity. Sobchak had been one of the democrats who had earlier been elected to the Supreme Soviet. He had used the Supreme Soviet as a forum to speak out against some of the ills of Soviet society. He was quite an interesting man. Well, the democrats who now were in control of the city Soviet wanted him to become Mayor when they couldn't agree among themselves who in their ranks should have that position. So they asked him if he would run in a special election for a couple of unfilled seats on the city Soviet. You had to be a member of the city Soviet to be elected Mayor. He did, and they urged everyone to vote only for Sobchak so that he could be elected Mayor. And that, in fact, is what happened. He became an energetic, democratically-minded reform Mayor of this major city but, even more interesting; he brought Putin along as his economic advisor, even knowing that Putin was a KGB agent at that time. That was not uncommon in the former Soviet Union. And so that's the story of how Putin got his start in normal politics, and how I met Putin, and how Putin made his first step toward becoming President of all the Russias. Very interesting bit of history, really.

Q: Was this breakdown in the economy and all, was this a fairly recent phenomenon? I mean, was something happening or—?

MILES: I think these were the first really dark days since recovery after World War II. I mean, there were obviously some pretty hard times right after the war, '46, '47, you know, going from an economy on a war footing to a civilian economy while still trying to build up Soviet nuclear power and coping with the great loss of manpower during the war. The Soviet economy was always slightly warped in favor of the military sector but having said that, this was the first time in the memory of the people that I knew and spoke to, since those dark days of '46, '47 up until about 1950 or '51, that things had been so difficult.

Q: There must have been considerable apprehension, because this was a fairly recent phenomenon, wasn't it?

MILES: Yes, yes it was. It didn't go back very far.

Q: People must have thought, "My God, what's happening?"

MILES: Russians would say, “What are we going to do? What is going to happen to us?” Well, Russians are great survivors, and a number of people had dachas or access to private plots or friends in the country. Even in Leningrad it was not difficult for an ordinary person to have access to a small plot of land, maybe the size of this room or slightly larger, where you could grow some potatoes and onions and things like that. If you had a dacha, you could do even more of that. And then they tried hard, although it was not always practical—we’re talking about four million people or so, that’s a lot of people. Anyhow, you tried hard to develop ties to people in the country, relatives or friends or whatever, where you could get 50 kilos of potatoes or cabbage, some onions, maybe, and survive through the winter. So Russians had various ways to get by but, in those hard times, they were not getting by in a healthy way, and they had to spend an inordinate amount of time on these various food-getting schemes or standing in line waiting for nonexistent vegetables or meat or cheese. It was damned difficult for them.

This caused considerable angst but I don’t think there was fear of famine. Agricultural conditions themselves were normal and people knew that the produce was there, but they could also see that the supply system had broken down. Generally bread was available. I don’t recall a shortage of bread. That was reassuring to Slavs because bread is a crucial part of every meal and in a way you can live on bread, at least for a while. But there was day to day concern, that’s for sure.

My wife, Sharon, was home one day when a neighbor came knocking at the door. It was a rather scrawny, older man with a British accent. He introduced himself as Victor Zorza and he asked Sharon if she happened to have any yogurt because his doctor had recommended it and he couldn’t find any in Leningrad due to the conditions at that time. Now, I expect that Sharon and I were probably the only people in the entire city of Leningrad who knew who Victor Zorza was. Maybe they would have recognized him at the British Consulate General if there had been one, but there wasn’t. Victor told us later that he had knocked at our door just because he saw the flag hanging from the second floor balcony and it had attracted him. Zorza had been a rather well-known syndicated columnist, working out of the *Washington Post*. I used to read him but stopped due to his rather virulent anti-organized labor pieces, but I always respected his insightful and well-drafted pieces on foreign affairs. Well, we became good friends there in Leningrad and, through him, we organized one of the first ever fundraising musical evenings held in the city since the October Revolution. Victor’s daughter had died in a hospice in England and he had come to Leningrad to start a hospice there in her memory. To my knowledge there was no hospice in the entire Soviet Union at that time. His daughter had been good friends with the famous pianist, Vladimir Ashkenazy, and Victor prevailed on Ashkenazy to come to Leningrad for the sole purpose of playing at a benefit concert in our residence. We invited all the political, military and cultural big shots but, more important, we invited the Leningrad “Captains of Industry”. I remember some of them saying to me, “We’re happy to give you money, but we have never done this before. How much do you think is appropriate?” And, off the top of my head, simply thinking about how big their enterprise was, I would say, “Oh, \$5000, \$10,000,” you know, whatever I thought the traffic would bear.

I happened to be near Ashkenazy and a small crowd of acolytes from the Leningrad musical world the afternoon of the concert. He didn’t know I was there. Ashkenazy sat down at the piano, started to play something and then drew back, saying—in Russian— “Playing this piano is like driving a tractor!” Admittedly, it was an old piano, but it was well-tuned and, of course, he

played brilliantly that evening. He is a lovely man. We have seen him a few times subsequently, in Berlin and in Washington, and he always remembers that event in Leningrad.

There is an interesting follow-on story. We had placed a huge silver punch bowl on a chest of drawers at the head of the entry stairs. People deposited envelopes with cash or pledges and we really did raise a lot of money. I told Victor I would lock all this up in the safe at the residence and he could take it to the bank the next day. Well, after everyone had gone, about 11:30 that evening, Victor and I went to collect everything from the punchbowl. The young man that Victor had asked to guard the bowl was gone and so was all the cash! Victor was beside himself. Anyhow, we called the police, they went to the young man's apartment that very evening and found him and the cash. I guess he had never seen so much money in his life and he simply couldn't resist the temptation.

Q: How did these people who were well-placed in Soviet society view the changing situation there in Leningrad?

MILES: They were probably concerned not only at the dreadful economic conditions but also at the deterioration of their authority—the fact that they didn't enjoy the same kind of respect they used to have, that their orders were not carried out with the same alacrity. When they asked for things to be done or even demanded that things be done, this didn't always happen. It must have worried the hell out of them, but I confess I know less about this phenomenon. I knew the Obkom First Secretary. I knew the managers of the major industrial enterprises, the military commanders, the KGB chief, the Chief of Police and so forth but, frankly, this was something we didn't talk about very much. I had a decent relationship with these people but trying to talk to them about this would have not gone over well. I could do it only obliquely. For example, I visited the shipyards and saw what they were doing to try to convert to civilian production. That was a sad day, by the way. Here they were, management and workers alike, proud builders of beautiful war ships—the guided missile cruiser *Peter the Great* was still being fitted out at the dock—and what were they showing me? Electric pelmeni [like ravioli] cookers. Maybe it was unpatriotic, but I genuinely shared their dismay.

Q: From the viewpoint of Leningrad and reporting on it, how was Gorbachev viewed when you got there?

MILES: Well, it was clear that he was putting things in motion that were upsetting to the people in power. He forced the resignation of the Leningrad Obkom First Secretary and forced the election of a political nonentity to replace him. This caused some grumbling in Party ranks. But, again, the leadership didn't talk about this very much. Actually Gorbachev didn't come to Leningrad often. I don't suppose he came to Leningrad more than two or three times during the three years I was there. And the diplomats—there were 14 consuls general there—and we were never invited to meet with Gorbachev. It was always considered an internal political thing and we were not included in those visits. So I never met Gorbachev at that time. I only met him later when I went back to Moscow in 1993. Anyhow, I don't know exactly what ordinary people thought of his reforms. I suppose they felt this was a breath of fresh air but they probably didn't know exactly where all this was going.

Q: I was wondering whether—

MILES: They certainly appreciated the freedom of the media. Leningrad TV was out ahead of the state TV in Moscow, for example, and was broadcasting some very interesting things indeed. And Leningrad TV was viewed all over the Soviet Union. So I know that people appreciated that and they attributed that to Gorbachev.

Q: How did you deal with that? I mean, did you have good ties with the media?

MILES: Yes. I would give interviews and, in contrast to the past, these interviews would be printed or shown on TV. I gave one very lengthy and rather personal interview which took up a whole page in *Izvestiya*, which had a circulation of something like twenty million! I still hear about that interview from my Russian friends. I guess that was my personal “fifteen minutes of fame”. And I appeared on television. I remember there was a famous plan put forward by an economist named Shatalin, the “500 Day Plan”, in which the Soviet economy could be completely reformed in 500 days. I was asked to appear on a television talk show to discuss that plus the history of the development of capitalism in the United States. That TV appearance turned out to have its funny side, and this shows you the freshness of Leningrad television, not to mention their audacity. On this program, the host would ask me a question and I would pontificate about this or that. It was informal, but I had my suit and tie on, very much the Consul General. Well, when the program was shown, the editors had interspersed my serious bits with little snippets from various movies, like Liza Minnelli and Joel Grey in *Cabaret*, singing the song about “money makes the world go round”, and dropping coins down into Joel Grey’s underpants and stuff like that. And then on the tape I would be asked another serious question and I would—I don’t think I was pompous but I was certainly serious—and I would be asked about Shatalin’s plan and I would say, “Well, 500 days is not much time to reform the communist command economy, is it?” You know, this and that, and then they would—they asked me about violence in the capitalist world and I said, “Well, sometimes in our early days, the robber barons would apply strong-arm methods and all, but we have outgrown that and it has been exaggerated anyhow.” In other words, typical, pious Foreign Service answers. And on the taped program, they followed that particular comment with a cut from the movie *The Cotton Club*, where a bunch of gangsters go into the club and machine gun down about 100 people plus tables, chairs, mirrors, bottles of liquor and chandeliers. When I saw the program on Leningrad TV, I thought it was hilarious. I thought, this is very clever journalism. And I never got burned for that inadvertent comedy act; the Department just took it as a reflection of the new times.

Sharon and I did an enormous amount of entertaining at the residence, and it was always well covered by television. One particularly memorable event occurred with Mstislav Rostropovich brought the National Symphony to Leningrad. This was Rostropovich’s first visit to the Soviet Union since 1974 when he left and was later stripped of his citizenship. The concert they performed at the theater was sold out and there were hundreds of people outside the theater. Loudspeakers were placed outside so those who couldn’t get in could hear the concert. The audience went wild; they kept calling him back for encore after encore. Finally the concert ended and we adjourned to a large reception at our residence. Rostropovich arrived, sat down at our piano—the one that Ashkenazy had said was like driving a tractor—and belted out *The Star*

Spangled Banner. I know that he performs this from time to time, but in this venue it had real special meaning. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Q: You were there when the Berlin Wall came down?

MILES: Yes, I was. That's right.

Q: How did that, I mean, was that seen as a seminal event or not?

MILES: Well, there were some related things. You remember, there was a large number of people who wandered across from either the border of Czechoslovakia or Hungary, I don't remember, exactly.

Q: Yes, they ended up in a West German compound and all.

MILES: Well, again, I think it was taken as this loss of Soviet power, this deterioration of the system and it lent itself to an air of confusion more than apprehension. There was a feeling that things were changing, that they, the Russians, were part of this change. "We don't know where it is going to end and we hope it's for the better, but it might not be for the better." But, yes, everyone was fascinated by that for sure. But at that time the Russians didn't exactly apply what they knew was happening in Berlin to themselves. They didn't think, well, gee, if they can do that in Germany, we can do it in Russia. I don't believe that thought of a fundamental change in the system really crossed too many minds. It was more like, Germany is Germany and a long way from us; we have more immediate problems, like where are we going to get something for our kids to eat tonight.

Q: Who was our Ambassador in Moscow?

MILES: It was Jack Matlock.

Q: How did Matlock use you and what was the relationship?

MILES: I was given a very strong, a very free hand and I appreciated that very much. Jack and I are quite different people but I worked for him three times in my career and we always got along very well. I respect him very much. His intellect, his language skills and his scholarship raise him way beyond the level of the average diplomat.

I used to go down to Moscow periodically and report in, you know, attend the country team meeting, and meet with the Ambassador and with others. Usually I would stay with Matlock in Spaso House and we would talk at breakfast. Then I would make the rounds in the Embassy and then go on back to Leningrad. Basically we were doing a good job of reporting what was going on in Leningrad and he just wanted to be sure that we had everything we needed in the way of resources and that we were covering things adequately which I believe we were.

I did try hard to keep Embassy Moscow civilians out of the Baltic States. You remember our policy at that time was that the U.S. Ambassador was not allowed to visit the Baltic States. This

was because the United States never recognized the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. Ever since the War, the Consul General in Leningrad was the highest level American official who was allowed to go there. When I went there, I would fly the American flag on the car so that everyone would know that I was there. Of course, I had no problem with the defense attachés from the Embassy going. I just wanted to know when they were going and what they intended to do there, so we worked that out easily enough. But as for the Embassy civilians, people from the Political Section or the Economic Section or whatever, I told Matlock and he sort of grudgingly agreed, that we could best handle that kind of reporting out of the Consulate General and that I did not want to complicate our sometimes delicate lines of communication over in the Baltics by tripping over every Tom, Dick and Harry from the Embassy. The Embassy people, the people in the reporting sections, wanted desperately to go over there because a lot of things were happening in the Baltics and they wanted to observe it and report on it.

We had a crackerjack team of people working at the Consulate General, mostly young officers but a few mid-career people. Our front office was managed by an amazingly resourceful and hard-working person, Linda Price, who later would accompany me to three embassies when I became Ambassador. And three of the officers later became ambassadors themselves.

Q: Okay. Let's talk about the Baltic States and what was happening while you were there.

MILES: Well, all hell was breaking loose. I can't give you a precise timeline for each country, but the spirit of nationalism and even of independence was definitely in the air. Each one of the three separate Baltic States—and they are really quite different, their languages are different, they represent different cultures, they look to different foreign influences in their history, and so on. But in any case, each one of them had a pretty well developed nationalist, opposition movement. And, again, I don't recall, I would have really have to do some research to come up with the exact chronology, but the nationalists had seized control of the Estonian parliament and established checkpoints to keep Russians from coming in and ousting them. In Lithuania, Russian tanks had actually surrounded the parliament building which the Lithuanian nationalists had taken over. This was a very dangerous situation which could easily have come to an armed confrontation. For months, you had the Soviet tanks surrounding the parliament building with their guns pointed inward at the building. Then you had check points near the entrances to the building, manned by nationalists with red armbands and rifles and shotguns over their shoulder. When you went into the building there would be these sleepy guys sitting around, you know, asleep in an armchair or something with a rifle, a hunting rifle or a shotgun propped up on their lap. Always a fuggy atmosphere in there—the air was full of cigarette smoke, dirty coffee cups everywhere and so on. I thought it had a certain resemblance to the Smolny Institute in 1917.

Those were very dramatic days and as the situation heated up around, I suppose 1990, I began to go over increasingly often. At this time, the National Security Council—through the State Department—asked us to keep a continuous presence in each one of the Baltic States, which was damned difficult because I had a very small staff. For security reasons, we always sent two officers at a time and at least one of them had to come back to Leningrad periodically and write the reports. Consequently there was a lot of pressure from the working stiffs in the Embassy in Moscow to use that as an excuse to send their political officers and their economic officers over

to “help out”. I didn’t want that to happen because I wanted to maintain a fairly tight control on what our people were doing in the Baltics and what we were reporting. So what I did was to ask non-POL/ECON officers to take part in all this to help stretch our manpower. So, the Public Affairs Officer or his deputy would go over, the Administrative Officer or the General Services Officer would go over; if they had a diplomatic passport, I threw them into the fray. They would report dramatic developments that might be taking place by phone. The KGB allowed that—probably because, in that way, they would know what we had been able to find out. But in order to do a real report back to Washington, the officers had to come back and write their cable out in longhand and send it up to Helsinki by courier to be typed in Helsinki and sent out that way. You see, our security system in Leningrad had been compromised some time before. Of course, at all overseas locations, we were told to assume that, with the exception of a few “cleared” spaces, the buildings we occupied were subject to penetration by hostile—or even friendly—foreign intelligence agencies, all the more so in the Soviet Union. While I was Consul General, a TDY security engineer actually discovered the listening devices which had been embedded in the construction materials in the walls of our building ever since its modernization 15 years or earlier. As an immediate result, we lost our ability to type and transmit classified material. We could send unclassified stuff out of Leningrad but classified reports had to be written down by hand and then carried up to Helsinki by diplomatic courier. We had a dedicated secretary up there and the poor woman had to struggle with our sometimes hurriedly written messages, full of foreign names and places in four different languages, and produce the classified reports which Washington and Embassy Moscow were eagerly waiting for.

Q: How did you get it to Helsinki?

MILES: We had couriers who would go back and forth. Helsinki was good enough to send people down most of the time to take care of these classified bags. I think they got a kick out of it—sort of like a visit to the front lines. And also we were sending our people up to Helsinki periodically to pick up our regular mail. Anyone with a diplomatic passport can be designated as a diplomatic courier to carry classified material on a specific trip. We were used to that arrangement because we had always carried the unclassified diplomatic pouch and the personal mail bag back and forth from Helsinki.

Q: How were you received by the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians?

MILES: Oh, they loved these demonstrations of support. I mean, they loved nothing more than to see that big American car with the flag come rolling up between the tanks in Lithuania, for example. And frankly, even some of the communist politicians were feeling the spirit of the times. I remember talking to Arnold Rüütel who held the highest position in the political structure of Estonia at that time. We had a good relationship and I always saw him when I went to Estonia. I remember going out of his office once and walking around in the garden with him; he showed me a pistol he kept in his pocket. And he said, “You know, this isn’t going to be like 1940 when the Soviets occupied our country. We know what happened then and this time I’m not going to go without a fight!” It was a very moving moment, and frankly all I could offer Rüütel and people like that was moral support. The official U.S. policy was always to support the independence of the Baltic States and we were certainly consistent in that regard. But we also had to be careful not to make false promises to the nationalist leaders. If the Soviet authorities

had decided to crush these nationalist movements by force, and that was a very real possibility, there was not a hell of a lot which the United States could have done about it. So I was reasonably discreet in what I was doing and I made sure that my officers understood the delicate role we were playing. But we were certainly showing support for these national aspirations of the people in the Baltics and I think that is what Washington liked. Washington wanted to be able to say—for example, if the Soviet government had protested our activities in the Baltic States, Washington could have said, quite honestly, “Well, Miles doesn’t have orders to do this; he’s just doing this on his own. We’ll talk to him about it and calm him down.” But in the absence of that criticism from Moscow, which never came, by the way, Washington was happy enough to be able to tell the Baltic-Americans here in the United States—constituents who vote—that the Consul General is over there, he’s showing the flag, literally. He’s in touch with the nationalist leaders. We are doing everything we can to stay on top of this situation.

So everybody was happy pretty much, except, I suppose, the Soviet authorities, but the Soviet authorities never complained. Well, they had a lot on their hands at that time—economic collapse, unrest in Azerbaijan, in Georgia. It was an amazing time.

Q: Would you, for example with the tanks surrounding the Lithuanian parliament building, I mean, would you just drive up there and say here I am?

MILES: Yes, although I admit, this was always a nerve-wracking experience.

Q: Well, this was a provocative act.

MILES: Well, it was a provocative act. And, again, because of the breakdown of the previous system of control, the Finnish Television was often there and Leningrad Television was often there. They would photograph me doing this and it would be shown on television—and, again, no protest from the Soviet authorities.

There were several messages here. First of all, the Soviet authorities were allowing this to happen, they allowed me to do it and then they allowed the video people to be there and film it, and most amazing, they allowed it to be shown. Truly amazing. And I don’t understand it to this day except I think people in positions of higher authority realized that times were changing and they were afraid of being on the wrong side. And Moscow center—the government, the Politburo, the organs of force—was not issuing firm instructions. And out in the field, with some very dramatic and bloody exceptions, the Soviet political, police and military authorities didn’t know what to do. Maybe the officials and officers on the spot were afraid of taking unauthorized action and being punished by their own leaders. Well, I really don’t know what they were thinking sitting in their offices or in those tanks. Of course, this ambiguous situation was not without its dangers.

In January 1991 I had three officers, an unusually large number, who happened to be in Riga, Latvia, when a rather famous incident occurred. This was right after the violence that had already occurred around the television tower in Lithuania.

Q: They sent some special Soviets, except—

MILES: They were special police; they were the so-called OMON [*Otryad Militsii Osobogo Naznacheniya*] police units, which were kind of like a SWAT team—guys with black ski masks over their faces who were not terribly concerned with human rights or anything like that. Well, I guess some of them just became incensed over these nationalist activities that were taking place so they went on a little bit of a rampage. It was never clear to me to what degree this was sanctioned by a local commander, let alone by anybody in Moscow. I don't think that Gorbachev ordered it. If Moscow had ordered something like this up, it would have been on a bigger scale. But in any case, these fellows came rampaging into one of the streets in downtown Riga. At one end of the street—it was a street about three blocks long bordering a park. A hotel was on one side of the street near one end; the Ministry of Justice or of Interior, I don't recall which, was at the other end. They opened fire on the Ministry building with automatic weapons and also managed to kill some people in an adjacent park. It wasn't clear why they were shooting at the people in the park. Maybe the people in the park were killed accidentally; I don't know. Anyhow several people died that night.

Then they came up the street to the hotel where our people were staying; this was in the evening, after dark, as I remember. Well, as luck would have it, the President of Latvia was having a private dinner back in the recesses of the hotel. One of the OMON fellows came in to the lobby of the hotel with his automatic weapon. My officers were up on the mezzanine behind some glass panels, and the President's bodyguard had just come out from the room where the President was having dinner to see what was going on, all this shooting and all, and he happened to be up on the mezzanine with his pistol out when the OMON fellow came into the hotel lobby. I'm not sure who opened fire first. Happily neither of them hit anyone. The OMON fellow opened fire with his AK-47, kind of spraying a whole string of rounds up the staircase and onto the mezzanine area. My officers were up there on the relatively small mezzanine where, thank God, there was a large square column, so they formed a kind of a snake line behind that column where they were reasonably protected from this automatic weapons fire.

When they came back to Leningrad, I had our people print up a little badge for them on a laminated plastic card with a pin on it and it read, "Diplomat Hero, Third Class"—for coming under hostile, communist fire in Riga, Latvia, on such and such a day. And I signed it and gave it to them at a staff meeting. I think it was the best award they ever got in their lives. And they asked, "What do you have to do in order to get Second Class?" I said, "Well, for Second Class, you have to be wounded." And they said, "OK. What do you have to do to get First Class?" I said, "First Class is only awarded posthumously." They said, "We'll take Third Class!" True story.

Q: We were pretty much just plain observers to this, weren't we?

MILES: We were observers and providing mild encouragement. We never sat down with the nationalist leaders and planned out what they should do next, what provocative act they should do next or anything like that. But we would say things like, "The White House—we'll make sure that the White House is informed of your activities. Everyone is very proud of you. You are a great credit to your nation. We wish you the best of luck and we'll see you again next week." It would be more like that.

Q: Were we concerned, you know, sort of with the 1956 Hungarian uprising and all that we weren't getting too — pushing revolutionaries too far, who would then end up in harm's way? Was this—?

MILES: It was always on my mind and I didn't want to put the American government in that fix again. I felt that we successfully walked that fine line. I was certainly aware of the 1956 events; I didn't want to lend them any false hopes. And so sometimes when they would talk about declarations of independence or whatever, I'd say, "Look, the U.S. policy doesn't recognize your incorporation into the Soviet Union but we do believe in a peaceful resolution of these issues." I urged them to maintain the peaceful evolution of their nationalist aspirations. I tried really hard not to lead them out on some kind of a limb that might break and which we could not support.

Q: How about the other, particularly Western powers: Germans, Brits, French and all. Were they involved in it or what were they up to?

MILES: They would come periodically, including people from their Embassies, because in Leningrad those Consulates General were very tiny—much smaller than ours. The Brits didn't even have a Consulate General in Leningrad. The others would have maybe two or three officers in Leningrad and they would spend most their time doing consular or commercial work. Sometimes they would visit the Baltics but they would more often send in people from their embassies in Moscow. So, they would come periodically and our officers in the field would usually meet with them and compare notes.

Q: Were the Finns—how active were they?

MILES: Quite active, more so than the others. And they had very good people in Leningrad.

Q: At that time could you differentiate between Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians?

MILES: Oh, quite. In fact, I think almost the only time when there was anything like a unified movement was this famous human chain that they formed; I think it was in the fall of 1989. I had been invited down to Vilnius by a Lithuanian fellow I had met at Harvard who wanted me to observe the human chain. So Sharon and I went down together to do that. And when we arrived on the scene with our friend, he, of course, joined it, and everyone said to us, you must join too. I thought that was maybe pushing the envelope. I didn't go down there in order to do that and I didn't think that this was really appropriate behavior for a diplomat, but quite frankly, in the circumstances, I didn't see any way not to do it. It was all linked hands, you see, all the way across the three Baltic States and you could see the KGB people driving up and down the street taking photographs and video, so when I would see them coming along, I would raise my hand and my friend's hand or Sharon's hand to cover my face or turn aside so that at least I would not be emblazoned all over the TV or whatever. But, you know, the Soviets never complained about that, not even to our Ambassador privately, and I didn't make a big deal out of it. I never mentioned it to any of the nationalist leaders. I didn't feel comfortable doing that, to tell you the truth; I thought that was going a little bit too far for a diplomat, but I just didn't see a way out of

it at the time. And that was about the only demonstration that I saw of concerted activity among the three.

In fact, you could see the opposite phenomenon. Believe it or not, as the independence movement continued to develop momentum, toll gates and customs houses began to appear on the major highways connecting the different Baltic states. Now, this was pretty silly. Technically, these were just administrative borders; I mean there hadn't been national borders there since 1940. Anyhow, someone—the local authorities, I guess—began to put up these little World War II-type customs houses with the diagonally striped paint, because they really wanted to demonstrate their “sovereignty”. So they immediately erected customs barriers—basically against each other. That was one of the first things they did as “national” entities.

I remember in Lithuania once, when things were looking particularly dark, I was asked to help one of the members of the nationalist “government” to leave Lithuania and go abroad to form a government in exile in case the communist authorities clamped down on the Lithuanians. And I said to Landsbergis, Vytautas Landsbergis, who was the chairman of the nationalist parliament of Lithuania—effectively, he was the nationalist President of the country. I said, “I’m very reluctant to take someone out in my official car with the flag flying. I’m not sure the situation is sufficiently dire that I would want to do that, but I would like to help in some way. What else might I do?” And he asked, “Where were you planning to go when you leave Lithuania?” And I said, “I have meetings scheduled in Riga. I’m going to drive up there.” He said, “I’ll talk to our friends in Riga to take in this member of my cabinet and try to get him abroad. You won’t need to have anything to do with it, but would you ride with him in my official car if I send it up there? It would be a measure of protection for him and you would be accompanying him rather than him accompanying you.” That seemed reasonable to me, rather clever, actually, and so I did that. We left that night. And we had no problem. We weren’t stopped by anyone; we went on up, in Landsbergis’ big Zil limousine, and my companion—it was Emanuelis Zingeris—dropped me off at my hotel in Riga. He went on abroad but the need to form a government in exile did not materialize and he soon returned to Lithuania. So that was an example when there was cooperation between the nationalist authorities in Lithuania and in Latvia. But I would say that was a relatively rare thing. Basically, as far as I could tell, each one was operating on a little different basis—along similar lines, but reading about each others’ activities pretty much in the media and then maybe letting that influence their own activities or not. The Estonians, while they certainly had their difficulties and their fears, because they were very near Leningrad but very near Finland too, and were a much smaller population, probably a million-and-a-half—and half of that ethnic Russians—so they were in a little tighter, dicier situation. They actually signed a treaty of sorts with the Soviet Union and as a result they were not subject to the same degree of armed pressure that the people in Latvia and the people in Lithuania were.

Q: Did the Estonian and Lithuanian and Latvian communities in the United States play any role? Were you getting people coming back at that time or not?

MILES: Not much of a role. There were a couple of expats there who had come back to help out in this nationalist revival that was taking place; one was later accused of being a KGB informant, in fact. I don’t know what the truth was in that case. But no, not at that time, not a whole lot. A wave of people returned after the collapse of the Soviet Union and some were elected or

appointed to positions of pretty high authority, including President in one case and Minister of Defense in another. But at the time I was there, there were very few such people playing a political role; you could count them on the fingers of one hand.

Q: What were you getting from the Russians in Leningrad about these developments?

MILES: It was quite interesting; that's a good question. I didn't bother asking the authorities about this because I knew what the answer would be. But what I got from the democratic Russians was very interesting. It was basically, "We don't really care what happens over there. They have never considered themselves part of the Soviet Union; they were reluctant members of the Russian empire. Lenin himself let them go back in 1918. We really don't care." But then they would add gratuitously, "We do care about Crimea!" They were quite exercised about Crimea, which Khrushchev had given away to Ukraine, you remember. And people in Leningrad felt much more strongly about the fact that Russia no longer possessed Crimea than they did about the fact that they had pretty much lost control in the Baltic States. It was quite interesting. And Estonia was no more than 50 miles from Leningrad, quite near, but it could have been on the moon as far as the people in Leningrad were concerned.

I had a memorable Fourth of July event in my residence. Actually, that year I had two Fourth of July events; this must have been in 1990 although it could have been 1991. Sharon and I had a pre-July Fourth sit-down dinner to which we invited the presidents and the foreign ministers of the nationalist governments in each of the three Baltic States and I think most of them came. That was a very emotional day, I must say. Lots of heartfelt toasts to liberty and freedom. We invited a few Russians but not very many; only people that we knew would not be offended by all that was going on. And we invited some of the Leningrad-based diplomats and my own people, of course. There were some really very emotional remarks that were made on their part about their gratitude for the measure of support which we had shown them and which the United States had always shown them and the fact that we were here celebrating the American independence and so forth. So that went over very well indeed. I didn't clear this with the State Department beforehand because I doubted that they would approve, although they liked our reporting cable on the event. The next day I had my regular Fourth of July reception for the officials and the people from Leningrad itself.

Q: Did these states become independent? That was after your—

MILES: I would have to do my research but they had declared their renewed independence. See, they felt they always had been independent, that they had been illegally taken over and puppet governments had been established. But they did issue declarations of renewed independence even while the Soviet Union was still in existence. But I would have to check the facts to see which state did what and when, exactly.

Q: Okay. Well then, Dick, did you want to put anything in here? What else do you want to talk about on this period of time?

MILES: Well, let me think about that.

Q: Okay.

MILES: We just haven't quite finished that.

Q: Because we haven't quite finished. We've been talking about the Baltics.

MILES: Yes. And I'd like to say a few words about the coup attempt—the putsch, as it's called—which occurred in the fall of '91 after I left. I think the prior activities of the Consulate General played a positive role in helping to form the Leningrad reaction to the putsch.

Q: Okay, today is the 3rd of May, 2007. Dick, well, do you want to talk about the—.

MILES: Just to close out the conversation of a couple of weeks ago. While I had left Leningrad in the summer of '91, I followed very closely the events that occurred there and I wished I were there, of course. These events were pretty exciting. And Leningrad, I do believe, having read a lot about it and having gone back and talked to some of the Russians who were leaders in Leningrad at that time, I think Leningrad helped to keep the Soviet Union heading toward a democratic solution of its many problems. The Deputy Mayor of Leningrad, Vyacheslav Shcherbakov, was a good man. He was a former nuclear submarine commander and had eventually reached the rank of Admiral. I had many useful and serious conversations with him while I was still in Leningrad. I loved his comment on the Chernobyl disaster: “The Chernobyl reactor was safe enough, but they [the engineers] acted as though they were tending a samovar!” He was conservative, as you can imagine, but he was very intelligent and was an independent thinker. He was still important in the Communist Party apparatus and my understanding is that, in the early hours of the putsch, he played a big role in convincing the Commander of the Leningrad Military District, General Samsonov, to stop the tanks that had begun to move toward the city in accordance with the orders that had come from Moscow. Samsonov, who I also knew and liked, was initially on the side of the conspirators in Moscow.

Now, the democratic Mayor, Sobchak, was out of town at the time. According to one account, Putin played a role in finding him and bringing him back to Leningrad. According to another firsthand account, Shcherbakov did this. I don't know which version is correct; most likely, they worked together. In any case, if Shcherbakov had gone along with Samsonov—who, after all, had the tanks at his disposal—if he had gone along with the request of the putsch leaders and had brought the KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs people along with him, it might have been quite a different story for Mr. Yeltsin and the crowd down in Moscow. Leningrad is the second largest city in Russia, it's a huge city, and because of the significance of what the Leningrad leaders did in defying the coup leadership, and all of this was covered on Leningrad television, pretty much everyone nationwide was aware that in Leningrad there was serious opposition to the coup attempt. I do believe that this was very important to Yeltsin and the leaders of the opposition in Moscow and encouraged them to stand fast there as well. The whole history of the world might have changed if things had gone a little bit differently.

During my time in Leningrad all of us on the Consulate General team worked very hard to cultivate the liberal democratic crowd and the nationalist Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian leaders. As Americans this was the natural thing for us to do but we also cultivated the

conservative crowd—the Army, the Navy, the Police and the KGB chief. I believe I was the first American Consul General to call on the KGB chief in Leningrad, maybe the first to call on the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs there in Leningrad, in other words the Chief of Police, in Leningrad and so on. Sharon and I became good friends of the Colonel, later General, in charge of the City Garrison—a historically and militarily significant post. People like this and their spouses had been to our residence, not once but many times. So we didn't just spend our time talking to people we agreed with. We spent a lot of time talking to people that we did not necessarily agree with. They would come to the residence for receptions and lunches and dinners, concerts, film showings, fashion shows and whatnot, and their wives would come. I very well remember one time when I got a copy of the Schwarzenegger film, *Red Heat*, and showed it to the brass of the Leningrad Ministry of Internal Affairs. We had a great movie theater right in the residence with synchronized 16 and 35mm projectors in a sound booth. An MVD General even came down from Moscow to see this movie. His comment? “We changed that style of epaulets last year.” And, “That's a ridiculous pistol. We don't use anything like that.” This, despite my best effort ahead of time to remind everyone that this was a Hollywood movie and did not necessarily reflect reality either in America or in the Soviet Union. The General did loosen up over drinks after the movie.

I mean, it was a different—it was a very dramatic time in the Soviet Union at that moment. I think, and in fact Sharon and I have often talked about it, and I do believe that even though I have been ambassador or chief of mission four times, principal officer six times, if you will—I still think that the consulate general assignment, 1988 to 1991, was the best that I ever had. Those were exciting times. We had an excellent team there and I think we were doing the right thing.

Q: You were mentioning all the time Leningrad. Was it called Leningrad when you were there?

MILES: Yes. Public opinion was divided on the issue of whether to change it. There was a reputable public opinion poll that was taken after the democrats took control of the Leningrad city Soviet—while it was still the Soviet Union, in other words. And in that poll, as I recall, it was something like 55 percent preferred to keep the name Leningrad while 45 percent would like to have seen it go back to St. Petersburg. And the reason is World War II. Everyone knows about the blockade of Leningrad and the incredible suffering of the population. It was not the Blockade of St. Petersburg. It was the Blockade of Leningrad.

Q: The 900 days of—

MILES: Yes. Well, it's known even in the West let alone in Leningrad itself. The name “Leningrad” itself was just part of their fabric, their very being, so it was not an easy thing for them to agree to change. But I forget exactly when it was changed. It was either after the failed putsch or a little later after the collapse of the Soviet Union; I just don't recall. At any rate, soon after I left, within six months after I left, the citizenry had changed their mind. The majority now favored changing the name and the Leningrad city Soviet agreed to change the name to St. Petersburg. Although I believe that neither the Leningrad Military District nor the Leningrad Oblast' [the region around St. Petersburg] has changed their title.

Q: Well now, you left there when?

MILES: I don't recall exactly: the summer of '91. I think it was July of '91.

ROBERT L. BARRY
Soviet Refugee Program
Washington, DC (1988-1992)

Ambassador Barry was born and raised in Pennsylvania. He attended Dartmouth College, Oxford University, St. Anthony's College, and Columbia. He served in the US Navy and entered the Foreign Service in 1962. He served in Yugoslavia, the USSR, Sweden, and Indonesia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: WorldNet being, could you explain what WorldNet is?

BARRY: It was a worldwide television broadcast and the television was fed by satellite to local television stations around the world who could pick off what they wanted from the satellite and replay it on their own television stations. So, a lot of the content was press conferences, speeches by prominent public figures and things like that. It would be broadcast from studios in Washington, it would be sent by television and picked up there.

Q: Not terribly interesting.

BARRY: Not terribly, no, it all depended on the willingness of other stations to use the material.

Q: Well, then you did this really for about two and a half years?

BARRY: About two years I guess. Then the Bush administration came in and as usual there was a full-scale changeover in the State Department. So, I went to see the new undersecretary for management Ivan Selin. I said, "Look I've been over there at VOA for two years. I don't want to spend the rest of my life there. I don't know anybody now in the hierarchy in the State Department. I think I could be of some use. What I would really like to do eventually is go to Moscow, as ambassador, but you know, in the meantime, could you find something for me?" So, he gave me a special project, which was to change the way in which we processed refugees from the USSR. That was at the time when they were allowing large scale Jewish emigration and most of these people, although they might have applied for an exit visa to go to Israel, really wanted to go to the U.S. We had moved a very large number of the several tens of thousands of them to a place in Italy where they were held while INS went through its endless process of trying to figure out who was eligible, who could come in and Selin said, "Well, we've got to stop that. It's costing too much. We need to process them in Moscow." The embassy in Moscow didn't think this was feasible. The immigration service was certainly against it, but I was given this, perhaps because of my success with TV Marti, as a project and spent the next several months trying to do this. That was the time that the embassy in Moscow had this fire and it was being rebuilt; we

structured the embassy so that we had this huge area where you could interview several dozens of people at the same time. We found a lot of people who were retired Foreign Service people who went back there and took on these interviewing jobs. We hired an outside contractor to do all this and eventually it worked. I remember once overhearing a discussion between some people from the Bureau of Consular Affairs and INS saying this was absolute nonsense, it will never, never work. Selin was also a determined kind of person. Of course, the OMB and everybody else was for it because it was going to save us a lot of money. As I say, eventually it worked. We got through a backlog of people we didn't have to send them to Italy anymore. It required some negotiation with the Soviets about the extension of these peoples' exit visas because it sometimes couldn't be done over the period of two or three months that they usually give you exit visas for.

Then in 1990 I had just been given the job of chief negotiator for the Open Skies Treaty. In the meantime, the wall had come down and the Congress had put together, a big package of aid for Eastern European democracies, the SEED Act, which involved several hundred million dollars of assistance each year. Larry Eagleburger was Deputy Secretary at that point. I had written a memo to Ivan Selin saying, "You can't handle this money through this traditional AID bureaucracy. They've never done this kind of thing. You need to have a dedicated office working on this project." Eagleburger was the coordinator of the whole thing along with the deputy secretary of the treasury and the chairman of the council of economic advisors. Selin passed my memo on to Eagleburger who bought off on it and made me the head of the Office of Eastern European Assistance reporting to the deputy secretary. We organized that. We got a bunch of talented people, many of them quite junior, but also some colleagues from before who'd been on the delegation in Stockholm and we set up this office. The first thing we did was say to AID, look you've got this idea that you're going to send retired AID employees to make a needs assessment in Eastern Europe. What are they going to do? They're going to go to the U.S. embassy and say, "Well, what do you think they need here." It's going to take you almost a year and in the meantime Congress is going to say, "Where is the money going?", so "Why don't you just drop that whole thing? Cut out the middle man, don't hire the retired AID employees and we can tell you what they need because we'll go directly to the embassies and to the governments concerned and come up with projects for you to spend the money on." I mean, they didn't like it, but Eagleburger was quite capable of stiffing the director of AID and the person who was the assistant administrator Carol Adleman, Ken Adleman's wife, was quite prepared to go along with this. She saw that that was where it made sense to do this. So, we set up a lot of programs.

We had some new ideas, such as these Enterprise Funds, which took some of the money appropriated by Congress and created a revolving investment fund. We brought together a bunch of people from the private sector to manage that and they were supposed to invest in small or medium sized businesses that needed to be privatized. Some of these were a big success. The Polish American Fund was a great success. Others were failures because of the quality of the management that went into it. But we resisted the idea that there would be AID missions in each of these countries. We said this is bureaucratizing the whole process. Let's find some new ways of delivering assistance and of course, this was a huge pot of money. I think at that point it was \$500 million and so everybody from around town was coming to want a piece of it. Some of it was spent quite well; things like the National Endowment for Democracy, NDI, the Republican Institute. They all put good programs in these countries. We sent a lot of people from the

business community out there to work in newly privatized firms to try to improve management. We set up some legal reform things, the American Bar Association projects. There was a lot of business interest in going out there to do some of these things, but there was a plethora of consultants hanging around.

G. PHILIP HUGHES
Executive Secretary, National Security Council
The White House, Washington, DC (1989-1990)

Ambassador Hughes was born and raised in Ohio and educated at the University of Dayton, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Harvard University. His career with the US Government included service at the senior level with the Congressional Budget Office, the Departments of State and Commerce, and the White House, where he served two tours with the National Security Council. In 1990 he was named US Ambassador to Barbados, where he served until 1993. Ambassador Hughes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: We're in January 1989 and you've talked about your perception of what the role of this job on the NSC is going to be, how did it develop? Then let's talk about the personalities and issues. Can I get the dates you were there?

HUGHES: I came to be executive secretary of the National Security Council at the very end of January or early February 1989 and I left in March or April of the following year to enter the ambassadorial seminar in anticipation of going out as ambassador to Barbados.

You asked at the end of our last session how I came to the job and how that came about. In a very curious way. I had my eye so to speak on being Executive Secretary of the National Security Council for some time. If anyone had asked, and a few people did ask actually, well before the election that brought George Bush to office what role I would like to play in the Bush Administration, I readily said I would like to be the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. Most people wondered why, because it was a pretty awful job in Washington. It has that reputation, at least among some of the insiders, because unlike the Executive Secretary at the State Department who's got a couple of Deputy Executive Secretaries, the director and deputy director of the secretariat line, the line, and a number of other offices supporting him, here it is basically you and your deputy, a few clerical assistants, and of course the White House situation room. There is not much more to support at least as enormous and varied a set of tasks as the Exec Sec at the State Department. It was one of those around the clock, on call all the time, rather thankless behind the scenes jobs.

Several of my friends wondered why I wanted to serve in that kind of role in the Bush Administration. The answer from my point of view was very clear. I thought it was the place in which I could best deploy all of corporate knowledge from when I was Mr. Bush's deputy foreign policy advisor for more than half of the Reagan Administration: who knew where he had been, what he had done, what positions he had taken on the issues, all of that sort of thing. That

might be very useful to whomever Mr. Bush would pick as his National Security Advisor, as his deputy. I was certain that those were roles for which I wasn't yet, frankly, prepared. I was in my very early 30's and while I've had a fair amount of experience under my belt, I didn't think either looking at people who had been appointed National Security Advisor or deputy National Security Advisor in the past, that I was quite ready for that kind of role or had that kind of ambition. Here was a place where I could serve Mr. Bush with all my corporate knowledge, help the National Security Advisor and also I thought help build the National Security Council staff from a rather out of the spotlight, behind the scenes sort of role.

In the Reagan Administration, the National Security Council staff had gone through, as far as I could see, a number of you might say additions or convulsions. There were a number of different experiments in how he managed his staff. There was of course a lot of turbulence when the Iran-Contra matter broke. Many people were sort of swept out and many people were brought in. There was a sort of new model of staffing that emphasized very senior, perhaps ex-ambassador or flag officer types and senior most ranks. That had pluses and minuses. I thought I had witnessed that all, seen that all, and could possibly help bring a measure of stability and pick from the best management styles that had worked with the NSC and contribute that to the Bush Administration.

In the Reagan Administration the role of the Executive Secretary hadn't always existed. In the beginning there was a staff director who was a regular member of the NSC staff, who was a senior economic analyst and dual-hatted as staff director. That didn't work because you couldn't have somebody directing staff who was staff. The next effort was to have a staff director who was only a staff director. A military officer actually as I recall, two different military officers, were brought in for that. The military officer style worked fine. It imposed a measure of discipline and kind of kept the wheels turning but it was less than satisfactory I think from the standpoint of the substantive interaction with the staff. Many members of the staff didn't view the military administrator as anything more than a functionary, not as an intellectual co-equal and as someone that they could end run or get around or wouldn't necessarily have to pay heed to.

Finally Bob Kimmitt, who himself came out of a military background and who in the Bush administration became Undersecretary for Political Affairs in the State Department, persuaded Bud McFarlane that what really needed to be done was that the Executive Secretary's job needed to be reestablished. Henry Kissinger had abolished it. When Kissinger had arrived in the White House in the Nixon administration, there was a very powerful figure who was occupying the position of executive secretary of the NSC staff. I am trying to remember his name. It is not a household name but it is rather famous inside Washington. He was among other things a mentor of Dick McCormick, former Undersecretary for Economic Affairs at State Department. Kissinger, I was told, didn't want to see a powerful, entrenched, independent figure there in the White House sort of astride the line of communication between him and his staff, and eventually between him and the President. So he abolished the role and installed a clerk, a woman named Jean Davis, whose job was basically to push paper around. To staple together the agenda for the NSC meeting with the accompanying documents and make sure that they were at everybody's place and make sure that paper moved on time, and nothing more. She played no substantive role at all in Henry Kissinger's arrangement.

It was from that experience that this whole evolution that I was describing evolved. When Christine Dodson was the staff secretary, as I think she was called, of the NSC staff in the Carter Administration, her role was sort of an evolution on the Kissinger model. The Reagan Administration grappled with these different approaches. Kimmitt finally persuaded Bud McFarlane, hey, we should have an Executive Secretary, someone whom the staff respects substantively as at least their substantive equal. Someone whom the National Security Advisor can lean on, not just for ministerial functions but also for some substantive advice and if you would kibitzing on policy. Someone who quite conceivably could end up carving out, or bearing responsibility for, particular portfolios within the range of things that the National Security Advisor and the deputy were grappling with. Bud bought on to that. Bob became the first Executive Secretary under this new dispensation. He stayed for about two-and-a-half years and then in rapid succession after him came three other Executive Secretaries, Bill who would become deputy secretary of energy, Rob McDaniel, Grant Green, and then I'm also forgetting the last Reagan executive secretary before I came to the job.

How did I get this job? When Bush was elected, once the election was over I was at my post at Commerce. I began to let it be known basically through my friends in the campaign and in the circle of Bush advisors that I had been working with for many years that I really would like the job as Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. I would like to serve in the Bush administration. I was asked what roles I would like to serve in and I had specified that role particularly. I didn't specify any others. I called on a number of people in the quest: the person who was in charge of presidential personnel transition, Chase Untermeyer; Dennis Ross, who had been foreign policy advisor during the campaign; Craig Fuller, who was sort of chief of staff of the transition effort; Boyden Grey, who had been counsel for the Vice President and then would be eventually counsel for the President; and so forth.

Along the way in the transition process, fairly early on, it was announced publicly that Brent Scowcroft would be the National Security Advisor. Not long thereafter that Bob Gates would be named his deputy. My friends and my colleagues passed along to Brent and recommended to Brent that I would be a good candidate to be the Executive Secretary to the NSC and sort of put me forward. Brent and I made a number of efforts over the phone to get in touch during the transition. At one point we scheduled to meet and then his schedule was such that it got blown off. We actually didn't talk about this job until literally the night of the inaugural ball. I was getting dressed at home in my tuxedo when a phone call came from Brent's office and he said something like I gather that you're interested in being Executive Secretary and so forth. On the phone even he said "you know I had in mind a different role for this thing than in the past. I had in mind that it would be a rather low level clerk type job and I'm not sure that it would be something that you would be interested in." I said that "I would like to talk to you about it." So he said that we'll set something up shortly. I went to the ball.

Very early on the next week he called me over for an interview. I went to the interview with Brent and Bob. I had never met Brent before. I knew Bob rather a lot from the Reagan Administration. We had an interview that I would say was so discouraging that I left the room thinking I'm the last person in the world that Brent Scowcroft will pick for this job because he described the role that was very much Jean Davis style. In fact, he alluded to Jean Davis: a paper

pusher, non-substantive, bureaucratic. Quite honestly I couldn't imagine that the Executive Secretary's role at the NSC staff would ever go back to being that. It may be youthful arrogance on my part or determination, or call it what you will.

As I listened to what he had to say as we talked through the interview, as I knew how the NSC had worked in the preceding eight years, what I was thinking was: general, you've been out of the White House for a long time, 12 years at least. Scowcroft Commission and all that notwithstanding, the way this place works has changed a lot in those 12 years. I didn't say this of course to Brent but what I was thinking was, once you get here and once you dig into this job, you are going to, I think, find out that the role of an Executive Secretary as Bob Kimmitt carved it out and what turned out to be my predecessors were carrying it out, was going to be so valuable to you that that is exactly how you will end up using me. I told him that I remained interested in the job and so forth and I left the interview thinking I was the last person in the world to get the job.

I really needed to think then about other roles in the administration that I hadn't been thinking about because I wasn't going to go to the White House. I had in the meantime a talk with my old boss, Don Gregg, who had been Bush's foreign policy advisor in the vice presidency and had done that role for nearly seven years, six-and-a-half years and through some very troubled turbulent times. Bush stuck with him and he stuck with Bush through the whole Iran Contra thing. Don had made a bid to Brent to be Deputy National Security Advisor or have some senior role in the White House national security establishment. I knew Brent had sort of brushed him aside or ruled that out in ways that Don didn't think were very flattering through all these years of service to George Bush. Anyway, I left the room thinking I'm not going to work in the White House. I've got to think of other options. What about DOD? What about State? Do I want to stay here at Commerce? I knew that I did not want to continue in that particular role in Commerce other than perhaps on a short term basis. A couple of days later I was conducting a staff meeting of my crew at Commerce when a call came from Brent. To my total surprise he said "I talked to the President about you. He speaks very highly of you. Are you still interested in that job?" "Well, yes, I am." "Well it's yours. When can you report?" I reported on the first of February.

How did the job evolve? I would say that it's hard to describe. In fact why don't I pause there and let you pepper me with some questions and that will sort of frame up how I describe how the job evolved.

Q: Brent Scowcroft had been on the National Security Council way back. You are really catching him quite new on the job. How did he initially sort of deal with his staff and see it going? What sort of picture was he giving you? Then I think we can talk from there about how maybe there were some changes.

HUGHES: Brent of course was inheriting a staff from the Reagan Administration. I think he made clear that he wanted to put his own people on that staff. You could think about the NSC staff a little bit like a layer cake. Top is the National Security Advisor, his deputy, the Executive Secretary and the secretariat structure that sort of manages the staff. Then you have the senior directors, or special assistants to the President, the directors and the deputy directors, and then the support staff. So you could think of it like a layer cake. Within the staff that Brent inherited I

think he made it reasonably clear that he intended to have all new senior directors. These would be his guys, his picks. He intended to have a lot of the directors and deputy directors remain holdovers from the Reagan administration. Most frequently they were detailees from other agencies: from CIA, Defense, State, sometimes from USIA.

We were under an edict, I guess, (it seems like every White House begins with this) to cut back the number of White House staff. One thing that was done was some fancy footwork and a little bit of juggling of the books to make the NSC staff smaller, leaner, meaner than the last Reagan staff that Frank Carlucci and Colin Powell presided over. How to do that? One thing Brent decided to do was to combine some of the functions of senior directors so you could get kind of double duty out of one or two senior directors. A second thing we decided to do was basically change the counting rules for how we dealt with support personnel like from NSA and so forth who were detailed to the situation room so the rolls didn't look quite as large. I don't think that was necessarily sort of intellectually dishonest. I will let other people decide whether it was dishonest. The Clinton Administration has done the same thing. Every administration does this.

Brent's picks for the senior director roles in the NSC staff started to dribble out into the press well before he and I ever talked about my being the executive secretary. I knew who many of the people were whom Brent was going to lean on as his senior directors on the NSC staff: Bob Blackwill as the senior director for Europe and Soviet Affairs, Richard Haass as the senior director for Near Eastern Affairs, David Miller as the senior director for Africa Affairs and also for what you might call drugs and thugs, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics. David had been ambassador in Tanzania as I recall and in Zimbabwe. Ginny Lampley, who had long been associated with Brent (she had an ex-military background) was to be his senior director for legislative liaison or the congressional things. There were several areas of the staff where it seemed Brent had people in mind and he wanted to fill those roles.

Then it seemed there were other parts of the staff where Bob Gates had more say about who was picked. For example Bill Working as the Senior Director for Intelligence Policy or eventually Dean Hoffman who was brought from the Agency. Dean had been NIO [National Intelligence Officer] for international economic matters and he was to be the senior economic officer on the staff.

It seemed like at first Brent didn't have sort of crystal clear view of who they wanted to run the Latin America shop. Bob Pastorino, at that time out in San Francisco, was a holdover from the late Reagan Administration in the senior director's role for Latin America. He was (inaudible) and so were the rest of the crew who were working under him including a great guy from the CIA. Another of the guys that Brent clearly picked for a senior director's role in the staff was Arnie Cantor to be the senior director for the defense function. Brent picked a number of senior directors. He also picked a couple of director positions under them of people who he was particularly close to or regarded particularly highly professionally. One of those was Condi Rice, who is now the Provost as I recall of Stanford but who was an extremely bright, extremely able, young black Soviet specialist. That was sort of the structure of the staff as we came into the Bush Administration. These people arrived quite quickly right with Brent and we got down to work.

Many of the other directors I should say on the staff did remain as holdovers from the Reagan

Administration. In the Near East area Shireen (I can't recall the last name) and Sandy Charles stayed with Richard Haass and his group and so forth. Some stayed, some went, many were Brent's picks, a few seemed to be Bob Gates' choices. The choices Brent made seemed to be in the areas of his particular interest and concentration and people whom he had worked with or known, or come to regard highly professionally through his years as a defense intellectual.

Q: One of the things as you talked about the composition that seems to be missing here is the conservative representative from the Senate or the House that had been in the Reagan Administration. Somebody who was you might say from the right wing intellectual or something of this nature, or at least a political animal if nothing else. You really are talking about pretty much a professional group.

HUGHES: That's exactly right and I think that is exactly the way Brent wanted it.

Q: It could be that Brent wanted it but there are other considerations. Sometimes you have to throw some meat to particularly the conservative wing of the Republican Party but this doesn't seem to have been a matter.

HUGHES: If you look at the National Security Council staff as sort of a curve or development over the course of the Reagan Administration, I think you would see at the very beginning of the Reagan administration this point of contrast with Brent's and George Bush's approach. I think you would see at the very beginning of the Reagan Administration a much more highly ideological National Security Council staff from Dick Allen and Doug Mann, his deputy, through the choice of senior directors. People like Richard Pipes, who had well known views about the Soviet Union, and director level people like Smetty Kramer on arms control in the staff.

You also saw a pronounced shift in the way detailees were used in the NSC where probably at the end of the Carter Administration most of the detailees on the NSC would have come from the State Department. There was scarcely a single State Department detailee in the first Reagan Administration NSC staff. The detailees were drawn from the intelligence community and from the military services. These were institutions that were regarded as more politically reliable and ideologically correct. Institutions with more backbone.

While that pattern persisted over time, I think a general trend that you can see in the Reagan Administration is that it was progressively diluted over eight years. I would say that it reached its zenith, that style of the NSC staff, with the period of Bill Clark as the National Security Advisor in the second part of the third year of the Reagan administration. Then with Bud McFarlane and John Poindexter and then certainly with Carlucci and Colin Powell it eroded, so that at the end there were very few identified ideological conservatives that were sort of imbedded in the Reagan NSC staff. For example, Constantine Menges who had been for a time senior director for Latin American Affairs and before that the national intelligence officer for Latin America at the CIA, was certainly a well identified figure in conservative circles and very well regarded and respected in those and many other circles intellectually. Constantine found favor in the later stages of the Judge Clark regime but found, I think, professional difficulty in the later stages of the Bud McFarlane era with the NSC staff. By the time Frank Carlucci arrived on the scene, I

don't think Constantine was any longer on the staff. That just gives you an idea of how that has gone.

I think that it was partly the tone set by President Bush. I don't think he wanted his NSC staff to be loaded up with ideological people or political people or people with political preconceptions about policy. He was very much a respecter of professionalism and professionals and even though some of these professionals were not drawn from the ranks of career services (Arnie Cantor came from Rand, Condi Rice came from university), they were clearly all professionals in the national security business.

Q: Before we talk of issues we might finish off with the staffing thing. Did you find yourself stapling agenda? How did your position evolve?

HUGHES: I might say by the way just as a last comment on that last point, that if you actually looked over that staff you might say that even though I consider myself to be a national security professional first and foremost, I may have been the person on the staff with the most political, if you would, kind of experience. That political experience wasn't what you had described, being the darling of conservative circles or the protégé of conservative Congressman Y.

Q: Usually the typical one would be the special assistant to Senator X from Georgia or something who wanted his person and the President would feel compelled to do this in order to assuage that particular wing of the party. But Bush didn't play that gambit?

HUGHES: No. There was only one occasion on which something akin to that game was played and it didn't last long and it wasn't particularly successful. We can get into that. It had to do with the staffing of the Latin America function.

To answer your question: did I end up stapling agendas and pushing papers? The role evolved into I think a particularly difficult one partly because of the approach to managing the staff that Brent had, and partly because of just the pace of the way the Bush White House operated. What do I mean by particularly difficult and what are we talking about? Brent as an operator tends to from my experience, operate very much as a lone practitioner. He is the wise man with years and years of accumulated experience. He knows his mind about most of the issues that he is going to grapple with, particularly if they are in his main areas of expertise: Europe, security, U.S. Soviet or U.S. East bloc relations at the time, perhaps China, Japan relations.

My perception was that he made it his priority to develop a particularly tight personal relationship with the President. Whenever you were with the President he saw his job, as far as I could tell, as oriented totally on serving the President, serving the President's needs, responding to the President's wishes. Here you have a President who wasn't at all passive about what he wanted to do in foreign policy. He was very active. The morning briefing of the President which began an hour earlier than President Reagan's did, frequently ended with the President giving Brent direction to get so and so, President Mitterrand, Prime Minister Thatcher on the phone. He wanted to talk to them now. He I think worked very much toward the President.

Bob Gates worked very closely with Brent. They went almost everywhere together whereas very

often it's a case that a principal is working with the President and the deputy is handling things back in the office. These two men went to almost virtually every meeting together. They did almost everything together. Brent also tended to work not, I think, very closely with other members of his staff.

At the time, except for a couple of what I would say favorites or intimates on particular issues like Condi Rice or Bob Blackwill or perhaps from time to time Richard Haass, I thought Brent tended to use the staff like a library. That is a set of references, or a set of resources that was sort of on the shelf and when he needed them for something he would pick one of them down off the shelf. He would have them come over to give him a briefing. He would give them some taskings, put something in action and then put them back on the shelf. The staff's interaction with the National Security Advisor was actually very limited. We had a morning senior staff meeting every morning. I had to persuade Brent that it would be useful to reinstate the Reagan Administration habit of having a general staff meeting at least once a month held in a big conference room on the other side of West Exec so that the rest of the staff, the directors and the deputy directors who also felt that they were part of the National Security Council and often did a good deal of the grunt work, could actually see their boss. They could actually hear what he had to say and get a little bit of a briefing about what was going on in the West Wing.

Regarding my role, yes it had a lot of administrating to it, there was no question about that: getting the National Security Council meetings set up, scheduling them, distributing agendas, getting papers in on time and so forth, but that all comes with the territory anyway. It also turned into a particularly difficult mediating role if you would between the staff and Brent because the staff in the early months anyway became, I think, very frustrated that paper didn't move. It was sort of like "we sent Brent a memo on this two months ago and there is no action" or "we sent Brent a memo on this two weeks ago and there is no action. We've had no response. Can you get something out of him." In fact I had very little personal access to Brent. I myself worked mostly with Bob Gates because Brent was mainly either with the President or closeted in his office behind closed doors. Through Bob or through his secretaries we would keep trying to get action on different things that the staff had proposed to Brent but where he had not yet gotten around to attending to them.

The staff I think felt very much out of touch with what was going on day-to-day in the West Wing except for a handful of intimates that Brent tended to rely on, the favorite references that he pulled off the shelf most frequently because they were the hottest issues that he had to grapple with or that the President had to grapple with. I ended up trying to play the role of the shock absorber as it were between the staff frustrations and the realities of the front office. It was a very uncomfortable role particularly without the kind of personal access to Brent that would have made that so much easier to do.

What else can be said about the role? I didn't, unlike my predecessors, have the privilege of attending the National Security Council meetings themselves. The effort was to shut down the number of people who were actually in the room because among other things the Bush Administration was very, very concerned about leaks. President Bush was practically phobic about leaks and I think regarded leaks as disloyal. As efforts by lower level subordinate people to essentially make policy through the press or sandbag their superiors on what policy decisions

could or couldn't be made through the press. He was absolutely determined that things would not leak. It was one of the dominating mind sets of his White House, and it resulted in frequent exclusion from meetings of people that in the Reagan Administration would in the normal course of things have been there. I was the least consequential probably of the people who weren't regularly in certain meetings.

There were instances where our ambassador to Germany was disinvited if you would, or not invited, to sit in on the President's meeting with Helmut Kohl or our ambassador to, I'm trying to think of a couple of other countries... Germany was really sort of the drop-dead surprise like what do you mean the ambassador to Germany isn't welcome to sit in on the meeting? It undercuts him terrifically.

There was clearly a great concern with keeping the group of people participating in virtually any kind of meeting as small as possible. If that meant either undercutting perhaps someone's official position, like the ambassador to Germany for example, or if it meant even passing by the opportunity to through a sort of a visible demonstration elevate the stature in the eyes of say a foreign visitor of a particular functionary in one of the departments whose job was going to be involved working closely with that government and perhaps trying to extract things from that government, that person might well not be included nevertheless. There was much less discretion actually on the part of the staff, on the part of really anybody in the chain of command, to recommend who would be in that meeting. It was much more a personal decision of Brent, the President and Secretary Baker, a very tight inner core of decision making in the White House.

Q: This is parallel to some extent in the State Department, isn't it, under Baker?

HUGHES: That's what I heard but I wasn't of course there, I wasn't on the State Department staff. But when I was ambassador of course, you get a different feel of this from the field than you do from the Seventh Floor, but yes, that was the reputation in the State Department as well.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the motivation sounds different than under Kissinger. Kissinger seemed to have a relationship with Nixon, but egos seemed to have played a major role. He wanted to control things but also, egos may be the wrong word, he wanted to make sure that he was the central figure. Whereas I take it that this was not coming from Scowcroft trying to cut other people out but it was coming both from Bush and also just the personal style that Bush and Scowcroft had developed.

HUGHES: I think that is right. Unless I misjudge, and I certainly hope I don't, I don't think that Brent's motivation or Bob Gates' motivation was at all sort of ego driven and I don't think that either of those men were power tripping here. I think that this was much more of a shared personal style and a tone that was probably set at the top by Mr. Bush himself: I want it to be tight; I want it to leak-proof; I want it to be my intimate trusted advisors whom I know and regard highly.

At times in the Reagan Administration there was a sort of ebb and flow of the interaction of the members of the National Security Council staff with the President. When Judge Clark was the National Security Advisor, because he didn't have a deep substantive background, or he didn't

have the reputation for such in the national security area, he tended to bring the individual members of the National Security Council staff into the oval office for briefings with the President frequently. In fact he often would bring them in every morning. For the morning briefing he might bring in a different expert depending on what the topic of the day was going to be or what was hot to handle that day.

In the Bush Administration, especially in the early months of the Bush Administration, my impression was that the members of the staff, even senior directors, had very limited contact with the President himself. Brent tended to be the intermediary between the staff and the President. It was he and Bob reporting, advising, and so forth to the President. As time went on and as certain crises unfolded, crises like Panama and some of the events that transpired in the Middle East, certainly when it came to the Gulf War, staff members did become much more intensely involved with the President and were frequent visitors to the oval office.

One of the real ironies is that at a human level, whereas Ronald Reagan as President may not have remembered and recognized the faces of and associated names with all of these NSC staffers who cycled through his office, most of Ronald Reagan's NSC staff felt that they knew him. They saw him regularly in the Oval Office and in action in the National Security Council meetings. Whereas Mr. Bush who had a great memory for names and faces, and a tremendous personal touch with people, probably only knew a very small number of his NSC staffers. Some of them he knew more from the Reagan days when he interacted with them there, than he knew from his presidency because they just didn't have very much contact with the President.

Q: We will come to the developments during this time that you were with the NSC later. One thing that always strikes me is when you have a president who is very conversant with foreign affairs, and the head of the NSC and his deputy director are conversant with this, that you don't use the staffs as much. This is all fine but there is always something that is going to come out of left field and they really don't know the territory. Problems will show that sort of in an open discussion somebody will say but this isn't going to work in Ouagadougou or something like that. Did you see any cases where the President and Scowcroft would head off in one direction and yet you or somebody was trying to say wait a minute, this is fine but what you're doing won't work because of the situation in such and such a country?

HUGHES: I guess I could think of a couple of examples in the direction that you're referring to. I am not thinking so much as country specific examples as I am thinking of issue examples. Maybe I should say a little bit more about Brent and Bob as a team then this point will make more sense. Brent Scowcroft clearly has been around the national security world so long that in a sense he is what in cricket terms is called a good all-rounder. He clearly has greater depth of expertise in certain areas, or had at that time, than in others. He was profoundly steeped in military affairs, arms control, strategic questions, NATO issues, east-west security issues, Russia as I mentioned. Those were mostly Bob Gates' areas of strength as well. Neither of them was probably terrifically deeply expert in Africa, or Latin America. They probably had shared considerable expertise in the problems of the Middle East since we had been grappling with these for decades and they were always front burner issues. But I suspect that neither of them was particularly deeply expert in any of the functional areas of activity that came up from UN issues, to international environment issues, to export control issues, things of that sort that I had

worked on.

In fact one of the ways that their areas of strength and some of the areas where they may have been not so strong showed up was in the National Security Decision Directorate Number One that the President issued on something like the first day that he was in office. It set up the NSC structure as he intended it to function and established a number of what we used to call senior inter-agency groups. Those groups were basically on every region of the world plus arms control and disarmament.

There were a whole number of inter-agency groups that functioned in the past and that needed to function in the future because we needed a mechanism to handle them. No provision had been set up for an inter-agency mechanism to adjudicate export control matters or to adjudicate international organization or environment, or drugs, terrorism, or those kinds of issues. I persuaded by a memo working with the other parts of the NSC staff that were responsible for those areas and noticed that all of a sudden the inter-agency mechanisms that had existed before to adjudicate their problems disappeared. We put up a recommendation to Brent that another directorate be established that would set up several additional committees to deal with these functional areas that perhaps Bob and Brent didn't have clearly in mind when they started out. He eventually approved that and I gathered suggestions from around the staff and wrote that particular decision directorate. It went out in I forget what number it was, maybe it was 12 or maybe it was 11. That was how we rounded out the inter-agency process.

When it came to an issue like what the President should do with respect to the Brazil environment problem or the Rio Conference which came later of course in the administration, or what posture the President should take on various international environmental initiatives, my perception was that the NSC front office tended to not take a view on this. They tended to want to let that issue go because it wasn't front and center in their scheme of things. As a result the action tended to be driven by parts of the administration that were mostly vested in that agenda, particularly Riley in the EPA. They tended to want to chart a much more, if you would, liberal or environmentalist oriented course than some of the conservatives who were either in the administration or in the Republican fraction on Capitol Hill. What ended up happening was, on for example many international environmental issues, the position of the administration was sort of pulled along by the environmentally sensitive elements of the administration. The NSC didn't play much of a role in this even though it may have concerned an international conference undertaking. The position that would be sort of heading toward the president would end up getting headed off by John Sununu, who was more of, if you would, an ideologically centered figure in the administration. He was Bush's Chief of Staff. He'd short stop that issue. That may be partly also an artifact of not having an NSC staff with people on it who had ideological or conservative ideological moorings. They were more policy professionals, national security gurus. That's an example.

Another example of a different sort is more in the personnel area. Latin America had been an explosive, contentious issue between Congress and the presidency over Central America. When Bob Pastorino was recruited from the NSC staff by the former deputy National Security Advisor John Negroponte, who was designated to be ambassador to Mexico, to go down to Mexico as his DCM, the question became who would become the head NSC guy on Latin America? Brent and

Bob Gates didn't seem to have particularly strong views about this. My impression was that they didn't have an Arnie Cantor or a Bob Blackwill specifically in mind and they were looking for ideas. Various candidates were proposed. One candidate that surfaced was someone who actually had a political background, or a campaign background, but he proved unacceptable to Bernie Aronson, who was the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs at the time. They almost got a candidate, then the position was sort of left hanging.

Then I got a call from my director of administration telling me that Bob Gates had called her, not me, (this will give you an idea a little bit of how the staff worked) to say that she should put on the NSC roster the name of a particular officer from the State Department who was going to be the new senior director for Latin American Affairs. I assumed that this was a nomination of the Foreign Service or that somehow Brent after talking to Larry Eagleburger, or someone from the State Department putting it up through Larry Eagleburger to Brent, had said that this would be a good idea. At my next meeting with Bob Gates I said "I understand that this person is going to come on board. You realize that there will probably be a problem with this." He said "no, I don't know what you're talking about." Then I told him what little I knew about this officer, and I didn't know very much at that time but I knew enough. This officer had a very difficult relationship with a number of the conservative senators and congressmen on Capitol Hill who were deeply involved in Latin American issues. It would be sending at a minimum a signal to them that we were sort of turning sharply left in our Latin America policy or Central America policy, that it was not going to be run by rock ribbed conservatives and so forth as in the past. This was not Jose Serrano or Constantine Menges. It was not the sort of people who had been running this part of the NSC in the past.

Bob didn't profess very much concern about it, but within about 48 hours my phone rang as I was sitting at my desk, informing me to take this officer off the rolls. He never actually arrived in the compound. What I understood subsequently had happened was that as soon as word filtered around, and it does filter around in this town, that he was going to come to the NSC staff, Senator Helms and perhaps others called Sununu, not Scowcroft. At least I understood that they called Sununu, not Scowcroft. They basically raised hell about it. He got so hot that the preferment was canceled.

There was then a quest for a new person. The new person that was finally settled on was someone who had credentials. This was one of the few times that I ever saw a semi-politically motivated choice of an NSC staff senior professional in that period. He had some credentials and some credence with Helms and the very conservative Republicans in Congress. That officer came on board and was there for about four months.

Q: Who was that?

HUGHES: Ted Briggs, who had been our ambassador just before in Panama. He came on the staff and was there for about four months. He ran into various battles with Bernie Aronson at the State Department over the way we would conduct Latin America policy. He was very much in the framework of the Reagan approach to Central America. Clearly the Bush Administration intended to turn in a very different direction on Central America and cauterize this issue and get it off the table politically so the administration didn't burn up endless political capital in

Congress wrangling over lethal aid to the Contras and all of those issues. We did not talk about this in detail but I am sure Ted dissented from the path that the administration was taking. How he expressed that dissent, with whom he shared it on Capitol Hill or whatever, I don't know but I am sure that it filtered around. I am sure that as a result, Bernie Aronson and maybe Larry Eagleburger and others at the State Department decided that this just wasn't working to have someone with that strong a personality, with such strong convictions on this issue, pointing in a different direction inside the NSC staff. My understanding is that basically the State Department dictated that there had to be a change there so Brent made a change. It was something that I also had never seen a National Security Advisor do.

Q: Let's move to the issues. During this time, the ones I can think of was the Gulf War was sort of developing. No, it hadn't developed.

HUGHES: No. It started after I left. The invasion began in August of 1990. I was in transition actually to the embassy at that time.

Q: When you were going through the expertise of Scowcroft and Gates, one glaring omission was Asia. Did you feel they also did not quite have the same feel for Asia as they did for other areas?

HUGHES: That's hard for me to say. In fact I was trying to remember whom they chose as the senior guy on Asian affairs. It was Carl Jackson, as I recall, who came from DOD. Carl then went on to be Dan Quayle's National Security Advisor in the second half of the Bush term. It is hard for me to evaluate, for what my judgment is worth, how comfortably they dealt with the range of Asian issues. They clearly knew their mind about who they wanted to pick as their senior Asia person. They kept on Doug Paul from the CIA under Carl in the Asia shop. I am trying to remember who else they brought on in the Asia shop. Maybe it was just a two person Asia shop now that I think about it, for a time anyway.

Whatever their depth of expertise, they clearly knew whom they wanted to draw on for expert advice so I wouldn't say that that was like an area of weakness or myopia or anything like that. It is clear that you knew where these men's heart was, what were the things that they really knew about and what were the things that they were really, really interested in. The job of the other staff members on other issues was largely to tend those fields, to keep those issues off the President's desk so to speak, and handle them themselves so that they did not burden the upper echelon at the White House.

Q: The problem is that the world is not a tidy place so that if you are really interested in one thing there is always an outbreak coming from somewhere else. Anyway, during this year that you were there, what were the major national security issues?

HUGHES: The first major issue if you would that came up was that there was of course to begin with the reviews of our policy. We did a policy review on practically every major substantive area of the world and every functional issue.

Regarding the relationship with the Soviet Union, Gorbachev was in power. There was a period

of change; glasnost and perestroika were going on and new leaders like Yeltsin were starting to emerge. The President and Brent Scowcroft were trying to define what should be our relationship and what should be our posture towards the Soviet Union. One of the early decisions of the Bush Administration was to have a kind of pause in the relationship with Moscow while we did an assessment. At a recent conference on the Bush presidency, Gorbachev actually spoke about this and said that he was surprised. He expected when George Bush was elected the pace of rapprochement and of working together with the U.S., interacting with the Soviet Union and with his efforts to bring about change, would pick up. In fact he was surprised he said and disappointed that there was this pause in our relationship while we did this review for 60 or so days.

Once the review was done there were a series of initiatives toward the Soviet Union. One was the offer of an Open Skies Agreement, another was the offer of an early meeting with Gorbachev and it was arranged for, as I recall, November in the Mediterranean. The idea was having it on board ships on nobody's territory, not on land. Bush had a naval background so they thought this was kind of interesting with a Russian ship and a U.S. ship doing trade visits and so forth. It didn't work out that way in the end but it sounded interesting. The relationship with Russia was one key issue.

The Middle East was a perennial issue and we almost have to sort of go line by line through where we were in the Middle East peace then. Shamir was in office and the Bush Administration had clearly decided that it wanted to advance the process of Middle East peace substantively. They saw the Israeli government, then a Likud government, as being one of the major impediments to further peace progress, in particularly the settlements policy. In Shamir's earliest visit to the White House, Bush pressed Shamir, as I understand, to desist settlement activity which was creating a fait accompli. At least I think the administration regarded it as creating a fait accompli on the grounds of just complicating the possibility of a peace settlement. I understand in his meeting with the President, Shamir said things that were taken to mean yes we will cease and desist, and he didn't. Bush felt betrayed and double-crossed by Shamir, and that colored the relationship from there and led the administration to actually do some very courageous things to try to pressure Israel to stop the settlements process and to engage in serious peace efforts with its neighbors.

Central America was a significant issue but it tended to be partly because of personnel turbulence in the NSC, partly because of the way that Brent, the President and Baker wanted to handle it. More of the initiative shifted over to the State Department under Bernie Aronson to craft a sort of a way out of our dilemma over Contra aid and Nicaragua. Hence was crafted the set of meetings that led to the Esquipulas Agreement and that led to the holding of elections in Nicaragua which turned out to be free and which turned out to produce a non-Sandinista victory.

Along the way the administration faced a series of if you would, crises or opportunities. Probably the first major one was Panama. I am trying to remember the exact sequence of this, whether Panama came first or the Philippines came first. The Philippines imbroglio or crisis as I recall came in August if I am not mistaken. It certainly came at a time when the President was away. It was largely managed by the Deputies Committee involved under Gates, meeting in the White House situation room. We received word that a coup was under way against Cory Aquino. We

received a request from the Philippine government to intervene somehow and stop the coup makers. Deliberations were organized very quickly in the White House Situation Room among the deputies. Decisions were recommended to the president that we couldn't intervene directly but what we could do was basically keep the Philippine Air Force on the ground by flying CAP over Manila which would be a demonstration of support for Cory Aquino. It wouldn't be belligerent. It would keep the Philippine Air Force on the ground and therefore kind of confine the resources available to the coup makers. It proved to be an extremely wise decision. The coup failed, Cory Aquino remained in office, and for the remainder of her term was forever, of course, in our debt.

We went through a couple of episodes with Panama. A major issue was what to do about Noriega. It was blatant drugs trafficking. It was clear that he was an unsavory character. He had promised elections, held them and then disrespected the results. The candidates were brutalized in the streets and very ugly public ways. At one stage we were actually in the middle of preparing for a White House arrival ceremony, I can't recall for which dignitary, when information arrived in the Sit Room. It was actually an appeal from some officers in Panama for assistance because they were in the process of having a coup. We received a little bit of advanced information about this earlier as I recall, that such a thing might happen and these officers were mounting a coup.

The question was what to do? They didn't actually ask for assistance as I recall. They just told us what they were doing. We scrambled around. I spent most of my time making sure that this arrival ceremony actually occurred believe it or not, because without any longer someone responsible for protocol functions in the White House, those things fell to me to do. I was trying to juggle two things. Making sure that the Sit Room kept information flowing to the NSC staff members, Brent and the President about what was happening in Panama, while we set up this ceremonial function. The coup quickly collapsed. It became clear that the coup wasn't going to succeed. It was not the opportune time to intervene. I think from that episode, the administration began then looking for what would be the next opportunity to intervene. I think it probably put on the mind set that we would not want to miss the next opportunity to somehow get Noriega out of the way. That was my impression.

That opportunity came several months later, as I recall in September or October, when Noriega's troops began a campaign of increasing harassment against Americans in Panama. They picked up a sailor and his wife. They beat up the guy in front of his wife and threatened his wife with rape or something. This story got to Mr. Bush and he was very livid about it, very clearly. It was almost a metaphor for his experience at the prep school where he saw some boys beating up on some underclassman and as a respected and physically strong upperclassman, he got them off of him. He said that we're not going to take this. We are not going to have our people in this kind of jeopardy. So there were a series of deputy meetings and National Security Council meetings that led in very rapid order within a few days to the intervention in Panama. Again a major issue that we faced.

Another issue that we faced is the whole issue of counter-narcotics strategy. The President, from the days of heading the south Florida task force and the National Narcotics Board interdiction system when he was Vice President, clearly wanted to do something about the drugs problem in

Latin America. The drugs law enforcement agencies working with the NSC staff under the office of the drug policy czar, Bill Bennett, developed an approach, a strategy to focus on the kingpins of the Latin America drug trade. Bush decided that one of the things that could be done to give impetus to this effort was to propose a four presidents' summit in Colombia. It was a very brave thing to do, to go to Colombia.

He actually went to Cartagena, one of the places that was sort of safe in Colombia, to the Colombian President's summer house there on the bay. He went down for a one day summit with the presidents of Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, as I recall. No, maybe it was just Bolivia, Peru and Colombia. Out of that grew, among other things, the Andean Trade Preference Act, sort of a decision directorate that there would be a multi-pronged attack on the drugs trading which would include an enhanced interdiction effort, a kingpin enforcement strategy, pressures on the governments to do as much eradication as possible, and economic incentives to try to give the countries other economic outlets beyond illicit drugs. Hence the birth of the Andean Trade Preference Act.

Q: On the Panama incursion, invasion, takeover, intervention, what was the role of the NSC at this point?

HUGHES: A very good question. I am even trying to remember who was in charge of our Latin America operation at the point that Panama came down. I think that it was probably by then Bill Price because I think that Ted Briggs had come and gone. He had brought Bill to the NSC staff, his old DCM from Honduras and from Panama. He had brought Bill to the NSC staff and Bill was sort of the acting-senior director and then became senior director and stayed on for the rest of the period.

The role of the NSC staff, having said I didn't attend the National Security Council meetings or the deputies meetings but I did read all the minutes and look over the outcomes that came out, my sense was that this was very much a top-down operation. Again that tight circle of decision making - Bush, Brent, Gates, Baker, perhaps Aronson, certainly Eagleburger - decided that something needed to be done. They were relying more on the NSC staff people, (in that case I think it probably would have been Price and Checelli) to be sources of fine tuning device, filters of information or interpreters of information, and transmitters and guiders of direction to the agencies to implement what basically was decided at the top.

My own mental model of this is that it was not the case of Grenada. In the case of the Grenada rescue operation, I wouldn't describe it as an entirely bottom-up exercise. I did have the opportunity to participate in the crisis pre-planning group meetings and some of the special situation group meetings that led to the decisions to go into Grenada. In that case, it was clear to me anyway, the President and the Vice President had not made up their minds about what they were going to do. They were taking advice from the military, from the State Department, and from the NSC staff about what to do. There were advisors in those roles, people on the NSC staff, John Poindexter himself, and others, who were urging or suggesting that this was a ripe opportunity because we were of course protecting the lives of American students and responding to the call of the OECS and all of those nice legal formalities. But it was also a ripe opportunity to rid the Eastern Caribbean of the Maurice Bishop Marxist government threat, and to send a

powerful signal to Nicaragua and Cuba on the cheap, and again cauterize a little regional security problem and keep it from festering into something bigger. It could probably be done very quickly and relatively cheaply in terms of cost of human lives and everything else.

Through that process of sequential decision making, learning that there was a task force on the way to relieve one of the carrier battle groups that could be diverted south for “evacuation” operations and then eventually the intervention operation, the President came around to supporting the idea of yes we should go in. Part of the reason I think that was done was because George Bush and George Shultz in this Special Situation Group expressed the view that this was something that should be done.

In the case of Panama, without unfortunately the advantage of being in the room when these sessions occurred, my impression was not that members of the bureaucracy at lower levels were pushing the senior most levels in the administration to take advantage of this opportunity, but rather that the President had made clear that he didn’t want the next opportunity to depose Noriega to go by. He certainly didn’t want American service people being brutalized and beat up by Noriega’s [inaudible] battalion. It was rather that tight circle of people saying that if now’s the time, then now’s the time. Taking advantage of I forget what the specific provocation was, I think it may have been Noriega’s forces blocked access impermissibly to some U.S. facilities or the use of our transit of certain areas in Panama that gave us the excuse to say well now is the time to lead the intervention.

I think there were two different decision models and I don’t have the impression, I hope it doesn’t do Bill a disservice, that Bill came to Brent with the idea that here’s the perfect opportunity to intervene to cauterize the problem in Panama. I think it is rather the other way around, that Bill provided expert advice, Checelli may have provided expert advice about some of the parameters. The military people would have provided a lot of advice about the situation on the ground with our facilities and what we could do, what we could bring in and so forth, how we could get it in. But the decisions were driven from the top.

Q: What about the way the NSC was structured when you were there, did they have a narcotics person staff or not?

HUGHES: Oh yes.

Q: What sort of a role did that play in the Cartagena meeting and structure?

HUGHES: We had a sort of drugs and thugs unit if you would, that dealt with counter- narcotics, counter-terrorism and I guess you might say international crime related problems. David Miller headed it, Randy Beers, I think he might still be on the NSC staff, two or three other guys, detailees from DEA and from the military staffed it. David was dual-hatted as the senior director for this global issues director and the senior director for African Affairs. Brent very much wanted it that way and David tried to get relieved of one or the other of those hats on a number of occasions but Brent very much wanted it to be a dual-hatted role.

I would say that was a unit that had more latitude to plan, direct and initiate policy, than say the

folks who were working Europe, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This was an area where clearly there was an important administration priority but where at the same time I don't think Brent or Bob claimed particular depth of expertise or absorption in those issues. So David Miller and his crew were able to take a lot more initiative in planning policy. If they didn't actually themselves propose, they certainly had an important hand in developing the idea for the Presidents' Summit in Cartagena and of this drugs strategy that emerged from that. They worked very closely at the same time with the staff of OMBCP, the national drug control policy office at the White House, Bill Bennett's staff and John Walter in particular. This is one of those cases where a unit of the NSC staff reached out and worked very, very closely with another unit at the White House in OMBCP to craft the administration's policy. The NSC staff would write up the directives that drove the international side of that effort, monitor the implementation of those directives, and kind of drive the agencies to fulfill and be responsive to the policy that the President laid down. Does that give you a little bit of a sense of it?

Q: Yes. I would think the overriding thing during this time was the great changes that were going on in the Soviet Union. Here is our mortal enemy doing almost a 180-degree turnaround and although we probably weren't as sure then as we knew later that they were basically headed for collapse and dissolution. This was THE issue. How was the NSC used to deal with this?

HUGHES: Here I will have to share impressions with you because my detailed memory is a little hazy on this. My impression is that events were changing more rapidly in Russia, in the Soviet Union, than practically we at the NSC staff could keep up with it. Frankly, again this is my impression, I think that through much of the first year of the Bush Administration anyway, we were playing catch up ball so to speak. We began as I said with a pause to assess relations. We then decided to go forward with some initiatives to try to hold out something to Gorbachev, to seize opportunities like open skies. This was supposed to be capturing the high ground.

Q: Open skies meaning what?

HUGHES: Open skies was a probably unnecessary initiative in my view but it was a proposal to negotiate a treaty that would permit fixed wing reconnaissance overflights of U.S.- territory, Russian territory, NATO and Warsaw Pact territory by all the participants of the treaty. We would work out some scheme that somehow (there were obviously a lot of technicalities involved, and pre-clearance and flight safety and so forth) we would be able to basically overfly the territory and photograph, observe and so forth. It was supposed to be a confidence building measure and a way to leverage our inherent openness into greater openness on the Soviets' part.

Q: This incidentally was proposed by Dwight Eisenhower back in the '50s.

HUGHES: Yes, it wasn't a fresh idea, was it? In any case we proposed this notion and began to try to get closer to Gorbachev. At the same time we had visits. There was a first visit by Yeltsin to the White House. I forget exactly what role Yeltsin was playing at that time.

Q: Mayor of Moscow.

HUGHES: That's right. He was pegged by many as an up and coming leader. He was received in

the White House. He was then publicly derided by some nameless NSC staffers as a drunk and a not very serious person. This struck me as a very strange way to do business with a country that was changing so rapidly that we couldn't really predict events. Today's mayor might be tomorrow's leader.

Q: Did you get involved with this because this is not a minor issue? This was an effort to make Gorbachev THE person and to knock down any opposition to him. It struck me as I was on the outside and out of government at the time, what the hell was happening, because doing this, and particularly coming apparently from the NSC?

HUGHES: I'm not sure, I'm not in a position to say. I absolutely don't know how calculated that particular remark to the press was from the unnamed NSC source. My own interpretation was very much like yours, that it was a combination of trying to reinforce Gorbachev as the leader we were betting on and the leader we wanted to work with. To also maybe downplay a little bit any sensitivity that there might have been in Moscow about anybody else but Gorbachev being received in the White House and at the same time just an expression of what particular individuals perhaps thought as their impressions of Yeltsin on first viewing. I gather that he didn't seem like he was entirely with it when he came to the White House.

Q: Let's say he has a drinking problem.

HUGHES: It didn't seem like very calculated statecraft to me. I had no involvement in the episode. I read about it in the newspapers like everybody else. I just scratched my head, like why in this environment do that or allow that to be done? It did not make sense to me but I think your and my guesses about the logic of it were pretty on target. I do believe that the Bush administration made a very calculated bet. They bet that Gorbachev was the guy to back. Why did they do that? They bet on him because he was bringing about reform. He was willing to move with us on arms control issues and bargain evidently reasonably. He was the leader we knew and they bet I think also on stability in Russia.

I'm not expressing this very well so let me try a bit different tack. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were two multi-ethnic, multi-national composites that were coming, both at the same time, under great strain with international division, factional fighting, and so forth. What was the Bush Administration's reaction to these? I think in both cases the reaction was to do whatever we can in a situation where we may have little leverage, to try to keep the country together. Not to have it fragment or fracture into a bunch of warring little nationalities and/or warring nationalisms. Try to preserve the status quo. Try to reform the status quo so that it is freer, it is less threatening, it is less repressive, it is more congenial to deal with. But certainly not to try to bring about a fundamental change in the geo-strategic order like the dismantlement of the Soviet Union.

Let's imagine that there might have been someone in the Reagan White House, the Reagan NSC, whose views would have been such that they would say here is a great opportunity to actually foster the dismantlement of this artificial creation of the Soviet Union into a series of independent nationalities and permanently reduce the capability of this entity to ever threaten our security or world security again. I think that view would have been very unwelcome in a Bush

White House because it would have been regarded as oh heavens, opening Pandora's box. Where would that have led? How would that have been seen by the rulers in Moscow? It would have been seen as aggressive, belligerent and threatening and it would have excited all the wrong reactions that we would want to excite. No, we should not be seen at all as fostering anything but stability of the leadership and continuity of the Soviet state.

I think that was sort of our approach and the result was that I believe that we ended up playing catch-up ball constantly. I think that we were playing catch-up ball when the Berlin Wall came down. I don't remember anyone anticipating it. I think we all watched it on CNN as I recall. I don't remember anybody getting more than 24 hours advanced notice that this was likely to happen. I think we were playing catch-up ball when we saw other countries in Eastern Europe even before the Wall came down (Czechoslovakia and Hungary) start to let people out including letting East Germans out through their borders, events that made the collapse of the Wall practically inevitable. As far as I could tell I think through this whole initial period from the review onwards, events were outpacing all planning in the East Bloc and Russia and we were reacting. Reacting to Vaclav Havel's rise in Czechoslovakia and bringing him to the White House at an early stage. Reacting to the fall of the Berlin Wall and so forth. I think it was a very reactive mode.

Q: In the NSC at this time, could you sort of compare and contrast at whatever sort of get-togethers you and some others, or people that you were aware of, to sit around and say what would happen if Germany unified? This is the type of almost academic exercise that sometimes it at least gets the brain cells working towards something. If people are so busy, they don't have time to talk about this.

HUGHES: Actually when I took my first job in Washington and had the idea that the NSC was this institution way off in the clouds that I might be lucky enough to come into contact with but probably would never be lucky enough to actually work at, I thought that that was part of the routine and part of the reality of the NSC staff. That these were a bunch of very wise deep thinkers about national security and foreign affairs issues who took the time in the White House to sit down and think about what would happen if..., or what should we be doing here. The reality is that it is an unending fire drill. Every day in every way it is an unending fire drill and if the drill isn't about something sublime, it's about something ridiculous. Clearing the text of the President's speech for the next event, getting a bunch of letters out to the President's frequent correspondents overseas, and so forth. Between the sublime and the ridiculous, it is an unending fire drill.

I never had, and I don't believe anybody else on the NSC staff ever had, the kind of little brainstorming session that you are referring to. We had some informal staff gatherings, it is true. One started off very early in my time with a sort of an ambush gripe session about why things weren't moving faster in the NSC staff. Why paper wasn't moving? Why things didn't flow more smoothly and efficiently? Those were natural growing pains of a new administration coming in and also a factor of personal style. I used that initial gathering to then basically offer a series of regular Friday afternoon open door meetings in my office to staff members who wanted to talk about what was going on in the staff. But that was more related to staff morale, internal communications, keeping people happy, understanding what problems staff were facing so that

we could try to alleviate them. Actually taking time out of your day to think about what would happen if Germany unified and how we would react to that? Unthinkable.

Q: I think this is important to get this on the record for people to understand how these places work because there is too often the idea that you had, and that I had, that these are people thinking the unthinkable and to have a plan for it.

HUGHES: The reality of life at the NSC staff is that the work probably all makes sense, or can be made to make sense, to the National Security Advisor who is on top sort of directing things and working with the president. It may make sense that individual staff members are working on their particular account in their particular field. But the staff members worked in remarkable isolation. Many of them don't interact a great deal with their compatriots up and down the hall. There is not a lot of cross-functional interchange. Many of the staff members I found, both during the Reagan and the Bush years, didn't know each other as well as I knew them because in my Bush assignment I was working with all the different parts of the NSC staff. Often the economic people didn't know the defense people or the intelligence people and didn't have any contact with the regional people and so forth.

It is also a place where as I said the range of work runs from the sublime to the ridiculous. It's hard to describe to anybody the range and variety of different tasks that a typical NSC staff member has to undertake, the rapidity with which they have to be done, and the never-ending flow of this stuff. What am I talking about? Cables to be cleared. There are established guidelines at the State Department about what cables going out to post dealing with what issues, at what level of policy, need to be pre-cleared with the White House. When those cables come in, they have to be routed to the appropriate staff member. A clearance has to be got within basically a deadline period of time. Changes have to be sometimes accumulated from several different parts of the staff and then they have to be given back to the State Department authoritatively through the executive secretary to get the cable cleared. That is one distinct process.

Presidential speeches have to be cleared by the NSC staff if they have anything to do with foreign policy. They have to be received from the staff secretary. They have to be farmed out to the members of the staff and they have to be gotten back on time. The input has to be authoritatively given by the National Security Advisor to the speech writers. This is what it should say: we don't want it to say happy, we don't want it to say glad. That has to be done.

Presidential notifications, treaties and agreements have to be sent to Capitol Hill on time in a certain legally prescribed procedure. A typical National Security Council staff member, particularly in areas dealing with aid, dealing with counter-narcotics certifications, dealing with reports on military procurement items and so forth, may have a number of annual reports that they have to make sure are transmitted by the President timely to Capitol Hill or funding is cut off for a particular program automatically perhaps. Those things have to get done.

Presidential correspondence. George Bush had pen pals all over the world. He received a huge number of Presidential letters. Not that we sent him the ridiculous, but one of the most persistent, and sort of vexing, irritating problems that we had in the early days of the NSC of George Bush, was just getting a handle on his correspondence with foreign leaders. He was so frequently on

the phone and so frequently personally in touch with foreign leaders that he didn't want to be in the embarrassing position of getting on the phone with Helmut Kohl and having Helmut Kohl saying, "Did you read my most recent letter?" and he had not seen it and had not known that it was there. He wanted to see his letters.

In the past in Ronald Reagan's Administration, correspondence from a head of state would have been handled in actually a routine way. It would have come in to the State Department or the NSC. It would have been routed to an NSC staff person and a Presidential reply would have been drafted. It would have been cleared with the State Department and so forth. It would have been sent up to the President through the National Security Advisor to be autographed, if you would, and it would go out. The process might take several weeks and the President might not see the incoming correspondence until he saw the outgoing correspondence.

George Bush wasn't going to have it that way. He wanted to see the incoming correspondence when it came in, immediately when it came in. The President received correspondence from everybody imaginable in the world about things ranging from how to conduct arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union to congratulations on your dog's birthday. But he wanted to see it all. He wanted to see it now. Rounding it up was no mean task so that he could see it now because correspondence for the President actually doesn't come into one mailbox, it comes into a whole bunch of different mailboxes through a whole bunch of different means. It can come in a cable through an embassy. It can come directly physically in the mail to the State Department somewhere, to the National Security Council, or the White House personal correspondence office. It can come to a whole bunch of different places. Just trying to round the stuff up so that we can give the President a compendium on a reasonably timely basis like twice or three times a week of who had written him what and giving him some kind of little summary of what it said so that he doesn't have to read every letter, was a major challenge to adapt to George Bush's style.

It was a major challenge to adapt the White House to the style of a President who might literally pick up the phone, at one case he picked up the phone and it rang right at my desk and he said, "Philip get so and so on the line for me." This President might be anywhere in the world. Maybe he's in France and there is six hour's difference but what if he is making a state visit to Japan? It might be 3:00 in the morning. These were the kinds of challenges that we faced. What I'm getting at with all these anecdotes is that this never-ending flow of work from the sublime to the ridiculous, even clearing routine Presidential correspondence to citizens who've written about some issue of concern to their congressman, occupy every imaginable hour of every NSC staff member's day. My starry-eyed illusions as a youth that there was time to sit around and operate the NSC staff like a think tank, that is just not the reality.

Q: On this, you have a President who is a telephoner and major issues are developed on the telephone. How did the NSC handle this because policy is made on the telephone?

HUGHES: Sometimes. It certainly was during the Gulf War.

Q: Yes but also at other times. If the President is talking to another President or chief of state or something, this is pretty committed. How did you handle this?

HUGHES: Basically totally differently from in the Reagan Administration. In the Reagan Administration a Presidential phone call would be scheduled in advance. Even if there was an incoming from another country there was always a stall: "The President isn't available right now but we'll get back to you." Then there was a mad scramble and I participated in several of these on the NSC staff. It was a mad scramble to find out what is this person calling the President about? Call the desk, call the embassy, call the foreign embassy. What's up with this country that is precipitating this call? Get talking points to the President before the call goes. Schedule the time with the foreign government when the call will happen and then get the two leaders on the line. On our President's end there would be a scripted conversation for him to have and he might or might not draw on it.

In one episode that I went through with President Reagan, the President of Mexico was calling about something that had nothing whatsoever to do with Mexico. It had to do with world events but we had written him a script that had only to do with Mexico so the President kept returning to the issues on Mexico even though they were kind of non sequiturs in the conversation.

With Mr. Bush it wasn't that way at all. The President didn't necessarily have a script. In fact he usually didn't have a script for his conversations. The script was in his head. Our challenge was to get an interpreter there and to get an NSC staff member to monitor the call. Brent and Bob would typically be with the President when the call went down in the White House or in their offices. Also to get minutes done of the call and then to do implementing and follow-up actions that were necessary. Either they would be self-evident in the call, or Brent or Bob would be given directions by the President, or they would themselves give direction after the call about what was to be done. That is basically how we handled it but in a sense it simplified the whole Presidential phone call business because there was a whole part of the Reagan scenario that was cut out, called preparation. All the concentration was on monitoring the follow-up. Not to say that there weren't some Presidential phone calls that were prepared and scripted and all the rest.

Q: Yes, because this was his style and the fact that here was somebody who his Rolodex, his telephone listing, was renowned. Over the years he had developed a contact and a style that catered to this.

HUGHES: I think that it really was an exercise for the situation room and the White House operators, the WAPA operators particularly, in compiling sort of frequently dialed numbers list for the President because the rate of phone calls was just so much greater than in the Reagan administration.

Q: Did you find that his style of doing this prompted other leaders around the world to call him too so we were getting more backwards and forwards?

HUGHES: Yes, clearly. Also I would say that from my experience, incoming calls were handled differently than in the Reagan Administration. Whereas in the Reagan Administration the call would invariably be stalled, (I didn't work on European issues on the Reagan NSC staff, but maybe it is possible that Margaret Thatcher got through immediately) everything else would be basically short stopped while there was preparation, research, and so forth. I believe that for Mr. Bush there was a much longer list of people who if the President could possibly physically do it,

he'd take the call right then and there and not go through some elaborate hoo-ha about waiting. He would take the call right then and there.

I might not have mentioned this, but I know we've gone through five tapes so I may well have said this earlier, but in the vice presidency I recall him once coming back from a hospital visit with President Reagan when President Reagan had been operated on for polyps in his colon in cancerous or pre-cancerous condition. He came back and the President was well, recovering well and so forth. Mr. Bush thought after his morning briefing that it would be a good idea for him to call the major western leaders and tell them that the President was doing fine. My boss came into my office after the morning briefing and gave me a list of people and said set up these calls with the Vice President, I actually knew many of the deputy diplomatic advisors in the respective leaders' offices. We did a little bit of time line with the time differences to figure out what time is it in different capitals and where will people be. We got WAPA working on the calls. In no time flat my phone was ringing off the hook from all of my counterparts in these other offices basically either apologizing that their man wasn't available right then, he's in a cabinet meeting but we can draw him out if this is an emergency and what is this about? It became clear that these calls coming at that particular time, far from being reassuring were scaring them because they thought that Mr. Bush was going to tell them that the President was dying. It had exactly the opposite of the intended effect.

Q: This might be a good time to stop. Is there anything else we should cover here before we move on?

HUGHES: I think we've pretty thoroughly covered the NSC staff. There are probably other issues that came up during the course of that first year-and-a-half of the Bush administration but I think we've hit most of the highlights and certainly the style of the NSC staff as it operated then. I can't think of anything else.

Q: Just one final comment. From what you are saying, because of Scowcroft's style and the way it developed, it sounds like yes this was an interesting job but in a way a year might have been enough.

HUGHES: Yes, in fact I wish I had asked for another job in the administration because, to be honest about it, it wasn't nearly as significant and meaningful a role as it had been in the Reagan Administration. There the Executive Secretary was looked on as like a third deputy and frequently substituted for the National Security Advisor on trips or things of that sort, minor trips, domestic trips with the President. The Bush Administration cut down on the President's entourage very drastically so there wasn't always someone accompanying him necessarily. That was something Brent and Bob did themselves. There were some aspects of the role that were frankly disappointing: not to participate in the NSC meetings themselves; to being the shock absorber so to speak between a staff that was often not very much in touch with the people higher up the line but somewhat frustrated; and between them and a boss with whom you actually didn't have that much communication and where you worked mainly through Bob Gates' deputy. Yes it was not exactly the role as Brent described it, but it was so very different to the way the role was performed in the Reagan Administration that it was in a sense almost a waste of time to do the job. So when the opportunity came to take an embassy, needless to say, it

was a welcomed opportunity.

THOMAS MACKLIN, JR.
General Services Officer
Moscow (1989-1991)

Thomas Macklin Jr. was born in Fort Worth, Texas in October of 1935. He attended San Diego State University and majored in political science, later receiving a masters degree in history. He entered the Foreign Service in 1965 and took his first post as a Consular Officer in Amsterdam. His career took him to The Hague, Vietnam, Barbados, Israel, Russia, and Italy as well as several posts within the State Department. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 2000.

Q: Today is November 27, 2000. You're off to Moscow. You were there from '89 to when?

MACKLIN: '91.

Q: Let's compare and contrast Moscow to when you were there previously, which was '83-'85. What was the situation from your perspective?

MACKLIN: From '83-'85, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the U.S. was at one of its low points. When I arrived in '83, it was Andropov as Secretary General of the Party and the Korean airliner incident had happened and there was the business with the missiles in Europe. When Andropov died and Chernenko came in, it was no better. Soviets were afraid to talk to you, really afraid. There were a handful of dissidents who would talk to the embassy people, but it was generally thought that half of them were there for the KGB. The government was not cooperative. There was no access to the public at large. The political section spent a lot of their time wading through these long polemic editorials hoping to find some nuance phrase that they could use to report a change in Soviet policy. So, it was pretty basic Cold War stuff with dirty tricks occasionally and a lot of snooping.

In '89 when we went back, Gorbachev had been in power for several years. He had been promoting his policy of glasnost [openness or candor]. What he wanted was to correct the problems with communism. They had a centralized economy, a government that made all the decisions, and the government because of corruption and because the system had basically broken down, didn't get the kind of information he needed. The government from the provinces, people reported what they thought the next hire rung of the bureaucracy wanted to hear. There was an emphasis on production quotas without regard to other factors such as pollution or ecology or the per unit price. So, the system had basically stopped functioning somewhere under Brezhnev. So, what Gorbachev wanted to do was he wanted candor within the Soviet system. He wanted production managers to talk about their real problems. He didn't want people hamstrung with production quotas which were unrealistic or which were self-defeating in the long run. He wanted to make qualitative improvements in the way people lived. He recognized that the Soviet

Union basically hadn't been able to provide the means for people to enjoy life. The health system was no good. There were just problems in every base of life. So, he opened it up, allowed and encouraged criticism, but the problem was that the whole system had gotten so corrupt and so inefficient and people were so cynical that once the complaints started to come in, it was difficult to channel them. There were so many complaints, the government couldn't deal with them. They really couldn't deal with open economic problems with other countries and with the West. So, on one hand, the government couldn't deal with the magnitude of the problem and as the people saw that the government wasn't really responding to anything, they became more cynical. So, it got worse rather than better. At the same time, the hard line wing of the Party felt very strongly that what was needed was more discipline, to reign people in. The West and the U.S. were offering strong incentives to open up the economy to outsiders and to open up the media to outside sources. So, whereas in the early '80s, there was nothing in the papers that wasn't controlled, there was a newspaper called Orgin Yolk, which was a youth journal which occasionally let people write letters to the editor that were kind of honest. But that was it and it was very controlled.

When I got there in '89, people were writing letters into "Literaturnaya Gazeta" asking things like, "How can I establish a Swiss bank account?" The newspaper would answer them. So, as people began to find out what it was really like on the outside, they became more interested in change. So, there were two main themes during that second tour. One is, the government and the people in the Soviet Union wanted to change. On the other hand, the U.S. embassy was still smarting from the whole business with Lonetree and was over concerned over security. So, you had on one hand a government which is finally opening up and you can meet people and security- (end of tape)

We couldn't meet with Russians. You couldn't talk to a Russian alone.

Q: That's crazy!

MACKLIN: Well, it was. For once, they were anxious to spill their guts. Matlock, who had replaced Art Hartman, who was kind of a big picture guy who was very smooth socially and oozed charm, was an expert on the Soviet Union. He knew some of the dialects. He spoke good Russian. He had been working for 30 years on the Soviet Union. No factoid was too small for him to want to file away. He insisted on volumes of reporting far and beyond what the community was interested in back here. I think the intelligence community jumped on everything they sent in. Over at Spaso House, the ambassador's residence, they were able to bring in large numbers of very important Russians. We got along with the Matlocks and got invited to a lot of functions over there. I liked Jack Matlock. He was an interesting guy. But he was full of contradictions. Whereas the first tour in Moscow, there was really no one who ever came to a social event at Spaso House other than the dissidents...

Q: Which is really not a real picture at all. This would be true if you only invited extreme left-wing communists to the White House.

MACKLIN: Yes. There were Soviet policemen out in front of Spaso House in the old days who would check the invitations and then still not let some people in. Well, this time, he could ask

anybody he wanted and there was no particular problem getting in as a rule. There were some wonderful conversations at Spaso House. It was fascinating. I remember one night I - the economist from Novosibirsk, Abengayneyen, who was one of the first people to puncture holes in some of the Soviet economy policies and was part of a group of economists from Novosibirsk who were kind of on the Russian cutting edge of understanding economics. He came to a lot of those functions. We got people from the foreign minister and the UPDK. It was really a renaissance. The security policy at the embassy was, you can not speak to a Russian unless you have a substantive reason to do so. If you work in political or economic, you have a reason to go out and talk to Russians. But you can't do it alone. You have to have somebody with you. If you speak to a Russian by mistake, you have to file a report. There was a form on an index card so that they could cross-check anybody you may have talked to.

Q: The Lonetree thing was obviously way down the line as far as... Who was calling the shots on this sort of thing?

MACKLIN: Well, there was concern from the White House. They didn't want any more embarrassment. Then the Under Secretary for Management was Ivan Selin, who himself desperately wanted to be ambassador to Moscow and tried very hard to get that job and quit when he didn't get it. But he had told people when they went out to post, "I don't want to see another security embarrassment." There was Lonetree. There was the Howard affair. The CIA guy who... But this was before they knew about Ames.

Q: Ames being a CIA officer well placed who turned out to be a Soviet spy. He was fingering all the agents.

MACKLIN: Yes. When we were there the first time, they couldn't figure out how the Russians kept such an accurate tab on who was and who wasn't with the Agency. So, there was still a lot of this paranoia and there was an awful lot of right-wing resentment of Soviet spying on us as if we didn't spy on them. So, the regional security officer, Mark Sanaa, was sent out there having been told, "Keep a tight reign on things. We don't want any problems out there." So, he did. There were problems with the rest of the embassy. It was this strange juxtaposition. There were people in the embassy who ignored it. A couple of people in the political section were kind of free spirits and really were working for the State Department just because they liked Russia and wanted to work in U.S.-Soviet affairs. They developed a wide range of friends and entertained a lot and basically said, "Screw you" to the RSO. Some of them got in a little bit of trouble and some didn't. There was also the question of the local employees. There was a perception amongst certain elements in the U.S. government that we had been extraordinarily stupid in the old days to employ Soviets at the embassy. Matlock had been on the NSC staff at the time and said, "We don't need them. I can get graduate students from universities in the U.S. and go out there and do the same thing." Well, if you want somebody to work in the political section to do political analysis and to translate, that's by and large true. But if you want a phone operator or a carpenter or an electrician or a plumber who knows how to work the pipes in those old buildings over there, it's kind of nice to have somebody who knows how they do things in Russia. We tried hard to get the front office to agree to hiring Russians. We were able to finally do that, but it was a long fight. The State Department had a contract with Pacific Architects and Engineers [PAE]. They would hire a lot of people to go out there and work in the consular section, in GSO, etc. We

had about 180 of them working out there at one time. All of them we had to house and provide special allowances for and pay a king's ransom. Some of them were pretty good and some of them weren't. We certainly needed Americans to run an air conditioning system and some of the highly technical elements of the compound. But there were two ways we were able to run a chink in this. One was, the embassy had two dachas that we maintained. They were both quite nice. Frankly, when you work like a demon for 12-14 hours a day for long periods of time, every now and then you could reserve the dacha and go outside of Moscow and it was beautiful out there. The air was clean, it was a birch forest, it was really gorgeous. It was a wonderful getaway. What was called the "old dacha" was out in Terasaco, a small suburb town. It had been abandoned because we had put an A&E couple out there and they had gone stir crazy and they got so nutty they had to pull them out. They couldn't get anybody to live up there because they were so isolated. So, they left it vacant. The minute it was left vacant, in came all the neighbors and started taking off doors and windows and pulling out wiring and stuff like that. So, we went over about a three month period to the front office, to the DCM, and then later to Matlock and sold them on the idea of hiring Soviets to watch the dacha. We'd have to go through UPDK, which had also changed. We'd have to go to them and we'd have to find Soviets who could go out there and maintain it. What they did was, they lived there. There was a small, little bitty dacha up near the gate and they lived there at all times. So, they were also a night watchman, made sure nobody broke in and stole anything. Not only were we able to do that, but we were able to hire back two of our old dacha caretakers who loved the old building and knew all of the problems with the grounds and stuff. Then with GSO and not with the Russians, we went back in and replaced the wiring and all of that stuff. It was always understood that the place was bugged. Nobody cared. You never discussed anything out there that was sensitive, but basically, we restored the old dacha and it became popular again. We used it for community picnics and stuff like that. But it was a long fight and the only way we were able to make it functional was by hiring Soviets to serve as night watchmen out there.

The other area where we had a big problem was drivers. We had a political section of 30-40 people and a front office that was demanding and in bad weather, you don't necessarily want to be walking across town. We didn't have enough drivers. So, we sold the embassy and the Department of State on the idea of signing a contract with a Russian organization to supply drivers. The drivers would not be able to enter the compound. They would have to stay outside the compound. But you could order a car and say, "I need to go to the airport" and you'd go to the gate and driver number seven would be there. They provided the vehicle. They'd drive you out to the airport, wait for you while you picked up whoever it was, and come back to town. In those days, as things broke down, there became less discipline and people became less afraid of the cops and cab drivers at the airport would rip people off and say, "Well, it will cost you \$70." From time to time, people would arrive at the airport, put their bags in the taxi, and the taxi driver would drive off into the woods, take away their money, bags, and passports, leave them out there in the cold, and drive off. So, it was important to have drivers. So, that was one of the big issues that affected the admin section concerning security.

Q: How about the char force and that sort of thing?

MACKLIN: The chars were Americans. After I left, we were able to get them to let Russian chars on the compound to do some of the basic stuff.

Q: My experience with hiring Americans to do essentially menial work is that you get a pretty low quality and these people in a way are much more susceptible. They're not as sophisticated and are more susceptible to getting involved in black market deals or romance. In other words, you're not really getting rid of the problem. In fact, you have a false sense of security when actually you're bringing people in who are more susceptible.

MACKLIN: That's true. There were problems with some of them and some of them had to be sent home. It is a problem. Also, there is a big cost factor. If you don't let people in the secure areas of the embassy, it was generally thought that they're not a threat. We all felt that our apartments, even on compound, were bugged and therefore you couldn't discuss anything sensitive in the apartments, including who worked where. So, what difference did it make if there was a Russian who came by and shoveled the snow off the stairwell rather than you, who didn't have enough time, or some PA&Eer who was pissed off about it. That was a very difficult issue in those days.

Q: I worked in Yugoslavia in the '60s and we had local employees. We were quite sure that there were some who were probably more willing than others, but they all had to report to the UDBA, the equivalent to the KGB. But at the same time, you could have conversations with them. You were picking up quite a bit from them. They're people and you're a person and you just sort of talk. Particularly translations and things like this. You were getting people who were intellectually engaged and they would start pointing out things.

MACKLIN: I can remember the first tour in the early '80s, we had some of the locals, Soviets who worked in the consular section who had been with us a long time and really liked the U.S. They were on a short leash from the Soviets, but they were good at working the system. There were a lot of cases where you had Americans who had come there as tourists who were injured way out in some far flown province where the phone system didn't work very well and these locals could talk through... You couldn't just dial an area code and get Tashkent. You had to go through different telephone exchanges. Sometimes you got there and they didn't want to talk to you or they would only speak a certain dialect. We had FSNs who were wonderful at getting through to the right people, who knew which hospitals they might be at, who saved lives. We lost that the second time around. They were missed. The same with the phone operators, who were admittedly Soviets and did they pay attention? You bet. But since all calls were strained before they came to the embassy anyways, what the hell difference did it make? They were strained first by the KGB and then they went to the switchboard. But the second time, we had Americans who spoke Russian but not so well who if you called them up and said, "I need to speak to somebody at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or over at the Kremlin," it was very difficult for them to operate. So, we lost a lot in effectiveness by being overly paranoid.

Q: Did you feel that Matlock was facing that problem or was this just a price he paid to do his thing?

MACKLIN: He did not face it. He did not agree with it. He said the old system was best. He said he wouldn't want to meet with a Soviet alone, that you were better off to have somebody with you, it was just good professional practice. But he had been one of the people who – it had been

hard for him to get that job. That was his dream job and he was there at a dream time.

One of the other themes that went on at that time was the intellectual fight between the political and economic sections. Matlock believed very strongly that the most important element was political, that everything in the Soviet Union was controlled by the Party, the Party was political, the political developments were the dog that wagged the tail, that economics was important only as an adjunct to that. The political counselor, Ray Smith, who is very bright, kind of felt the same way. Ray Smith had 30-40 people working in the political section, divided between external and internal. They had an enormous group. John Blaney was the econ counselor. He had a staff of three. He used to say, "This nation is collapsing economically. It's in freefall. They can't provide the goods and services for the people. It's falling apart economically and that's going to have a bearing on the politics." Well, they'd get into these arguments at staff meetings over what was more important. Matlock and Ray Smith on one side and Blaney on the other. It was tough on old Blaney. When it came time to fight about resources in any way, Blaney always lost out. Economics just wasn't that important. Well, as history unfolded, Blaney was right and they were wrong. But that was another opinion.

Q: It's interesting to see it coming at that point. We had this huge operation focused on the Soviet Union. We were doing everything you could think of to find out about this country and yet when it fell apart, we didn't get it.

MACKLIN: There is a tendency to want to deal with the government in power and to not offend the government in power by developing a close relationship with the opposition. So, what happened there was that the embassy said, "Gorbachev is our man. He is changing this country. He is the first guy since Peter the Great who's really changing things. He will keep changing. He has agreed to all of these disarmament discussions and he's prepared to cut nuclear weapons. This is a guy we should talk to and we should help him stay in power." Then along the way, people started saying, "You know, Gorbachev is losing his grip. We should pay more attention to Yeltsin." There was great pressure from the front office not to get too close to Yeltsin. So, this was another strain that was going on. Later on, when Yeltsin was in power and it was falling apart, there were those who said we were too close to Yeltsin. But back then it was Gorbachev and the Bush administration in particular was behind Gorbachev when the Baltic countries split away. We were very slow to recognize and we kept trying to hold this union together, to help Gorbachev hold it together, even though the Baltic countries and some of the others wanted our support to break away.

Q: Was this a theme that you could feel in the embassy?

MACKLIN: Yes.

Q: You've got a political section with 30-40 people. What the heck were they doing?

MACKLIN: Well, they did a lot of reporting. They were by and large good officers. They got out. You could talk to people and people would talk to you. So, there was a lot of information to report.

Q: Did you see any change in the support people that you were dealing with in the Soviet Union?

MACKLIN: I went back as admin counselor, but I was in fact number two and in fact for most of the time I was number three. It was a strange thing. I very much wanted to go back. In EUR/EX, I got along very well with Clark Rogers, the deputy executive director. I didn't get along at all with Ken Peltier, who didn't like me. I really wanted to go back and I had expressed an interest in going back as admin counselor and Ken Peltier wouldn't hear of it. They assigned somebody else and even picked somebody for number two. But then the person who was supposed to go as number two developed a family medical problem. So, there was nobody in the wings. So, Clark Rogers called me up and said, "Would you like to go to Moscow?" I said, "I'd love to." So, it was all set up and I went. But I went as number two. Ward Latrelle was the admin minister counselor. Then I was his number two, the admin counselor. I said to Ward, "What I'd like to do is run this the way Embassy Bonn runs. The minister counselor for administration deals with the other agencies at post and with the ambassador, sort of up on this interagency level. The admin counselor runs the mission. I supervise GSO and the budget people, etc." Ward agreed, "You run the thing and I'll deal with interagency problems." Then we were there about eight months and Ivan Selin, who was Under Secretary for Management, still didn't think we were doing things right, we as an embassy in general. At the same time, there was all this concern over the bugging of the new embassy building. This was an issue that had gone through that whole period and was part of the outrage of the right wing – how could we let this happen? So, Selin wanted his man in Moscow. He said, "I am sending Joe Hulings out there. He is going to be kind of the second DCM. Joe Hulings is going to be minister counselor for management. He will supervise the admin and consular sections. Max Robinson, the CG, will report to Joe Hulings. Ward Latrelle, the admin minister counselor, would report to Joe Hulings." When that happened, Ward Latrelle said, "Screw you. I want out of here." He left the next summer. I said, "I'd very much like to take Ward's place." They said, "Okay," and I said, "Can I get a TDYer out to take my place just because it will all work here?" They said, "Okay" and I went out and recruited somebody. Then one day out of the blue I was informed that Bob Austin was coming to take Ward's place. I was very upset but I stayed on through the year. I got promoted out of the job. Bob Austin got tossed out of the Service more or less. But Joe was there the whole time. So, I had to deal with both Joe... There was about a three month gap before Bob arrived, so I ran things. Then he came to post, was there three months, and went on home leave for two months. So, about half of that year, I was in charge. So, it wasn't so bad.

Q: How about morale in the embassy?

MACKLIN: Have you talked to Mike Joyce?

Q: No, I haven't.

MACKLIN: Mike Joyce lives in Virginia. He was DCM for about three years under Matlock. He is a wonderful guy. He did a good job. Matlock is very difficult to work for. Frankly, most of the time I was out there, Mike Joyce looked like he wouldn't live through the week. He was grey, had pallor, shook constantly. Look at him now and you'd think he is a picture of health. But Matlock just worked him nuts.

Q: You were saying that Matlock had his idiosyncrasies. How did Matlock manage?

MACKLIN: Matlock couldn't manage. He was a political officer. He was your basic political officer, promoted up to be the chief political officer at the chief post in the world. That is what he ran. If you talked to him and said, "We've got to pay attention to this," and you convinced him, he would do it, but he didn't believe it. We went to him... I liked the political stuff and I like to know what's going on. I told him or maybe Mike, "If you could give us a monthly briefing, you really know this stuff. You know what's going on. Most of the people are here because they're interested in the Soviet Union. They're interested in Russia. If you could give us monthly briefings, people would better understand what's going on and it would help them relate their jobs to the overall mission." I had actually done the same thing in Tel Aviv with some success. So, Matlock started these monthly sessions. They were great. He would take a lot of time and pay a lot of attention to that. He was not the kind of guy... There are some FSOs who like to stick the stiletto in somebody – people like Lannon Walker, who delight in putting the stiletto in somebody and watching them squirm. Matlock was not like that. He didn't like to hurt people. But at the same time, we didn't have FSNs and they were entertaining at Spaso House every goddamned night. They needed written invitations to go out. He would have FSOs in the political section sitting down, filling out invitations by hand. He would review them himself to make sure that they were all done right and he would send back batches of them because they got the case wrong or some grammatical element. These were people who were working themselves sick like Mike Joyce. He did it without thinking. He'd send them back and say, "Do it over." So, he just didn't understand. It wasn't part of his nature to understand how to manage things. He kind of thought, "Everybody is excited as I am to be there." He has an active mind. I doubt if he slept five hours a night and didn't think anybody else did either. I liked him, but he was very difficult to work for.

Q: Back to morale.

MACKLIN: The biggest problem with morale was the security thing. Most of the people were there because they wanted to be in the Soviet Union, they wanted to be in Moscow, they were interested in the history and the culture. On the other hand, you had Security saying, "Don't leave the compound." When I had been there the first time in the early '80s, there were a lot of people who were very happy not to leave the compound, but this time people couldn't wait to get out there and see things and talk to people. Security drove them nuts. Mark Sanaa, my friend, a good guy, really went around the bend. They started keeping files on all of the Americans at post without telling anybody. They would have internal ciphers and then not tell somebody. There was a cipher at post where you entered the secure area and there was a Marine booth. Inside the door to get out, there was a cipher, but they wouldn't tell people what the cipher was, so you had trouble getting out. We had a fire marshal at post on contract, so we would unleash the fire marshal to get internal ciphers changed.

One of the biggest problems at post was in secure communications. There was pressure from the front office to do reams of reporting, but since it was all classified for the most part, classified cables had to be typed up on computers which were kept in vault boxes. There were only three of them at post and they would only hold two or three people at the same time. They were double locked things. We had a lot of admin problems with the building. There was a construction

problem. We had the new embassy building which was full of intelligence agencies who were tearing it apart to make sure they found all the bugs, who lived there 24 hours a day around the year, tearing bricks apart. Then in the building itself we had a \$20 million project redoing major parts of the building. So, there was always construction going on and we'd have electrical outages all the time. So, sometimes, people working late at night would go into the vault, open the first door, which is an electronically operated sealed lock, go in, then open the second one, and you'd go inside. Then you'd close the first one and the second one and sit down to work and the electricity would go off. You're stuck in there and think, "God, is there another fire. Am I trapped in here? How do I get out of here?" They can't see anything. People would get the wits scared out of them. You'd go in there and there were only two or three machines and somebody was using them. You've got to get this cable out before you can go home tonight and your kid's having a birthday party, so you need to get it done and get home. You try to hurry up somebody and they say, "Goddammit, don't bug me. I'm writing." It's not just typing something you're written. They wrote while they type. One of the things that Security did... People were hurrying. You'd finish up and they'd say, "You're done." You know these people. You're trying to cooperate with them. So, "Okay, it's your machine." Off you go. One of the security officers used to go into those vaults at three in the morning, and find out if anybody had by mistake left a document on the hard drive. Well, if they had, it was treated as leaving an unattended classified document, so you got a security violation. If you get two or three, you're going to be put on LWOP, it goes on your record. We know the problem people are having now with security violations. Nobody wanted a security violation. But it's all because somebody forgot to clear the hard drive when they left or they were pushed off the machine by somebody who pulled rank. Who is to know? So, there was a lot of bitterness. So, someone from the embassy used to go into those vaults late at night and type up bogus classified messages in the name of the security officer who was going around tracking people down. But he wouldn't give himself a security violation for this. But the Security people got so angry that they put out an admin notice that described what was happening and threatened the people. It said, "We think we know who you are and we're going to get you." They never got them. But there was stuff like that that went on.

Let me give you two more quick examples. After we had been there about a year, a group of Soviet ex-pats from New York came in. These were guys who had immigrated to New York about 20 years ago and had had a thriving business with a video store and they wanted to get in the hotels in Russia which were opening up. They thought there was a gold mine but "We want our foot in the door in Moscow." So, they came to the embassy and said, "We'll set up the video shop for you basically free. We'll charge you the cost per video about what it costs to maintain this operation. We'll give you a library of 4,000 videos." Wow. Everybody loved that. Long, dark winters. You can watch a video movie. You don't have to worry about somebody from the States sending you the stuff. They'd bring out all the new movies and a lot of kids movies. They'd say, "The way we work it at home, we do this on a computer and the computer tells us every month which videos are moving and which aren't. If there are videos that aren't moving, you send them back and we'll replace them." Well, in admin., we agreed that we could go ahead and draw up a contract and the Security Office wouldn't clear it. They said, "Well, is this computer a Tempis hard drive computer?" "Well, no. It's an unclassified area in the compound." They said, well, then the Soviets can pick up the emanations from this unclassified computer." "Yes, I guess they could." "Well, then they can figure out what movies we checked out and from seeing what movies you check out, they can do a personality profile and they can find out your

weaknesses.” We said, “Shit, most people leave their blinds open anyway. If they want to see what movies they’re watching, the KGB is in the building next door.” “No, we can’t do it.” So, we argued and they finally said, “Well, if you code everybody’s name and you code every movie, we’ll agree to it.” So, everybody had to have a name serial code, like a bar code, and every movie had a bar code. So, you’d go in there and barcode yourself in and you’d barcode the movie out. It was things like that that just really...

To keep the Marines on kind of a sense of mission, they would have monthly hostage simulations. They were never announced. Just sometime during the month, you could tell when they were coming... We lived right next door to the RSO. You’d see him going out in his flack jacket with a helmet and they’d ring an alarm bell and have a hostage scenario develop. Usually somewhere in the embassy someone, an outsider, had entered and had taken a hostage and was somewhere in the embassy. So, the Marines had to tumble out of the rack, get in full battle gear, run up to the chancery, which was a quarter of a mile away, go inside fully armed, going down the hallways safely, to try to find out where the hostage situation was. They’d run those things at least once a month. People in the political, economic section, etc., would be working late at night and they’d stumble into these armed Marines. Nobody was ever shot, but it was just... There was a lot of tension.

Q: With the Marines, one of the things that is sort of unwritten history is, how does one take care of the Marines that are young men with normal sex drives. How was this taken care of in Moscow?

MACKLIN: The second tour there, there were lots of Americans on compound. Of the 180-some PA&Eers, at least 40% were female. All of them were young, interested in a good time. There were a lot of businesses that came to Moscow in those days and they often hired young Americans. So, suddenly, whereas the first tour in the ‘80s there really wasn’t much available in the way of a social life for the Marines, the second time, there were just loads of girls.

Q: I suppose this was the graduate students’ year abroad.

MACKLIN: Yes. Or even people who hadn’t finished. There were a lot of them.

There were other incidents that I don’t remember right now, but it seemed like every week there was some sort of hassle. While we were trying to get drivers on contract, the Security Office fought it constantly. Trying to get people for the dacha and we had to overcome their resistance. We had a lot of problems... UPDK the first time I was there was barely polite. The second time around, we needed a major expansion in our housing. OFM had come along. So, if we didn’t get good housing, the Russians over here didn’t get good housing. It worked. It worked so well that people back here kind of loved to stick their finger in the eye of the Soviet mission. One of the first housing problems we had... I went over there with Ray Smith and we got harangued at by the head of UPDK, whom I had never seen the first time, and somebody from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about some housing block they had been putting Soviets in here that they really hated because they were identified there and were being bothered by dissidents over here. I became convinced that the Soviets probably had a pretty good case. Maybe if we were helpful there, they’d ease up in Moscow. So, it took a couple of months of trying to persuade the

Department of State, mostly EUR/SOV, that we should cooperate with them on this one particular housing development. I think it knocked the socks off of everybody on the Russian side. They couldn't believe that we were suddenly being nice. Things kind of opened up. We got permission to go private. At the same time, UPDK was told, "You've got to be self-sufficient. You're no longer going to be funded by the KGB."

One of the things Gorbachev did was say to various ministries and various divisions of the government, "You're not going to get funding from the central government anymore. You've got to come up with your own funding and develop a budget accordingly." So, UPDK that dealt with apartments and rentals, etc., were told, "You've got to be self-sufficient. You've got to make enough money off rents and other services to pay for your personnel requirements." So, they became a little bit nicer. At the same time, we were given permission to go out on the private sector. At that time the Russians had invited in people from the private sector to build apartment buildings. There was one Swedish guy who made a lot of money inside the Soviet Union that he couldn't export. So, he said, "Well, I'll build an apartment building and then rent out the apartments and then maybe I can get paid offshore." There was stuff like that going on. So, we were able to start renting apartments from organizations other than UPDK. That made UPDK a little more anxious to be user friendly. So, there was a change in the general attitude of government. The head of UPDK was an Armenian named Karis Dechiance. I had a really good relationship with him; he was very helpful to us. He looked a lot like Gene Hackman and he had a deep guttural voice.

Q: A famous actor.

MACKLIN: At one juncture, I said, "Do you have access to a video machine and is it multi-system?" He said, "Yes." I said, "I'll get you a couple of Gene Hackman movies," so I did. He was really proud that he looked like this American actor.

What else was interesting? There were some strange people at post, but there is no advantage in talking about that.

Q: Maybe you can call them "Mr. X" and "Ms. X."

MACKLIN: There were a few of the types who really did like the Russians and were kind of naive about it but there were only a couple of them and everybody knew who they were. One of the big events there was the fire. It changed personalities a lot. In March of the second year, 1991, they were still working on the chancery. The chancery on the ring road contained the entire embassy except some elements of admin. It had several apartments in it. It had the political, economic, science, consular sections, parts of various other organizations that you find in embassies. All of it was there. The front office, security office, etc. at the same time, they were working on the building, redoing floors. They'd vacate a floor and then redo it. They were doing a good job, the contractor who was in there. One of the things they were doing was putting a big freight elevator on the back of the building. The embassy had two crummy Soviet elevators. One was a glass elevator that would only work about half the time. I remember one time in the first tour, it was stuck somewhere around the seventh floor with Art Hartman. Then there was an inside elevator that went up to the ninth floor that was very small. It was jerky. So, they were

putting on this big, enormous freight elevator on the back of the building, which it desperately needed. That was about the end of the whole project. Well, there was a material that was being used on the inside of that elevator that had been provided by a certain organization back here and cleared because it would somehow shield the embassy. You could send out certain kinds of electronic signals through this sheeting. It was procured by this other organization. It was guaranteed non-flammable. Well, there was a welder up on the eighth or ninth floor who was welding away that day early in the morning. A piece of slag from the thing he was welding fell down inside to about the second floor and it got wedged up against some of that sheeting, which turned out to be highly flammable. Within about five minutes, the whole elevator was a roving candle. Of course, it opened up onto every floor of the embassy and so we had to do an evacuation of the embassy. It went all the way up to the roof. The fire lasted all that day, started up again on its own the next day. We had to call in the Soviet fire department. We had our own fire people. The Marines got in on it. Part of GSO, the security guys. It took forever to put that fire out. Basically, it obliterated the mission. Even the consular section down on the ground floor couldn't function because of the smoke damage. There was really no floor on that embassy where you could work again. It was either burned out or the smoke damage had charred everything. They went into my office. The Russian fireman stole some stuff out of there in the process. There was great danger over secure safes and stuff like that. But it was a really bad fire. It looked at one time like the whole building was going to come down. Why it didn't, I don't know.

When it started, I ran down to the new embassy office building on the compound and saw the construction engineer, Carl. I said, "Why don't I get my video camera?" I lived on compound. He said, "Do it." I came back about a minute later with my camera. We went to the top and spent the day up there videotaping the fire. Most of the best fire footage I provided. The Security Office back here, FBO, etc., and the CIA and some others, did a reexamination of the fire to see if it could have been started by some other means. I just turned over my footage to them lock, stock, and barrel. But it was a massive fire.

Q: I've heard people say that the first firefighters in were very professional and doing stuff, but then another crew came in and seemed to be KGB types.

MACKLIN: There was a second crew that came along that was well-briefed on what to look for. Who knows what they got away with. There was one woman in the political section, Tatiana Deford, who had a brooch. She was of European extraction and her French mother or grandmother had given her a brooch that was about 200 years old. It was very valuable to her and kind of valuable because it had jewels in it. It was in a safe that was not a secure triple locked safe and it was stolen. I told her afterwards, "You've got to know the firemen took it. My suggestion is, you see our fire marshal and get an introduction to the fire chief of the city of Moscow and say, 'I don't care who took it. I don't care what the circumstances are. But here is \$500 green. I want it back.' I'll bet you you'll get it back." Well, the fire marshal said, "I resent the allegation that a fireman would steal." She wouldn't push it, so it never went anywhere. A couple of times, people said they stopped Russian firemen from trying to break into safes and take things out of the building. But it caused a lot of excitement and a lot of stress. Then when the fire was over, there was no place to go to work. So, here I was, I was the admin. section. As I remember, Bob Austin wasn't there. So, I had to get together with Joel Hulings and we went

down onto the compound and we had to find places for people to work. We went to the Soviets. The consular section of the new building had never been affected because it was on the ground floor. So, they gave us permission to use that even though we didn't allow them their building here. Then there was a big meeting room auditorium. We divided that up. We took the bowling alley and put down a false floor and put DOD in there. We threw people out of townhouses. The army attache was a wonderful guy and was very cooperative and was due to leave post in three months. We said, "WE'RE sorry. We've got to move you into a small apartment." He didn't bellyache. We put the whole admin office in that townhouse. Then in this auditorium was the political section, the econ section, the science people, and agriculture and certain other organizations. We got makeshift tables in there, flat picnic tables and stuff. Nobody had enough table space for all their offices. So, if a table was allotted to the econ. Section, but they went out to lunch, they'd come back and find political officers sitting there working at their table. We set up one vault in the basement, in the motor pool area, of the building with two terminals. People would line up outside those terminals waiting to get in to use them to type their cables. There were often 5-10 people in line.

Matlock, the day after the fire, I expected him to say, "We've had it. Let's reduce to about half of our staff, send about half the people home, and let's prioritize what we're going to do." Well, he made a promise to the White House the day or so after the fire that this was a full performance embassy, that everything would continue at the same level it did before, and that was it. That's what he expected from everybody. So, everybody was trying to do the same job-

Q: Spaso House, was it used?

MACKLIN: It was not because they didn't want them over there. Mrs. Matlock was rather more difficult to get along with than he was. We had a maitre d'. There were two problems with Spaso House that I got involved in. One was, because they entertained so much, it was very difficult to come up with enough food to have food for all these dinners. You couldn't do it through official channels. So, the head cook, Pietro, who was an Italian who had married a Soviet and who spoke Russian with an Italian accent, was a master at knowing the black market. He would go off in the morning armed with vodka and cigarettes and come back with fresh veal and vegetables that you hadn't seen for weeks. He was wonderful at that. Well, some of the security guys said, "Well, he's trading on the black market and I don't really like that." The deputy budget officer was on his first overseas tour. His only job in the U.S. government before had been as an IRS inspector. So, this was all the kind of impropriety that gnawed at him. I said, "Look, damn it, it's a false economy here anyways. We've got to provide food for those people at Spaso House. He does it." Well, they put it in writing. I said, "We've got to deal with it." Lo and behold, Sherman Funk came out about three weeks later. I reminded him that I had written him a letter from Rome outlining some of the problems with an investigation at that point that had been counter to accepted legal procedure in the U.S. I said, "Gosh, I was hoping I'd get a response" and he said, "Didn't I ever respond to you? That was a wonderful letter. On this thing at Spaso House, do what you're doing. Don't worry about a thing. I'll send you a letter in a couple of weeks reaffirming this, but I want you to go ahead and let that guy keep dealing on the black market." Of course, he never sent the letter, but the guy kept dealing on the black market.

Q: How about the consular section? Did that cause any problems?

MACKLIN: No, he didn't cause me any problems. The guy who was the consul general, Max Robinson, was very bright and very competent. He was a good guy. Max and I got along. We had no problems at all. The first year I was there, my GSO was a guy named Jim McKeezer, who was on his last tour in the Foreign Service. He was a strict constructionist. You don't do anything you don't have to do. Just stick your neck out and you get into trouble. Well, in the old days, the Soviets didn't give people exit visas. Now they did. So, we suddenly got a large volume of visa applicants. It was unheard of in the old days. They didn't have enough space. So, Max Robinson came and said, "Maybe we could issue visas outside, but it's hard. Maybe if we took the side of the building and built kind of a lean-to and created windows out there." I said, "Makes sense to me." Well, the GSO really didn't like it. He just rubbed his heels and we finally had to order him to do it. He said, "Damn it, you let Max do this and the next thing you know he'll want walls. Then once he puts up walls, he's going to want it heated." I said, "Well, I would presume he will, so let's plan for it." "Well, then they're going to want bathrooms." Damn it, these people have to go to the bathroom, too. In any event, that was a constant battle to try and provide enough service for the consular section. They really needed it. They had their hands full. There were more Americans coming over, more Americans getting into trouble. Max Robinson did a good job. He was a good officer.

Q: You said the security people wanted to keep you all on the compound. What about life off the compound?

MACKLIN: Life was much better. I don't remember anybody being victimized the way they had been in the old days. There were incidents. I didn't notice that the second time. In fact, life off compound was nice. They had allowed free enterprise restaurants to spring up, so you could find new restaurants around town. If you paid them a little on the side, you could get good food. There were nightclubs that kind of sprang up, nothing special, but kind of interesting. The two circuses improved a lot. Then you had other firms come to town – McDonalds was a huge hit. At McDonalds, they started out providing hamburgers - at Russian prices. So, that meant a Russian could afford to get a hamburger at McDonalds. For us, it meant you could get a hamburger for about three cents. The Russians, you would see them lined up for blocks around McDonalds, waiting to go in. It was good food and it was cheap. Pizza Hut came in after the first year. Ice Cream, Baskin Robbins. Pizza Hut provided pretty good pizza. So, there were things like this. They restored some of the hotels. The Metropole was restored beautifully. So, there were social attractions outside in the city. The flea market sprang up. When I had been there before, Russians couldn't sell anything. The only way to sell anything was through what we called the government commission. You'd go there. It's kind of like a pawn shop. You could buy things and most of the stuff was crap. But at the flea market, it was really free enterprise. You could get some good stuff. Individual Russians had a shot at getting some hard currency. So, it was fun on the weekends, if you didn't have to work, to go off and buy things.

Q: Did you get out at all? By this time, we had some consul generals around, didn't we?

MACKLIN: Actually, we only had Leningrad while I was there. I got three or four times. That was a lot of fun. It was a fascinating city. They had a lot of problems down there that we tried to help them with. Yekaterinburg didn't open until later on when I was on the desk and the same

with Vladivostok.

Q: Kiev?

MACKLIN: We tried to open Kiev. Finally, it did. The last year I was there, John Gunderson went down there with two other people and opened it up. But the problem was, the Department wouldn't give us any money. We owned four apartments in Kiev, but they had fallen apart and they needed to be redone. We didn't have an office building. John Gunderson was assigned down there as consul general. He's a good guy who did a good job. He was a tad arrogant and kept coming up to see us and saying, "Why can't you guys give me what I need?" We couldn't even support the Moscow mission on the budget we had. So, there was a lot of friction developed. We tried to get money from Washington from FBO and just came up empty handed.

There was one other problem I can mention in the admin side. When I arrived there, the budget section basically didn't work. The budget officer never knew how much money he had. Our accounting staff was maintained offsite in Bonn. There were five dedicated FSNs who handled the books for Embassy Moscow. But there was no computer link between the two. He wasn't a great manager and wasn't particularly liked. What he would do was, about every two or three months, he'd take his books and fly out to Bonn and spend a week going over the books and find out how much money he had. So, it was a terrible way to run things. He was too conservative when you needed to buy things. Then we'd find out later on that we could have made purchases that we desperately needed. So, I basically sacked the person who was doing our computers, who was incompetent. We got with a lot of nagging and persuading somebody who was very good at computers who was able to work up an e-mail line between Embassy Moscow and Embassy Bonn. So, it was a permanent line and the budget section was then able to get information daily. It worked really well. It allowed us to straighten out the budget section. The head of the budget operations was going through a lot of personal problems. His number two was this guy whose only job had been working for the IRS and he felt his main job wasn't really to help with the budget, but to try and identify people who might be cheating somehow. So, it took a long time, but we finally got that e-mail link and were able to straighten out the budget operation.

Then we had problems with the old guard from the Office of communications. This was at a time when the Department combined all of the computer people in the Foreign Service with the Office of Communications. The people from the Office of Communications, there was an old guard there who were very good at old technology but didn't understand new technology. They felt this woman we had who was doing the computer work was an upstart. They needed to rein her in. She was doing what we wanted her to do. So, OC sent out a representative, one of their regional guys, who felt he didn't need to talk to me and would go straight to the DCM. Well, the DCM said, "You've got to go deal with Matlock." We had a battle. They tried to knife this woman. They tried to spread rumors that she was incompetent and so forth. We were able to help her through it, but it was a stupid bureaucratic fight that we didn't need.

Q: You left before there was no longer a Soviet Union.

MACKLIN: We left a month before the coup. I always regretted it.

Q: What was your wife doing there?

MACKLIN: She went out to work in the political section. She was assigned to political internal. Did some traveling but really wanted to work in science, so she was able to do a switch with a guy named Ed Salazar and both were better off. She worked in science two years and liked it.

THOMPSON R. BUCHANAN
Consultant (Retired Foreign Service Officer)
Moscow (1990)

Thompson R. Buchanan was born in Beverly Hills, California in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Yale University. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943-1946. Mr. Buchanan's Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, France, Russia, Burundi, Gabon, and Norway. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 15, 1996.

BUCHANAN: In 1990, I went back to Moscow working for INS, Immigration and Naturalization Service, as an interviewer of would-be refugees. I spent six weeks in Rome waiting for a visa, which was hardly a hardship, and then stayed at the Ukraine Hotel across the river from the embassy while I interviewed would-be refugees. Under the Frank Lautenberg amendment to the 1980 Refugee Act, there were certain categories of people who were given special dispensation. They were considered by definition to be persecuted...Soviet Jews, Evangelical Christians, notably Pentecostals, Ukrainian Uniats and Ukrainian Autocephalics. Jewish applicants, notably from Moscow, were obviously well briefed on what to say to demonstrate a fear of future persecution. Some incidents of anti-Semitism certainly contributed to genuine panic among some of the applicants. It was virtually impossible to reject even the most well-established Jewish applicant claiming persecution, and with them, all the members of their extended family. The Pentecostals were naively honest in what they had to tell us, but they came with huge, uneducated families, and we could anticipate that they would soon become a burden on our welfare system. As Pentecostals, they had refused to let their children join the Communist youth organization, the Komsomol, a requirement for higher education. As a result, they remained essentially manual or collective farm workers. Instead of being tied by these discriminatory criteria, we interviewers would have liked to be able to emulate the Canadians, who would look at a family and decide by more objective standards: How is their English? Will they assimilate easily in our country? Do they have skills that we need?

Under our program, many of the people accepted as refugees are old and difficult to assimilate. Brighton Beach in New York is an example of a community composed of dissatisfied immigrants, many of whom have made no effort to assimilate or even learn English. The Jewish community, however, has been very effective in providing a support system for its immigrants so that the percentage on welfare is lower, I believe, than with most other immigrants. We now have the phenomenon that Jewish refugees, who have become successful in America, are returning to Russia, protected by their American passport or at least Green Card, to show the Russians how to run a market economy.

The efforts of our applicants to prove that they qualified as refugees was sometimes hilarious, if also touching. Some Russians, whose parents had probably hidden the fact that they had Jewish blood by changing their names and documents, now tried desperately to find proof of their Jewishness. Or simply to invent the fact. Others discovered that if you couldn't claim any Jewish parentage, maybe you could prove that you were a Pentecostal. I had a lovely young couple and child, whom I would have liked to have let in. They had good English, were very attractive, had the right attitude and you knew they would have done very well in the States in a short time. They came in and said they were Pentecostals. I asked since when, and they gave me a date which was fairly close to the time when the decision was made to make Pentecostal one of our special categories. So, I asked some questions to determine whether they really were Pentecostal. "Were you christened?" "Oh yes, of course." And they gave me a date when they were christened. "By water?" How about "spiritual christening?" Well, "spiritual christening" refers to the moment when the spirit of the Lord is said to descend upon you and you speak in foreign tongues. Unfortunately, they didn't know what spiritual christening was. They looked up to heaven, but heaven didn't help them. I would have been overruled had I accepted them, but we would have liked to have had more flexibility.

Q: I know, as an old visa hand, exactly what you mean.

BUCHANAN: So, I was there in the visa mill churning these things out. It was always very sad because, under freezing conditions, you would find lines and lines of people, many with children, extending out to the street. Some of them had come from Central Asia and were dirty, often very smelly and some of them had very sad tales to tell.

I went back for six weeks in 1991 and had the luck to be living in the Ukraina Hotel in a room on the 21st story, opposite the "White House," the parliament building, when the attempted putsch took place on August 21. I was awakened at 4 a.m.. by the rumble of tanks coming down Kutuzovskii Prospekt under my window, fortunately to help and not attack Yeltsin and his supporters. It was a moving sight to walk across the bridge through the barricades to our Embassy on the other side. A lot of the young entrepreneurs and students of Moscow suddenly realized that their future was at stake and came to defend the White House. But the majority of Muscovites waited, in typical Russian fashion, to see what was the "correlation of political forces," *"Kto Kovo."*

Four days after the abortive putsch, an older INS man of Russian parentage and I went down to the Caucasus. We were in Pyatigorsk and watched an open air meeting called to discuss the failed coup. It was obviously a time for a settling of accounts among local politicians and the citizenry. The Cossacks were very visible and vocal. The local Party bosses were shouted down as they tried to explain why they had waited so long before jumping on the Yeltsin bandwagon by sending a message of support. Speakers cited all sorts of misdeeds and corruption, including how city hall had sold licenses to friends to open offices in city hall itself.

We returned to Mt. Elbrus, where Nan and I had skied in 1978. We took the gondola ride to the top and then rode a chair lift that looked as though the metal chairs had been welded together by someone in their back garage. We said, "What are we doing on this?" Anyway we survived, but

as we got off, a little old lady came up and handed me a tiny little booklet published by a German Protestant sect basically praying for our souls. I think, perhaps, she thought we would be vulnerable after our chair lift experience.

A company in Washington interested in doing business in Russia asked me to look up a particular lady who was proposing to sell a variety of raw materials like marble. She proved to be a very impressive woman who was an official in one of the more progressive districts (raions) of Moscow. Although she was Jewish, she was determined not to emigrate but to remain and fight for a better Russia.

In 1992, an old friend and Leningrader, Bob Barry, who was then Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, asked if I would help out the Embassy in Moscow with humanitarian aid shipments that were getting underway, consisting of military surplus supplies from Europe. Beginning in February, I became the liaison between the Embassy and the Russian organization that handled the receipt of aid. I was given room 401 in the Russian aid headquarters, the former Gorbachev press center. As an illustration of the times, I ran one day into an interesting young man, who was a deputy in the parliament. He was red in the face and spitting mad. It seems that he had arranged to get our building for the aid organization, with Yeltsin signing the proper decree in January. Suddenly an official from Yakutiya in Siberia appeared with a document, also signed by Yeltsin, giving the building to the Yakuts. Naively I said, "Oh, I didn't know that the Yakuts had so much influence." He replied, "Influence hell, diamonds!" Like South Africa, Yakutiya is rich in gold but particularly diamonds. It has ties with the South African diamond firm, De Beers. The Yakuts had obviously paid off someone, who probably forged Yeltsin's signature, to get our building. In a typical bureaucratic compromise, the Yakuts ended up with two floors, including my room, while the aid organization retained floors one, five and six.

The hard-driving Richard Armitage ran this humanitarian effort. For State, I helped his representative in Moscow decide what Russian organizations would receive what supplies and monitor the arrival of those supplies at the airport, and their receipt by the agreed organizations. We sent Russian-speaking American students with the supplies to monitor their actual delivery to the needy recipients. A number of times I stood for six or seven hours at the airport in freezing temperatures, while we wondered where the trucks were that were supposed to meet the shipment. I personally accompanied only one delivery of supplies, in this case to a prison about five hours from Moscow -- the only time we made such a selection. We arrived late at night. Our packages were supposed to be for the young men in the prison, many of whom had been cooped up 29 to a room for as much as two years, with very little food -- not for the older male inmates. To my embarrassment, most of our boxes said "women" on the side, containing everything from tampons to facial cream. The rather fatherly officer in charge of the prison reassured me, saying that the 256 women on his staff would greatly appreciate the shipment. And since the wardens in prisons in Russia often do not live much better than the prisoners, I didn't mind.

As part of my liaison function, I was invited to accompany the Minister of Social Affairs, a very attractive lady, to Frankfurt, flying on an AN 140, the largest transport in the world at that time. The Russians wanted to show that they were helping with the shipment of humanitarian aid.

Q: What about military supplies?

BUCHANAN: We liquidated many of the military warehouses in Western Europe for dairy products, food, clothes, canned goods, chili (the Russians didn't know what to do with it and didn't like it), and things like that. A lot of the stuff you had to cook and we had a little brochure on how to do this. A great deal of what we sent was of very little direct use to the Russians. It was symbolic more than practical aid, often probably being used for barter or sale.

Q: This was because of the basic sort of collapse of the internal system of the Soviet Union?

BUCHANAN: Yes, that is right. It followed the release of prices when everything became tremendously expensive and people couldn't afford to buy very much. It was not famine yet, but people were hungry.

We had a query from Montclair, New Jersey, regarding the situation in its sister city, Cherepovets, northwest of Moscow, so I went up there on a weekend. What I determined, as in most of these places, the people were not starving. What they really needed was medical supplies. I went to a 1,000 bed hospital there run by a very impressive surgeon. Among other things I said to him, "You know Westerners are concerned about going to Russian hospitals; it is weeks before they are released. Why?" He said, "In all of my hospital I have one EKG machine. That is the only apparatus that I have. I have to keep people a long time in bed to get some idea what may be wrong with them. I don't have any equipment. We would give anything for even secondhand equipment."

That was really my major push when I came back. I wrote a long report on Cherepovets stating they could use notably medical equipment, funneled through some of the private organizations that were beginning to be established in Cherepovets. The USSR, as you know, had no tradition of charity; in fact it was forbidden for non-state organizations to do charitable work. But charity organizations, both church and private, were slowly beginning to be put in place. Some of our aid could be channeled through these organizations. That was one of the conclusions of my visit.

The most interesting visit that I had was to Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan. Secretary of Defense Cheney's daughter worked for Ambassador Armitage, head of our humanitarian aid program: she was in charge of conversion of military industry to civilian use. She asked me to go out to Semipalatinsk to prepare the way for two members of the Executive Corps to go there to see what they could do to convert the Russian "Nevada testing grounds," if you will, to peaceful use. The idea of dropping a couple of American businessmen with no Russian on the cold plains of Kazakhstan didn't seem to make a lot of sense to me, but I went out anyway. I went out prepared for a warmer climate and arrived in a blizzard and practically went into shock I was so cold.

The mayor of Semipalatinsk had just come back from a year in a business school in Tokyo. He had all sorts of bright ideas of what he thought could be done for his town. There is the town of Semipalatinsk and then there is what they call the "polygon" or military research complex. When I was in Semipalatinsk, I learned that there was a delegation of American high temperature experts visiting the polygon. I concluded that, where there is something of serious scientific interest in Russia, American corporations will send out their own delegations without any nudging from the US Government.

Among my more interesting visits in Semipalatinsk was one to a factory producing amphibious vehicles, and other small vehicles for the military. It was a caricature of a filthy Russian plant, with debris strewn all over the place. The youngish, arrogant director had his own ideas of what he wanted to produce in the new market economy, namely, an amphibious, all-terrain vehicle that he planned to sell on the world market. He was totally scornful of the suggestion by the mayor of Semipalatinsk that he convert his plant into the first vehicular industry of Kazakhstan. His clearly racial reaction to a proposal by a Kazakh, much better educated than he, belied the frequent claims made by Kazakhs regarding the racial harmony pervading in their country.

From the military vehicle plant we visited a Kazakh plant for cutting marble. The contrast was striking. The Kazakh plant was immaculate. I had seen this in Central Asia where the Russian quarter was dirty and the native quarter was kept clean and neat. Different cultures and traditions. The marble plant manager complained to me because some fellow from New Jersey had swindled them. He had promised to do all sorts of things, and he had a contract, but he wasn't following through, etc.

My visit to Semipalatinsk told me a little bit of what we needed to do in Russia as a whole, namely, do something to promote local small industries -- for canning, producing bricks or glass factories -- enterprises that would provide local employment and also provide the consumer goods that Russia needed. AID was not doing this. That became a main theme of an article I wrote after I came back.

The most difficult part of my trip, besides persuading, particularly the Russian military that was very suspicious of my whole mission, was hospitality. The great thing in Kazakhstan is horse meat and horse sausage, which I found virtually inedible. The mayor invited me back for potluck dinner. The advantage of potluck was I was not the honored guest and didn't get the sheep's eye. But what I did get was an enormous platter of very tough pasta with piles of this inedible sausage on top. Aside from the fact that the lady of the house insisted that I take a second helping, they were a charming family. They insisted that their son be present to learn how to behave in public.

I came away from Kazakhstan with a variety of ideas of what could be done and what I would suggest that our Executive Corps guinea pigs look at. First, I suggested that they choose men who grew up in desolate areas like Cheyenne, Wyoming. My whole trip proved to be academic, or worse. I was told when I asked when the executives were leaving, that it had been decided that the radiation level in the Semipalatinsk area was too high to risk sending someone there. Thank you very much!

Q: And would you mind standing a little away from the desk!

BUCHANAN: On the basis of that humanitarian aid assignment, I wrote an article that appeared in the April 1993 *Foreign Service Journal* concerning the type of aid that we should be trying to provide to Russia, and how we needed to understand that Russia would work out its own path to development in its own good time. What was required of America was patience and understanding -- not an American forte. 1992 was my last professional contact with Russia. In 1994 I concocted a project which would have provided me with an excuse to keep going back to

Russia, namely, promoting a sister resort relationship between Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where I vote, and Teberda, which is a nature reserve near Dombai, which is an Alpine ski and climbing resort, both in the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Republic on the Russian border with Georgia. This spectacularly beautiful area was former Premier Kosygin's favorite retreat and the most luxurious hotel inn in the area is still referred to as Kosygin's dacha. A local businessman is trying to convert it into a retreat for the rich and famous. I went there with letters from the mayor of Jackson, and a box of medical supplies for the local hospital. I arranged the trip through the divorced wife of our former Elbrus friends, now remarried to an American in Oklahoma. Her friends in Moscow must have thought that I was coming with big bucks, because they arranged for me to meet upon my arrival with a Vice Minister of the Economy. My most intriguing contact claimed to work for the Federation of UNESCO clubs, one of whose functions was to promote sister city relations with the West. This supposed schoolmate of the vascular surgeon-alpinist, who was accompanying our small delegation of three Americans to Dombai, was quick to tell me that he had retired from the KGB only two years before. He said that he was now a member of the international organization of retired intelligence officers founded by Bill Whipple of CIA, and that he had toured 33 cities in the US lecturing about the KGB. He was presumably coming along to see what this old "cold warrior" was doing at his age, trying to set up some project in an ethnically sensitive area of the Caucasus. He had done his homework, reminding me, for example, who had been my station chief in Leningrad. Actually, he was a quite amusing and helpful fellow, a former dean of the consular corps in, I believe, Osaka, Japan.

As the oldest man present, I was regularly named "Tamadan" or master of ceremonies Caucasus style for our evening banquets. To judge by my frequent hangovers, I was not the drinker of vodka that I used to be. The skiing in "Dombai also left something to be desired: ungroomed slopes and a chairlift that broke down, leaving me freezing, floating in air for two and a half hours, unlike my companions too high to jump. A young lady seated in the chair beside me probably saved me from hypothermia by periodically rubbing my back. Dombai has great tourist potential, but the facilities for the 600-800,000 Soviet tourists who used to throng there are now virtually empty, as Russians who can afford to travel prefer to go to Switzerland. I did not generate much interest in my project when I returned to Jackson. The mayor who sponsored me had been fired, and I doubtless deterred skiers by my overly frank description of what needed to be done to make Dombai a modern ski resort. I have not returned to Russia since 1994, but I am again planning a trip there, this time via Anchorage, Alaska, to explore Siberia and the Maritime Provinces. I cannot explain this addiction for Russia. It is rather like reading a fascinating, disturbing novel that you want to put down but can't.

The Foreign Service is not the career that it used to be. But still, life in the Service can expose you to a language and culture, and human experience, that can become your life passion, if you are as fortunate as I was. It is worth the gamble.

GORDON GRAY
Soviet Desk Officer, Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1990-1992)

Ambassador Gordon Gray was born in New York in 1956. He received his BA from Yale and MA from Columbia University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1982. His overseas assignments include Karachi, Amman, Ottawa, Cairo, Baghdad and as ambassador to Tunisia. Ambassador Gray was interviewed in 2016 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

GRAY: As desk officer I went to his confirmation hearing before the invasion. As I mentioned before, Skip was my DCM in Amman. In addition, when I was on the Kuwait desk I worked with his desk officers when he was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. I then worked for him when he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State.

Q: How did you find your work with the court in exile I imagine you dealt with the court in exile didn't you?

GRAY: No, because my tour ended right at the time of the invasion due to the way the assignment and transfer process worked. I left the desk shortly after the invasion, and moved across the hall. I was the Middle East watcher on what was then the Soviet desk and so I was dealing with the same issue, just from a different perspective.

Q: What was your job and title?

GRAY: On the Soviet desk?

Q: Yeah. What were the responsibilities?

GRAY: I had the Middle East portfolio on the Soviet desk during the three-quarters of my tour. Once the Soviet Union dissolved (on Christmas Day 1991), I focused on Russian foreign policy in general.

Q: Okay you talked about the initial Soviet reaction to the invasion to Kuwait, and our concerns. What were we up to?

GRAY: There was a real schism within Soviet policymaking circles about the invasion of Kuwait. On the one hand, just as Syria today is a client important to Russia, the same was true of Iraq at the time. There was a very strong relationship between Soviet diplomats and the Iraqi government; a large number of Soviet diplomats had served there. There was also a strong military and intelligence relationship. Yevgeny Primakov was a confidante of Saddam Hussein. In sum, there were many within Soviet foreign policymaking circles who reflexively and with great determination supported Saddam and the invasion. On the other hand, there were those like Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze who saw the bigger picture of the changing U.S.-Soviet relationship. Fortunately for us, Secretary Baker had developed a very strong relationship with him. I do not want to make it sound as if it was a foregone conclusion that the United States and the USSR would cooperate on this issue, because it certainly wasn't. But at the highest levels, the Baker-Shevardnadze relationship succeeded in keeping the Soviets on side. You'll recall all of the Security Council resolutions passed. The Soviets supported them and did not use their veto.

Q: What was your impression of being in the Soviet sphere of influence in the State Department? Was it a different world?

GRAY: The Soviet what?

Q: I mean dealing with Soviet affairs it must have been quite a different world wasn't it for you?

GRAY: It was, and particularly for me as I had only served in NEA to that point. Moreover, the Soviet desk was sufficiently large and sufficiently influential that it was in effect a mini-bureau. I found it a very collegial place to work. I really lucked out in the sense that being there at such a pivotal time when the Soviet Union disintegrated.

Q: Did you find that your colleagues appreciated the various sensitivities and currents that ran in the Middle Eastern bureau?

GRAY: I'm not sure that I fully understand the question.

Q: The issues of the Middle East I mean they were dealing with one of the two major concerns of the State Department at the time; the Soviet Union and the Middle East.

GRAY: If the question you are getting at is was there any friction with the Near East Bureau or anything like that, I didn't...

Q: Yeah, well that's it or a difference. I mean you are a new boy on the block and I was wondering if you felt any strains or difficulties in dealing with the Near Eastern problem.

GRAY: No, I think in some ways the people on the Soviet desk appreciated the fact that I had good relationships with people in NEA personally, and had insights as to what was going on. I think the opposite was true as well; my friends in NEA appreciated that I could share perspectives from the Soviet desk. There is a great expression in Arabic which is that "the fish rots from the head." Getting back to my comment before, wiring diagrams are never as important as the people. We had a very strong leadership on the Soviet desk and it was also extremely collegial leadership. Sandy Vershbow was the director my first year; he later became Ambassador to Russia. The deputy director during my entire tour was John Tefft, who is our current ambassador to Russia. The director my second year was Larry Napper, who was later named ambassador twice, including to Kazakhstan. The head of my section was John Ordway, who, like Larry, was also named ambassador twice, including to Kazakhstan. While they were all obviously very accomplished, they were also low-key and collegial individuals, so there was no "us versus them" mentality.

Q: Were the people dealing with the Soviet Union per se having problems in our taking their longtime colleague Syria on as an enemy?

GRAY: I'm sorry – again?

Q: Was your group getting reports of this policy of siding with Kuwait against Iraq causing difficulty within the Soviet Union or Russia at the time?

GRAY: I wouldn't put it as with Kuwait against Iraq; it was more siding more with the United States. It did cause problems within, and we saw manifestations such as Primakov trying another shuttle mission to Baghdad to get Saddam to back down, virtually at the last minute. But at the end of the day Gorbachev and Shevardnadze had the upper hand and their perspective prevailed. I am sure that behind the scenes there was a lot of bureaucratic intrigue that was opaque to us at the time. Maybe we'll learn more when the Soviet archives are opened.

Q: Were there any particular problems that you dealt with while you were on that job?

GRAY: It seemed as if I was doing press coverage every day Primakov said something or traveled, but that's the life of an action officer in the State Department. Iraq was obviously the big issue for my first six months on the Soviet desk. We were also working on Soviet disengagement from Afghanistan. The policy direction was clear and the Undersecretary for Political Affairs at the time, Mike Armacost, very much led that effort. While there was plenty of work to do at the action officer level, it was not contentious. The third issue was the transformation of the Soviet Union. There was a failed coup attempt against Gorbachev in 1991, followed by his Christmas Day 1991 announcement that the Soviet Union was no more. We then saw the rise of Yeltsin. It really was a new world in U.S.-Russian relations. (I'll say 'Russian' now since the Soviet Union had dissolved.) It affected the work of everyone on the Soviet desk because just about everything was possible. We were cooperating in ways that had been unimaginable before. On a lot of issues, we were able to find a resolution. I think we all had an appreciation at the time that we were living in special times and that the bilateral relationship was so good it could only go in one direction.

Q: It really had a terribly exciting time.

GRAY: It was great. That's why one joins the Foreign Service – to see history being made. I wasn't the one making history, and I wasn't a Soviet expert, but if you are interested in foreign policy it was just a tremendous experience. I was fortunate to be surrounded by not just experts, but collegial ones at that. If I may, let me digress again with a personal story. It was the day after Thanksgiving, when offices in Washington tend to be under-staffed. There may have been a couple of other people on the Soviet desk that day, but it seemed like my colleague and I were the only two in the office. Neither of us had served in Moscow, and neither of us spoke Russian, so of course we got an urgent request from the White House on how to translate the term "make way for ducklings." You may remember that Barbara Bush, then the First Lady, was going to Moscow, and she wanted to present a replica of the statue of the ducklings from the children's book to a park in Moscow. (The original is in Boston Commons if I am not mistaken.) Jack and I looked at each other and we said, "There's got to be an interpreter somewhere - we sure can't answer that question." Those were the easy crises to deal with.

Q: Were we concerned about developments in Russia at the time or was it a positive feeling?

GRAY: At the risk of giving a very State Department-like answer, I would say both. It was a very positive atmosphere because there were so many avenues for cooperation. At the same time, the experience we had had with Soviet policymakers over Iraq was illustrative of the very strong currents that resisted Gorbachev and the Gorbachev-Shevardnadze policies. To quote Alan Greenspan in a completely different context, I don't think there was any "irrational exuberance."

Q: You know from the outside I felt a great deal of pleasure for George Bush I and his State Department in dealing with a whole post 1989 period.

GRAY: There was a masterful vision of what the post-1989 world should look like. The strategy was strong and there was also was a terrific execution of the policy.

Q: I think one of the amazing things I looked at was we were very careful not to exude triumphalism at the top. Other people were but we weren't.

GRAY: That's right - there was no gloating. I certainly don't recall a "no gloating" memorandum, but that was clearly the message. I don't know if you've read Jon Meacham's biography of the first President Bush but it makes it very clear that was the way his mother raised him.

Q: You don't gloat.

GRAY: I think that translated very effectively into the way he and Secretary Baker managed the post-1989 world.

Q: Did you feel like you are sitting in the midst of masters of the universe at the time?

GRAY: Very much so, because the State Department had two extremely effective Secretaries of State who had the great confidence of the President. Once when Secretary Shultz was traveling, his staff – who knew that the staff assistants toiled in the vineyards – invited us to his inner office. Secretary Shultz had Captain's Chairs with a seal from each of the Cabinet-level posts that he had held. So there was one from when he was director of OMB, one from when he was Secretary of Treasury, etc. Secretary Shultz's value was not just his experience, but his integrity. He didn't need to be Secretary of State - he had already done it all and could go back to Stanford and live a much less stressful life. My guess is that President Reagan understood that. And certainly the relationship between President Bush 41 and Secretary Baker was even closer. When the Department has a Secretary who is that close to the President and that well-regarded, it makes everybody's life in the Department a lot easier, and, I suspect, everybody's life in the interagency community as well.

Q: One has the contrast it when Henry Kissinger seemed to want to accept all the glory to himself and personalize it so much.

GRAY: Yes.

Q: Well, what did you do after this time? Is there anything else we should talk about on the Russia desk?

GRAY: No, I think we hit the high points. As I said, it was a wonderful time to be on the desk, and a wonderful time to be in the State Department for that matter.

Q: I was just going to say were they still paying you for having this wonderful job? I mean what the hell.

GRAY: They were still paying me, which was good as I had growing family. They may have been paying me my market value, but I would have accepted more money as well.

GREG THIELMANN
Chief, Office of Strategic Forces Analysis, INR
Washington, DC (1990-1993)

Mr. Thielmann was born and raised in Iowa and was educated at Grinnell College and Princeton University. A specialist in Political-Military Affairs, he held a number of positions dealing with such matters as Strategic Proliferation, Arms Control and Missile Programs. He also served abroad at several posts in the capacity of Political Officer and Consular Officer. His last position was Chief, Office of Analysis for Strategic Proliferation and Military Affairs in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Mr. Thielmann was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004

THIELMANN: In 1990, I went to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) and became the division chief for strategic forces analysis, which in a lot of ways was a continuation of my time in the Soviet Union, because our main concern in that job was with the breakup of the Soviet Union -- who had their finger on the nuclear trigger? It was of course Soviet strategic forces much more than Chinese or any nascent nuclear power that we worried about. That was our focus.

Q: So we'll pick this up in 1990 when you're off to INR.

Today is March 14th, 2005. Greg, how did you find the atmosphere of INR at that time. Were people listening? In general, what was your impression?

THIELMANN: I had a very favorable impression of INR, once I was inside it. I remember having had occasional contact with INR from the policy bureau perspective. I remember at the time they were obviously the keeper of secrets and had some interesting information, and they were capable people in it, but I did not really appreciate what a resource it was until I was inside it. Then I realized that for example the department had a chair in the intelligence community when the fifteen agencies or some subset of them got together to decide on a national assessment or some lower order of intelligence community proclamation. The State Department was there to

put in its interpretation. One of the things that I had not appreciated until I got into INR was that there were very few entities in the intelligence community that did not have what I would call a kind of institutional bias which sort of skewed their assessments. All of the entities of the intelligence community have institutional biases I believe, including INR, but some of them seemed to pose a real threat to doing things that would, let's say, cast a dim light on their own agencies policy proclivities. If I can just put that another way, in the State Department it really did not matter if our analysis was critical of current U.S. foreign policy. This was little understood outside the INR, but certainly inside the building I quickly came to realize that the leadership of the intelligence bureau would fiercely protect the intellectual integrity of the line analysts. So an analyst didn't really have to worry about a judgement or a conclusion that would embarrass the others in the building or elsewhere in the U.S. government. The job was about as objective as one could imagine inside a government context. You obviously had to worry about people continuing to listen to you, and, if you got to be such a nag or if your tone was too snide and everything, you might turn off the kind of policy consumers that you wanted to pay attention to your product. But it was really refreshing to realize how academic in a sense INR was. You were expected to be on top of your product and to use evidence intelligently. But you were encouraged to use your judgement, make a leap when necessary as long as you made clear that this was a guess and that you reported accurately on what the confidence level was based on the evidence available. But it was quickly apparently to me that this was the kind of place where one could go home satisfied in the evening because you had done the best job you could given the evidence available to help policymakers understand what we knew from existing information. Much to my surprise I found out that, in many ways, that was more satisfying than being a cog in the policy machine and very often supporting policy with which you had serious reservations. Although broad of course as the implementer of policy you would also have a heavy responsibility to report what the foreigners thought of the policy or what the situation was in a foreign country. So being an objective reporter of facts had its own satisfaction. But I found that for me personally it was very satisfying to have a few layers between me as an analyst and the Secretary of State, the highest level consumer, and to be in that role of controlling the end result of your output much more than you did as a policy player.

Q: Well, one of the things we'll talk about if the interagency discussions and the biases there. One of the things, and you correct me if I'm wrong, was that in a way State had a certain exclusion from the budgetary process. I'm sure as regards the CIA and the Defense Department an awful lot of their analysis was based on how much money they'd get in order to collect this information, all sorts of equipment and paid sources and all that. Essentially we were doing it with what we had. So that nobody was saying well, if you think if you're knocking our product, what you're doing is you're cutting out a big slice of our budget.

THIELMANN: That's right. That's an important observation about the way things worked. The State Department's INR was on such a shoe string that, if one looked at the billions and billions being spent by the intelligence community, INR didn't even show up as a blip. INR's budget was basically the personnel costs of 220 people or something like that. Other elements of the intelligence community would have a big stake in people appreciating and valuing their own particular sources of intelligence information whether it was photographic imagery satellites, signals intelligence apparatus or human intelligence. All of these things were costly, and there would be a bias toward making whatever contribution your agency specialized in seem

extremely important. The best example of that I think really is CIA and Human Intelligence. The CIA was the agency responsible for putting all of that evaluatory language on any kind of spy reporting. So any espionage would or should've been labeled in terms of what access that source had, what their record of reliability was and any kind of other information that, while protecting the name of the source, would allow the consumer to have some sense of what kind of information this was. From my point of view that was a really flawed part of the system because the CIA had an institutional interest in praising the value of its sources, and over the course of my career there were a number of times when I saw that those labels were not accurate. This is apart from the whole experience in Iraq where the Iraqi National Congress and others had obvious motives to slant the information. In that case even the CIA often said these sources were unreliable. But I'm talking about sources that the CIA kind of incorrectly labeled. As a foreign service officer abroad there were times when we caught this on information that we knew could not be true. Yet the CIA label is consistently reliable, and in at least one instance we found out it was someone who had left the job a year before he was claiming to still hold it. It was obvious because of what he was saying that this person could not be plugged in, and yet the CIA was not rigorous in their labeling. So to me that's an example of how the institutional interests of some of the other agencies would rob them of objective and hard-nosed assessments.

Q: Well, also too I think that, I'll make a comment on this while we're talking in general terms. INR probably is closer to "what does this mean for policy?" In other words it's really very close to action. Do we change our policy or not? Other ones are the accumulation of data, and the people who are on the intelligence side are not having to ask "what do we do about this tomorrow?" When INR is much closer to the policy development process. Does that make sense?

THIELMANN: That points to another institutional advantage we had over many others. We were so close to the consumers of information, literally minutes away, people down the corridor, a couple floors up, other people in the building. This was an advantage that hardly anyone else in the intelligence community had. DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) was mostly not in the Pentagon. They were in a separate building. CIA headquarters was on the other side of the river from most of their key intelligence consumers. Those agencies were so large that it would be very unusual for the producers of the intelligence and the analysts to really hear directly from the consumers the reactions to their product. So if there were any reactions at all, it was sort of filtered down through many layers. Their activity would be much more like thrown over the wall or shot in the dark as regards its utility. We had a better sense not because we were better analysts but because of the proximity and the constant contact with the policy consumers. We had a much better notion of what was important to them on a particular day or what was relevant given the overall policy context in terms of our analysis.

Q: Well, another thing and then we can move long. I think size also has a factor because the more people working over something, just means more layers. I'm told that the Jordanian desk in CIA has maybe ten people. The INR desk has one or two at most. You end up with the usual government thing of massaging something, editing it, and it doesn't come out. It gets neutered as it goes through the editing process of too many people going too far. It means that something can be wrong. But it also means, if you just have one person or two people working on something, it comes out as a little more stark, unedited as opposed to one that goes through the bureaucratic process of layers, that takes away all the bite, is safer but not perhaps as valid.

THIELMANN: There are a lot of different dimensions to the truism that small really is beautiful, and it is for intelligence analysis as well as a lot of other things. You've referred to some of the ways in which that's true. Certainly the layering is one way. Whatever ground truth you're starting with or keen insights of the line analysts, if you go through too many layers, you're going to weave around and get a product at the end which may be rather far from the original analytical insight. The CIA in particular had so many resources and such polished presenters in terms of wordsmiths and editors that you had a lot of very glossy products and some good writing in some of those products. But by the time it was ripe for publishing and presenting to others you may have strayed rather far from the ground truth that the line analyst originally developed. That just wasn't the case in INR. Usually the Secretary would be reading words of the line analyst. They were sometimes edited or massaged through an office director or the assistant secretary or deputy assistant secretary but not nearly as much as in the other agencies. So that was certainly one advantage. Another advantage of being small that I came to appreciate at INR was that it's almost impossible to lose sight of the forest because you can't be a specialist in all the trees. It's a very good thing that the U.S. government has specialists on the trees and on small detailed issues, but you have access to them as an INR analyst so you don't need to have that in-house. What you do need to have is someone who can put the various things together and describe the forest. I found that one aspect of that was that my office dealt with technical issues, weapons intelligence basically, political-military things, but it was always in the context of some complicated geo-political situation, about which INR experts were in frequent contact with us and also very nearby. If we were doing something on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, we would always be doing it with the Near East/South Asia office and the Iraq experts. I think that easy access and frequent interaction on a personal level with those people meant that, even though we didn't always agree with their spin on things, there was a close interaction and working relationship, which in the other larger agencies often became a very formal thing. I think it made us a little bit more nimble and more integrated in our end product than some of the other agencies. Also it had an advantage from a supervisory aspect. The assistant secretary and deputy assistant secretaries knew the people whose product they were editing. They knew the eccentricities of the analysts. They knew who was green and who was mature, who was very careful and precise about language and who wasn't. They could make compensations. I just can't imagine in the larger agencies when you got to something that was going to be published in the National Intelligence Daily or whatever that the editors personally knew the people who were writing the product. In this brief conversation we're talking about three different ways that small size can be an advantage. There are obviously also disadvantages. If one analyst gets sick, INR is in trouble. Usually there is one person who can fill in, but that one person has a lot of other responsibilities. So there are obviously advantages and disadvantages, but when it comes to integrated analysis, self confidence, and fidelity to the evidence, I think it's hard to beat the size that INR had.

Q: Who was the head of INR at the time?

THIELMANN: Stapleton Roy was the head. Well, let me go back. Douglas Mulholland was head of INR when I came in 1990. This was someone who had been part of the small Treasury Department intelligence operation under President Bush, I think. So he came over to the State Department. In my second iteration in INR it was Stapleton Roy who had been ambassador to

China and Indonesia. And Phyllis Oakley. They were basically, Phyllis Oakley, Stapleton Roy and then Carl Ford, those were all people I served under.

Q: Well, the first time 1990 to when were you in INR?

THIELMANN: 1990 to 1993, I extended one year.

Let me just throw in one other head of INR toward the end of my first tour there. Toby Gati, G-A-T-I, became assistant secretary so I had a very brief period with her. It was mostly Mulholland but then Toby Gati.

Q: How did you find Mulholland?

THIELMANN: Mulholland was a competent person, a nice person. I don't think he'll be in the list of INR greats. He was not a product of the foreign service or the State Department culture, but he was a gentleman and competent so people had no real complaints. If there were any secret desires it would to have had a more feisty or stronger voice maybe in the interagency—

Q: Now coming from Treasury was he a sort of Baker confidante.

THIELMANN: Yes, he was. Yes, he was.

Q: So did you feel that you had—

THIELMANN: We felt that we were plugged into the Secretary because of that association, and that's always important for the analyst to feel that they have an entrée into the Secretary's office.

Q: Well, let's talk now about 1990 to '93 and your job was on the military side. I mean this had to be a fascinating time because we're talking about the rapid demise of the Soviet Union, all sorts of weapons up for grabs and everything else. Talk about your job.

THIELMANN: I was acting division chief because I didn't have the foreign service rank that fitted the position at the time. That job had been one of the most important in INR because it was trying to monitor and analyze Soviet strategic forces, which obviously were the large existential threat to the United States. It was also the office that worried about providing the relevant intelligence on that subject which would be used by those negotiating the strategic offensive arms treaties, the SALT treaties and then the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) treaties. So that was kind of the traditional main focus of the job, worrying about Chinese forces obviously and other countries that had nuclear weapons as well. It was overwhelmingly Soviet military power. Once the Soviet Union fell, one little dimension of the job really bloomed. The traditional efforts to look at the reliability of the command and control structures and how operationally orders to attack would've been conveyed to the missile forces. All of that which was before a very small subset of the job became much more important as the Soviet Union broke up into a number of different states including Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, each one of which hosted significant numbers of Soviet strategic forces. So that first tour in INR corresponded with this very delicate period of the U.S. working very hard in a number of ways to

try to insure that these four countries with nuclear weapons transitioned to only one country with nuclear weapons. Or to put it another way, the Soviet control over the nuclear weapons would morph into a Russian control over nuclear weapons and Minsk, Kiev and Alma-Ata did not end up having their own nuclear forces bequeathed to them because of the breakup. It was particularly sensitive in the case of Ukraine because Ukraine more than the others had some of the largest and most sophisticated missile assembly plants, had a lot of indigenous expertise on how to make both the delivery vehicles and also the nuclear weapons.

So the Ukrainians had some real choices for keeping some of those nuclear weapons. What actually would have happened if they had continued along that path or if they had seriously pursued that path, we don't know. Obviously the Russians were very intent on them not having those options, but it was a real concern. There were a number of scenarios that were seriously considered that would have featured war between Ukraine and Russia. Most of those scenarios I think we thought were unrealistic, but that they were even seriously discussed showed what a real crisis this was and what a delicate period of time it was.

Q: Well, in a sort of peculiar way we and the Russians were both on the same side, weren't we?

THIELMANN: It was a very curious form of cooperation because we shared an interest with the Russians in ensuring that Russia maintained control over all those nuclear forces. In some respects we rooted for the safe transit of nuclear weapons from these other countries back to Russia so they could then be put online aimed at the United States. There was certainly some irony in that, but it was considered a far worse outcome if we had new independent centers of power that might also have targeted their weapons at the United States. So part of the irony also was that, as much as we wanted Russia to maintain control of the weapons, we genuinely wanted Ukraine to evolve in a western direction and to reanimate some of the traditions that were really alive in Ukraine as a European country. It was much more oriented toward the U.S. than the more Asian-oriented heartland of the Soviet Union was. So we were trying to encourage that. We were trying to get Ukraine to see itself as a country that would be benefited much more by pursuing a German or a Japanese model of obviously being capable of having nuclear weapons but, by pursuing a non-nuclear path, could find a better way to reintegrate itself into the western economy.

Q: Well, how did you find dealing with particularly the Defense Intelligence Agency and the CIA on this particular issue? I mean were there any problems or divergences?

THIELMANN: There were certainly some divergences and, while my memory is not terribly sharp on this, I think in general I would like to say we were a little bit more sophisticated in the scenarios that we used. Some of those probably from the Defense Department side of things put more credence in the outbreak of war between Ukraine and, Russia, and when we thought through those scenarios, it just seemed extremely unlikely. I mean for one thing there were so many Russians living in Ukraine. The eastern part of Ukraine was basically ethnic Russian. It just got kind of incredible to think about any scenario in which you would have one of these countries lobbying nuclear weapons at another. So I think, to put it neutrally, it was because we were closer to a more sophisticated analysis of the internal dynamics of Soviet society and the new emerging societies that we weighed the likelihood of those scenarios a little bit differently.

One of the other things that I remember about this era is that we received some very valuable human intelligence from some of our foreign allies. Without going into too much detail, I was impressed at the quality of information of one of our special partners in intelligence. They had presumably at much lower cost were providing better human intelligence, more critical useful human intelligence than our own U.S. agencies.

Q: Were you concerned about rogue scientists in the Ukraine or elsewhere exporting their knowledge of nuclear things to people such as Iran, Iraq and all that?

THIELMANN: That was definitely a constant concern. Even in INR where we had such limited resources, we tried to start keeping track of certain individuals about which there was intelligence. We tried to stay plugged into the other agencies who had the resources to look closely at this because this was seen by almost everyone in the intelligence community as a source of concern that in the end would be much greater than the prospect of Ukraine developing independent nuclear forces. The collapse of the Soviet economy and all those incentives and privileges and everything else that made life for weapons scientists about as good as it could be in a Soviet context led to people not getting paid month after month. The temptations became very great even though in that respect I think those who were not as familiar with the Soviet society maybe saw the temptations as being greater by putting ourselves in their shoes. I think there was for those who were not as close to the way the Soviet Union actually operated, it was just easy to imagine hundreds of thousands of scientists just contracting out to Libya or other countries.

Q: Yes, I mean when one looks at it, one thinks about oneself.

THIELMANN: Yes.

Q: If all of a sudden the State Department stopped paying me my pension, my God what would I do?

THIELMANN: That's right.

Q: But I guess they had support systems and other things.

THIELMANN: They had support systems and sort of a deep nationalism so that a lot of Soviet scientists would not be particularly comfortable working for the Iraqis or the Libyans, or the North Koreans or anyone else. I say that even in the knowledge that there were Russians and Ukrainians who did just that. The magnitude of the problem was probably not what we might think putting ourselves in their shoes. It was certainly a serious enough concern that we needed to inform the policy people who could actually do something to mitigate that danger and did in fact by aiding some of the labs and the weapons manufacturing facilities to give them another alternative at home for using some of their skills.

Q: What about the Soviet Black Sea fleet because it was a pretty sophisticated set of ships and all that including nuclear missiles. The problem was where did it belong?

THIELMANN: That was another incredible development that occurred as a result of the breakup. Sevastopol, the headquarters of the Soviet Black Sea fleet, was a very Russian city. It was extremely important in the Russian military context. It had this sort of glorious World War Two history as a heroic defense against the Nazi invasion. It was about as rock solid as any Russian city could be, and yet all of a sudden it found itself in the Ukraine. So all those Russian war ships and the Russian personnel were all of a sudden in another country that had its own designs on Russian ships. So that was another messy problem and of course one of the serious irritants in the Russian-Ukrainian relationship. Having been to Sevastopol while in the embassy in Moscow and having seen that firsthand, it was another way in which I suppose I benefited from having been a foreign service officer and our office benefited a bit from that kind of perspective. But we also understood that in terms of strategic forces, the Black Sea fleet was fading in significance, and it almost was almost irrelevant in terms of the strategic impact of the Russian Navy. I mean, it was all the Northern fleet and the Pacific fleet. That's where their sea-based nuclear deterrent was based. So the Black Sea fleet and those military capabilities, during the height of the Cold War had been exaggerated by the U.S. partly because it was good for raising funding. But no one I think ever really saw the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean as being able to last very long if there were actually a war. So I think the Black Sea fleet in that conflict with Ukraine was of great significance in political terms but less so in military terms.

Q: With naval intelligence and all looking at the Black Sea fleet, did the defense people have a sort of a different view? Because as you say it's pretty obvious it's a write off. But in order to maintain enough ships in our Navy you've got to have a threat.

THIELMANN: Yes, I think it's pretty hard to ignore that dynamic entirely. This isn't to cast aspersions on the integrity of defense analysts or the Navy. But there's just a natural interest in looking at the order of battle of Russian ships and arguing that we had to have a comparable order of battle matching them cruiser for cruiser ignoring all these things like the bases that ring the Mediterranean with fixed wing aircraft that can attack those ships. It was just a horribly hostile environment for the Soviet Navy in the best of days to operate. I mean they could use port facilities in Syria or Egypt perhaps but—

Q: And get out of the Basra, exactly.

THIELMANN: I mean so vulnerable to being bottled up. I mean I would say that the U.S. Navy didn't have an institutional interest in presenting to the public the full dimensions of the Russian problems -- what the Soviet problems would be and what the U.S. problems would be if there were an actual conflict.

Q: While you were there, did you see any crisis coming up regarding missile control in this Soviet-Russian-Ukraine context during this '90-'93 period.

THIELMANN: There were some very delicate moments in which we analyzed what the Ukrainian options would be if they really wanted to seize control of forces, and it wasn't evident that the Russians could keep them from doing it if they really chose to. There were elements in the Ukrainian political spectrum that were arguing for that course of action. So it wasn't just a theoretical excursion of Western analysts. There were real Ukrainians who wanted to do that. I

think my memory is that we were a little less alarmist about the prospects of that happening than some in other agencies. We recognized the danger and certainly highlighted it as a danger and treated it as an analytical priority because of the consequences, but we were a little less pessimistic about whether or not it would happen than were some in the other agencies.

Q: Was looking at the Israeli nuclear force sort of a no no at that time? I mean in other words for domestic political reasons, you just didn't talk about it.

THIELMANN: This was one of those areas in which it seemed to me that the long arm of the policy world stretched into the intelligence world. I remember from that period in INR working on national intelligence estimates, looking fifteen years out at the nuclear powers, I was somewhat amazed at the invisibility in these top-secret intelligence community surveys of world nuclear weapons. It was almost like the Israelis didn't exist. At that point it was really a very bizarre thing because the Indians and Pakistanis didn't have nuclear weapons at that point. We had the five MPT nuclear powers that existed in 1968 and the Israelis. The Israelis had a very significant nuclear capability with sophisticated delivery systems that could for example allow them to attack Ukraine or parts of Russia and a kind of nuclear force that in size was kind of approaching the British and French nuclear forces. Yet it seemed to be politically incorrect to say anything in these top-secret internal documents about Israeli nuclear capabilities. I remember protesting at analytical sessions and trying to push them to a more objective academic look at the issue not colored by the fact that the Israelis had their policy of ambiguity and did not want to admit that they had nuclear capability. I said that's no reason for us not to describe it as we know it. I mean whatever policy the U.S. wants to take in terms of subscribing to Israeli ambiguity we should not be kidding ourselves about the objective realities.

Q: Well, did you feel that this was self-censorship on the part of the intelligence community of saying, oh God if we do this it's sure to leak and it's sure to bring all hell on the Israeli lobby and Friends of Israel will be all over us? In other words this was not somebody from up above doing it. Where did you feel it was coming from?

THIELMANN: I really felt it was self-censorship. Now I wasn't maybe high enough in the hierarchy. Maybe it was more direct than that, but I think it was political savvy -- senior intelligence officials thinking this is a problem we don't want to have. We don't want the pro-Israeli lobby coming down hard on the U.S. government because of something that we did here so let's just not talk about it.

Q: Yes. It really is amazing. Well, what about China? How did we view China at that time, '90 to '93?

THIELMANN: What I remember about that era is that it was so difficult for the intelligence community to not use our own model of strategic forces development in thinking about the Chinese. So what I remember from that era was how strong the other agencies pushed in their analytical product for the assumption that China would have many more strategic nuclear weapons within some number of years, that they would have multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles on each of those missiles and that they would be telling policymakers the Chinese are basically going to take off. One of the reasons I remember that so strongly was

because I was uncomfortable at the time since we had seen a history of the Chinese being very modest in their nuclear weapons programs. I mean they acquired nuclear weapons, and then they increased their capabilities at a very slow rate. It was nothing like either the U.S. or the Soviet development pattern -- kind of exponential increases in warheads. I remember at the time feeling that I didn't really have enough time as an analyst of Chinese strategic forces to really pound the table too hard on this issue. I remember being skeptical, but these memories came back to me several years later when I reentered the picture and found that lo and behold the Chinese hadn't done any of those things that the majority of the intelligence community seemed comfortable in predicting. But they were still at that same low level of strategic missiles that could threaten the United States.

Q: Well, as you are looking at this, did you find the normal military assumption of a worst case scenario. You can't say the United States will roll over the Iraqi Army in a matter of days practically. You have to say well, maybe such and such, whatever it is. It's always, you have to plan for the worst case. Was this coming through in the what you are getting out of the analysis people?

THIELMANN: I think that's certainly part of it, and I'm not as hard as some on the worst case analytical predisposition of the Pentagon. I mean I call it responsible prudent worst case analysis.

Q: I agree.

THIELMANN: But that's what they need to do. But that didn't mean that we had to do that. The way I would put it, our obligation in advising the senior State Department leadership was to present them with our best estimate of what was likely to happen and not what could in the worst circumstances happen. I mean we can identify that and encourage people not to forget that this most likely course could be wrong and that it could be even worse than that. But that shouldn't be our headline on intelligence products because that's very misleading. If you end up writing products that use screaming headlines and saying this country could do this when that's a ten percent probability, you've fundamentally misled the Congress and the senior leadership because they don't read that as being something that's very unlikely. So to me that's the real difference. You do need to look at the worst case, but you also need to have perspective properly presented to the policy makers. So I think what was happening here was a reflection of the natural and understandable instincts of the military side of the intelligence community. But then the irresponsible senior intelligence officials who come up with the community products giving it more weight than it deserves and the kind of presentations that are made. I would also say even for those who understandably should look at the worst case, I don't think there was due deference to what the track record was of China even in that 1990 to 1993 interval. They should've drawn some conclusions from how China had behaved in the 1980s instead of just saying well, of course China could technologically develop independently targeted reentry vehicles. In order to provide the sort of U.S. level of protection of their modest force, there is an imperative they increase the number of warheads. I mean that's the way we would think. We would think you assume the worst of the other side so you have to make sure that you can survive an attack that the other side makes against you. The Chinese obviously didn't think that way because their forces in the early 1990s and certainly in later 1990s were getting perilously vulnerable to a first strike U.S. attack. But the Chinese weren't thinking the way we were about

that because they were obviously willing to accept that kind of vulnerability.

Q: What about the powers in this time period of North Korea, India, Pakistan? Was this part of your portfolio?

THIELMANN: It's interesting in terms of portfolio our office in INR was still treating this as something the proliferation division looked at and not the strategic forces division. I was already a little uncomfortable with that because it's such an artificial distinction really. I mean the putative strategic powers or the countries that were emerging nuclear powers or had an apparent intent to continue pursuing that at least had to be something we were looking at because the expertise and the criteria of maintaining strategic forces and command and control and all those things were something that was in the realm of the strategic forces analyst not so much in the realm of those who were worrying about whether this missile production equipment was being transferred or not or range testing or range radars for testing missiles in flight. I mean ultimately there was a merger toward the end of the period of the missile proliferation into the strategic forces, which kind of took care of the problem for me anyway. That was a logical development. But in 1990 to 1993 it was still on the horizon. We knew that India and Pakistan were working on this, but we didn't know in either case for sure that they had made a decision to actually go forward. I'm going to have to take a break.

Q: Yes. Were there any either incidents, crises, amusing things or anything like that happening during this particular time?

THIELMANN: I don't think so. I mean I'm sure there were, but I'm drawing a blank at the moment on whether other developments—. One of the things that struck me about the particular office that I served in was we had a very able office director named Gary Dietrich, and he had a deputy named Alan Locke who I then went to work for later. It was a real sense that this particular office was one of the hardest working and well managed in the bureau. That made an impression on me because it was very easy to compare offices in a small bureau. You would see the office directors represented at morning meetings, and so it was very impressive in terms of the way the office was managed and the recruitment of personnel and everything. I was impressed with this particular office.

Q: Well, did you ever feel that you were outmanned, outgunned or something at the joint meetings with particularly Defense and CIA?

THIELMANN: Yes, we always felt that one of the particular frustrations in INR, and I experience this much more when I became office director, was it always seemed like we were just on the verge of getting the minimum number of people. We could never quite get there. There was always some critical shortage in the office, some critical issue that you had to cover that for one reason or another you just couldn't get people on board. Either security was taking a long time or veteran's preference indicated that you had to choose someone that you didn't want to choose or INR seemed to be always at its personnel limit. It was always a real juggling act to bring someone else onboard, and then there would be freezes and everything. So personnel was a constant problem and the State Department had not been particularly generous over the years either. When it took the various cuts that it experienced over those decades, it was always

tempting to shave a few more analysts off of INR.

Q: Of course this is a particularly bad time.

THIELMANN: Yes.

Q: Personnel wise throughout the State Department.

THIELMANN: Yes. That's right.

Q: Throughout the government but—

THIELMANN: That's right.

Q: But the State Department was taking quite a hit. There just wasn't the pressure from above. Baker was not very interested.

THIELMANN: Yes, that's putting it mildly. I mean, we all noticed it at the time. This gets back to that exact time, 1993, that the Soviet Union broke up, and Baker gained points on the Hill by saying well, we can eat all those cuts. We can established fourteen new embassies, and we don't need more people for those fourteen new embassies. It was an absurd statement and we paid for it in a terrible way.

DAVID M. SCHOONOVER
Agriculture Minister-Counselor
Moscow (1990-1994)

David M. Schoonover was born and raised in Illinois. He received a bachelor's and master's degree in Agriculture Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He joined the Foreign Service in 1984. He served in Beijing, Moscow and Seoul. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: You were in Moscow again from '90 to '94?

SCHOONOVER: '90 to '94, yes. Four and a half years on that tour. The previous time had been about three and a half, so altogether about eight years of my life were spent in Moscow. It was interesting to go back after about 25 years. I went alone to Moscow on my second tour, although my children, Brian and Kathryn, who then were in college, each came to visit about once each year, and we were able to do some interesting personal travel together.

Q: You went back and you were there to see the demise of the Soviet Union, weren't you?

SCHOONOVER: Absolutely.

Q: Would you talk a bit about what was the situation when you got there in 1990.

SCHOONOVER: I found it changed in terms of the social and political dimension and very similar in terms of the physical dimension. Going back to Moscow in 1990, frankly, it looked about the same as it had back in 1967 when I left there the previous time. However, it was a much more open environment. Gorbachev had been in power for about five years, as I recall, at the beginning of 1990, and people would talk with us; people were talking and discussing with each other. I'd been there only a month or so and there was a huge demonstration. There were people marching through the streets of Moscow. You never would have seen anything like that in the earlier years. In earlier years, it was a very tightly controlled police state, and there was no doubt about it. People were scared to death to talk to foreigners back in the '60's. It was very different when I went back in 1990.

Q: But it was still the Soviet Union.

SCHOONOVER: And Gorbachev was still the General Secretary of the Communist Party, and that's how he was the dominant official at the beginning of 1990. That changed drastically during the four and a half years that I was there.

Q: What was the title of your job?

SCHOONOVER: I was the Agricultural Counselor, the head of the Agricultural Office at the Embassy. Actually, they upgraded it to Minister Counselor, I guess, while I was there. So, I was the Minister Counselor for Agricultural Affairs.

Q: Who were the Ambassador and the DCM then?

SCHOONOVER: OK. We had three different ambassadors while I was there, and also three DCM's. Jack Matlock was the Ambassador when I first arrived, and then after about a year and half, Bob Strauss was Ambassador, and the last year that I was there Tom Pickering was Ambassador. Jim Collins was the DCM for the longest period of my stay.

Q: When you arrived, what was foremost on your plate agricultural-wise?

SCHOONOVER: That's quite interesting because it changed so dramatically in the course of the year. When I arrived it was pretty much still a reporting post, with the largest amount of our time spent reporting and analyzing the activities that were taking place. I remember making a crop observation trip in the Ukraine and North Caucasus in the spring of '90, much as I had done 25 years earlier. We were tailed by Soviet internal security workers, just as in the old days. I had to point them out to the young staffer from my office accompanying me, who was unaware the Soviets were still practicing tailing. Some things hadn't changed. By the way, our office soon became extremely busy, so that was my last crop observation trip, although my staff still made a few more before we had to stop completely. Besides reporting, we had an active exchanges program assigned to our office. Visitor support is always a task at an Embassy, and if I have neglected to mention this work previously, I should note that Senator Leahy, then head of the Senate Agricultural Committee, visited Moscow in '90, and I escorted him on his meetings to

Moscow, and on to Leningrad, and then Minsk and Gomel in the Byelorussian republic (now Belarus). We had some market development activities, similar to the ones I described in China. We didn't have any big demonstration projects like model feed or flour mills, but we had a lot of activities. There were a couple of big activities jointly with the Commerce Department. I remember that first year working with some of their agri-business officials on agri-business activities. For example, there was an agricultural equipment and supplies show. Our office was involved peripherally with that show. USDA is not directly involved with promoting sales of farm equipment and some other farm supplies. That's more the task of the Commerce Department, but at the same time, because we had the agricultural contacts and the knowledge in the field, my Commercial Counselor friend at the Embassy would call on us.

Q: Who was that?

SCHOONOVER: Jim... you'll forgive me if I can't think of his last name at this moment. I had several different Commerce colleagues while I was there, and I would probably have to go back, and check my records, which unfortunately are boxed up at the moment. But anyway, we worked together on several of these types of projects. I remember that USDA and Commerce jointly hosted a large group of Soviet food industry officials at a conference in Washington that year. I guess in my own assessment at the time I was feeling that working with agriculture officials in the Soviet Union, and improving our relationships with them would be to our advantage in the Agricultural Office, as well, and it would provide us with contacts. But this is the sort of thing that we were doing that first year, and it included accompanying several teams of U.S. government and private sector officials on travel and visits in the Soviet Union. Later in the year it was decided that we would initiate a credit guarantee program for the Soviet Union for the purchase of agriculture commodities. It had been quite a few years since we had an active credit guarantee program with the Soviet Union. As best I recall, that was about late 1990, toward the end of the year. And so we had quite a lot of interest in that program, and that was about the point in the beginning of '91 when things really started changing. I can't recall exactly when Gorbachev became President as opposed to General Secretary. I believe it was March 1990. But it was during this period of '90, '91 that Gorbachev was no longer just the General Secretary of the Communist Party but also held the position of President, which had been created for him. The republics began asserting themselves much more during this period. The nationalistic feelings of people were quite obvious already in the spring of '90 in Estonia, when I made a trip there. As early as the beginning of 1991 Lithuania had demonstrations in Vilnius, including the incident when Soviet military put down the demonstrations at the TV tower in Vilnius. A lot was going on, not only in Lithuania and the Baltics, but in other republics, too. Yeltsin was beginning to rise to the forefront.

Q: He was mayor, wasn't he, of Moscow?

SCHOONOVER: He had been Mayor, earlier, and then his position among the Soviet leadership had slipped. Then the elections for Presidency of the Russian Republic took place in June of '91, and Yeltsin became the Russian President. A lot of political ferment and changes were going on during this period, and the republics were beginning to individually assert their independence, and Gorbachev was resisting. There was a lot of discussion about working out new charters for the relationship between the republics and the union. '91 was a very turbulent year, of course, in

the political relationship between Gorbachev and the “Center”, and the individual republics. I remember one trip I made to Georgia to participate in a conference either late in ‘90 or early in ‘91. Outside the conference site, a huge number of Georgians were demonstrating for independence and filling the main street of Tbilisi. For me, ‘91 was a fascinating, but extremely busy year.

So much happened in that period in the Soviet Union. It seems almost impossible now to remember exactly what day everything happened. There were things happening every day. One just got up each day and wondered what major development would take place today, and pretty soon became blasé to the sorts of things, which in most places would happen once in a tour. It was absolutely fascinating, but after a while I was almost on overload. It really got started after the ‘90/’91 winter, as I recall, except for the Baltic incidents...there was an incident in Lithuania and also one in Latvia. I recall coming back to the United States on leave in March ‘91, perhaps on R&R. I had been there over a year. And life had been fairly predictable up to that point. While I was back in the United States, I turned on the TV one day, and heard there had been a fire at the Embassy in Moscow, and that’s how I learned about the fire. Again, just like Tiananmen, I was away from the capital at the time that it happened. But it was very fortunate. We had been going through fire drills, I recall, while I was there. Everyone got out of the embassy. No deaths. They said there were a few smoke inhalation problems with the last few people who got out. I’ll put this in for fire drills: If we had not been doing those drills, I expect the fire would have been much more catastrophic. Well, anyway, I got back from leave, and we were all working in one big room on sawhorses. On my trip back I carried in a little laptop computer for our office to work with, and a few files, and that’s how our office got started again. The entire embassy worked out of one big common room on the residential compound, and got operations up and running again and eventually, of course, everything started coming back together again. After the common room, our office worked out of my townhouse for a while. We weren’t able to relocate the Agricultural Office back in the regular Embassy building till the end of my tour there. We moved our office into one of the hotels; for most of my tour in Moscow, we worked out of the Penta Hotel. That was one tour when I lived at the Embassy and commuted to work away from the Embassy, as opposed to the other way around.

My life got real busy that year. It was one of the busiest years I remember. Our Under Secretary of Agriculture—his name was Dick Crowder-- that particular year was very much focused on what was going on in the Soviet Union. And he organized many, many visits. I think once I figured out he spent about two months of that year visiting in my territory.

Q: You don’t want Under Secretaries on your turf.

SCHOONOVER: I had the Secretary also before the year was over but the Under Secretary alone, I think, was there for something like five or six separate trips because each one might be one or two weeks. So add them all up--about two months of his visits. But it did make the time busy and fascinating, I’ll say that for it. It was still Soviet Union in 1991. Remember, the flag didn’t come down on the Kremlin till Christmas of that year.

I think one of the Under Secretary’s first visits was to Lithuania. That was about April, and he had decided not to come in through Moscow but go through Poland. We met him at the border between Poland and the Soviet Union in Belarus, in what would be the country of Belarus. We

drove from there to Vilnius, and met with the president of Lithuania. The Lithuanians said they were independent, of course, and Gorbachev and the Soviet Union didn't recognize them as independent, so Lithuania was in kind of an uncertain category at the time. It was fascinating to be there right then. We visited not so long after the incidents that had taken place there. The parliament building in Lithuania was barricaded. All sorts of things were plastered around the perimeter, such as, "Soviets Go Home" and those kinds of slogans. There were tanks, Soviet tanks, not Lithuanian tanks, lurking around behind buildings and in various places in the city, so it was a kind of dicey situation at the time. But it was an initial outreach by the United States to Lithuania, although we didn't get around to recognizing the independence of Lithuania until later.

Q: But remember, we didn't really unrecognize them.

SCHOONOVER: That's right. You're right. We never recognized them as part of the Soviet Union, so it was sort of a peculiar situation. But we didn't formally, I guess, get around to reaffirming their sovereignty and sending in an Ambassador until later.

Q: ...sending in an Ambassador?

SCHOONOVER: Right, Right. But it was a fascinating time to be there. That was April '91, and it was just the beginning. In May the Under Secretary came again for a visit. He wanted to visit not just Moscow, but in particular to go to Ukraine and meet with leaders there. Also, we wanted to go out to a couple of the Russian provinces and just take a look at the situation there. Again, as was his want, usually I didn't know about his visit until a few days beforehand. Sometimes I had maybe five days notice or so to organize a visit. At that time, the Soviet Ministry of Agriculture, which had been functioning rather well in 1990, was beginning to become dysfunctional. They weren't always able to do the support work that they normally would do for an Embassy. So, for this visit, I phoned Ukrainian officials and worked it out myself. About one day ahead of his arrival, I hopped on an airplane and went down and finished up the details with the Ukrainian officials rather than working with Soviet Ministry of Agriculture officials. It kept us hopping around to work during that period. In the past it had been so centralized and we had to work through the Soviet Ministry of Agriculture, and all of a sudden it couldn't work that way or didn't work very well, and we had to do it ourselves. Fundamentally, this was good. In most countries, that's the way it works, but we weren't accustomed to doing that in the Soviet Union, and generally we were just beginning to develop the necessary relationships. I had made a couple of trips to Ukraine and established a few good contacts, fortunately. We were moving from a very centralized situation to something that was much more decentralized.

Q: What was our interest from an agricultural point of view?

SCHOONOVER: Well, we had rather large agricultural credit guarantee programs with the Soviet Union, and we were looking at the needs for agriculture commodities. There also had been so many reports about food shortages, and because supplies had dried up in stores, he also was assessing the food shortage situation. I think it was near the beginning of the recognition that things were disintegrating. I talk about hosting the Under Secretary of Agriculture, but most of the delegations also included someone from the White House staff, someone from State, and

someone perhaps from other agencies. So it was usually an interagency group that came. I think there was a recognition that things were coming unstuck and we needed to get discussions going with officials in places other than just Moscow. But a key objective was to size up the food situation, to try to make some sort of an estimate...some kind of projection of the kind of programs we had to get going there, whether it would be food aid programs or technical assistance or additional credit or whatever, so that we could be a player there in the appropriate way. By the way, the Lithuanian visit was only the Under Secretary of Agriculture. The visits to Russia, Ukraine, and other republics, as I said, usually included people from the White House staff, and other departments and agencies. This was a period, of course, of such drastic and rapid change and such uncertainly trying to stay abreast of what was going on, that people in Washington I think wanted to have the kind of feel best attained by having someone actually coming in from Washington as opposed to relying solely on reports from the Embassy.

Q: It was an exciting time. When did this happen, I don't know what the Russian term for it...

SCHOONOVER: Decollectivization?

Q: Decollectivization or at least the attempt to? Was that allowed to spring up?

SCHOONOVER: I won't say that they had done away with collective farms or state farms, but they were allowing private farms. So there was a beginning of establishment of private farms. I do recall in one of the early visits we were able to set up meetings with the head of the private farmers organization and also a meeting with private entrepreneurs throughout the agri-business community and give a flavor to our Washington visitors of what was going on in that sphere. It really was a time of crosscurrents. The private farms were allowed, but they certainly were not officially encouraged in any way. A lot of the prerequisites for successful private farming were not in place, and they were having difficulty to be able to buy supplies and goods. Their land holding status was uncertain, and just a great many things were uncertain for them. This all perhaps fit into the technical assistance area that came along later. As I mentioned, the USDA Under Secretary and his delegations were sizing up the food situation and the overall situation and assessing what programs the U.S. Government might offer. I think that agriculture was viewed as one of the key areas where the U.S. could start offering a program. We already had the credit guarantee program for the Soviet Union. We had not yet had food aid or very much in the way of technical assistance, but it was the period when we were looking at those programs, and they came along very soon afterwards. Before long we were heavily involved in all kinds of programs.

But again, that year, we had the visit I told you about in May to Ukraine, and a few months later the Under Secretary was back again with another delegation, and we went to Central Asia and Armenia, as well as some other places in Russia. And because things were disintegrating, we began to want to have contacts with the republic officials. And I can't place it exactly in time now, perhaps late in '91, but I remember we had a meeting in Moscow at some point where we met with the Agricultural Ministries and Grains Ministries or supply officials of all the republics, or all that would send representatives anyway. We were talking not only to Soviet national officials, but we were meeting with all the individual republics, beginning to get their own assessments of their needs, beginning to look ahead towards the time when we might be dealing

with each other.

Now, the Soviet Union hadn't collapsed yet. It was in August of 1991 that there was the so-called *coup* when a certain group in the Soviet leadership decided to put Gorbachev under house arrest, you might say, and to take over the country. And we had tanks in the streets of Moscow in August that year, which, as you know, did not succeed and, in hind sight, probably was the thing that triggered the actual timing of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was happening, but probably no one could have made it happen more quickly than just that coup attempt. That particular incident really set it off, and the Soviet Union did finally collapse that year. That's when Ambassador Bob Strauss came in. I recall that particular day he arrived right as the coup was collapsing. There was a lot of activity around the Embassy, lots of demonstrations. I was riding the Metro from our office at the hotel back to the Embassy when I heard people talking on the Metro that the coup had collapsed. I got to the Embassy, and Ambassador Strauss had just arrived from the airport at that time. It was exactly at the time that the coup collapsed when he arrived.

I think one of the very first public events he attended was when Gorbachev was brought back and Gorbachev addressed the people, and the Ambassador stood side by side with Gorbachev, sort of saying we're back with you again, you know.

Q: When the coup happened, the first couple of days when Gorbachev was under house arrest down in Yalta, I guess, or Crimea or somewhere, was there concern that, oh my God, we're going to go back to Stalinist times or something?

SCHOONOVER: Well, for a few days there, yes. Yes. These were clearly hardliners who had attempted to take over the Soviet Union. No one knew exactly where we were heading and yes, I think there were concerns that the opening up of the society that Gorbachev had permitted would be brought to an end. Everything was going back down under clamps again. I think there was concern for just a few days. Of course, we gave a lot of moral support, shall I say, to Yeltsin during that period.

Q: Was contact with Soviet officials in your area of responsibility, was that sort of stopped or cut off or were you going out and trying to find out what they was doing?

SCHOONOVER: During the period of the coup?

Q: Yes During and then after.

SCHOONOVER: During the period of the coup, it was pretty chaotic. It only lasted a few days. I don't recall having a lot of meetings with agricultural people precisely during those two or three days. We did continue to have contacts, certainly, with officials, but I think everybody, including Soviet officials themselves, kind of hunkered down for a few days. I don't think they didn't want any contact. They just didn't know which way the wind was blowing. One of my better contacts was not in the ministries, but headed the Agricultural Committee of the Supreme Soviet. In '90 I had gone to stay for a few days with him on his farm in East Siberia, so we had established a close relationship. I can't recall having any meetings with him that week, but he was often a

good contact for staying abreast of what was going on. And another was the assistant to the Deputy Prime Minister for Agriculture. They had an Agricultural Minister, but they also had a Deputy Prime Minister, who was over the Agricultural Ministry, as well as related ministries, such as those involved with agricultural equipment, procuring farm products and so forth. So he had the whole area under his jurisdiction. As it happened I knew his assistant, sort of his personal secretary. This maybe shows the advantage of some of the exchanges and of being involved for a long period of time. This assistant in an earlier incarnation had been involved with the exchanges back in the '70's, and he was sort of an old friend already when I arrived in Moscow. When I really had to have help putting a program together for a delegation or setting up meetings with senior officials--and the Agriculture Ministry at that point clearly was incapable of doing it--he was the one I usually called on to get help. After the coup, an interim government was established, headed by Ivan Silayev, who had been Prime Minister for Russia, and who now in effect became the Prime Minister for the Soviet Union. There were only five key officials heading the work of this interim government, and food and agriculture fell under Yuri Luzhkov, who later went on to become Mayor of Moscow. One of Under Secretary Crowder's visits came at this time, and I remember spending a weekend calling Silayev's appointments secretary both at office and at home, trying to set up the appointment. As best I recall, we met eventually with Luzhkov, but not Silayev. It is hard to imagine the work load these five people must have had trying to manage the affairs for the entire Soviet Union, which was collapsing around them.

Q: When you got there in 1990 and made your calls, I assume you started getting out into the field. How much progress or lack therefore had you seen on the ground and in collective farms and other agricultural distribution systems in the time between the 1960's when you were there and the 1990's when you came back?

SCHOONOVER: Well, some of their activities and their plans had changed, but the system was pretty much, I think, like it had been. I mean, there had been a lot of shuffling around of people on the deck of the Titanic, so to speak, but I think the situation was still basically the same. I don't think the collective and state farm system was ever destined to function very well in terms of the more complex aspects of agriculture. They did pretty well in terms of basic crop production, basic grain production, as long as the planners could keep them supplied with equipment and fertilizers and they produced some pretty good fields of grain. Actually, I've seen some beautiful fields of grain in the Soviet Union. So as long as the operation wasn't too complex, they could do pretty well with it. When they started trying to get involved with livestock production, which involves some fairly careful programs of feeding and disease control and overall good management with people being responsible for those livestock at all the required hours, they just weren't able to handle that very well. The system did not have the responsibility built into it that we would believe necessary to have successful programs for livestock production. And they were having a hard time getting any kind of measures of efficiency that we would consider acceptable. But again, like I said, I saw some beautiful fields of grain in the Soviet Union.

Q: Of course, they've got that wonderful soil and that grain. Isn't there a certain type of soil named after...

SCHOONOVER: Chernozem.

Q: Black soil.

SCHOONOVER: Right. In the Ukraine, and Kuban, as they called it, in the North Caucasus and in the central black soil region. Some wonderful black soil, and I saw some wonderful crops there. But I did not see a great deal of progress when it comes right down to it, over that period of time. Yields went up. Yields went up because they used a lot more fertilizer. One could see almost a direct correlation between the increasing amounts of fertilizer they were putting on, and they were applying huge amounts, and the yields of grain.

Q: Speaking of fertilizer, did you get involved in that disaster, I guess, of cotton down around the Aral Sea and all that? How was that going?

SCHOONOVER: I had visited cotton regions in Central Asia, but around the Aral Sea I had never had an opportunity to visit there. As I recall, it was a closed region, and it was impossible to get in there.

Q: Did you run across this thing...we were talking about the Soviet era now,about this almost complete disregard of environmental concerns because production was everything.

SCHOONOVER: Right. And I think that's the way it was. Sometimes they would get results, but they were just ruining the resources in getting those results. I mean, if you force everything to its maximum until there isn't anything to force anymore, and I think they were doing that in some areas, you sometimes get results at the expense of the resource base. The example that you cited about the Aral Sea was one. They were talking about diverting Siberian rivers to try to bring more water into that region. And who knows what environmental consequences that might have had if they actually had been able to pull that off. But there were some rather wild schemes going. But yes, a lot of the irrigation projects in Central Asia, I'm sure, had long-term disastrous consequences for the region.

Q: From our perspective...your perspective... as Agricultural Minister-Counselor then, were we concerned in doing something in this '90, '94 period and doing something about the environmental damage from an agricultural point of view or was this something we were reporting on and just feeling well, the more they ruin things, the better the market for our stuff is?

SCHOONOVER: I wouldn't say that. The work of the Agricultural Counselor typically was not so much on environmental matters. We had a Science Counselor and a Science officer in the Embassy, who generally had more responsibility for reporting on relations in the environmental area. The Agricultural Office was more involved with trade and less with technical assistance programs. That's just the way the U.S. bureaucracy divides up its functions. However, in the case of Russia, when the Soviet Union finally did collapse at the end of 1991, the U.S. Agriculture Department, using its appropriated funds, did undertake technical assistance activities with Russia through our office at the Embassy, and we ended up with some rather extensive programs. I don't recall any of our projects precisely on the environmental consequences around the Aral Sea. That's a major disaster. I wouldn't begin to say how one goes about correcting that

disaster once you've created it. But in terms of generally trying to be of assistance with technical assistance programs, our office did get quite heavily involved in the first post-Soviet years. And that's really more of an exception to the rule than the standard Agricultural Office activity, because in most countries, the Department of Agriculture, through the Embassy Agricultural Office, is involved primarily with agricultural trade promotion.

Maybe I should wrap up '91, and then jump on ahead, to Russia primarily. The attempted coup was in August. In October U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ed Madigan brought a large delegation of government and private sector agribusiness officials to the Soviet Union. At that point, the Soviet ministries were practically non-functional, but we managed to put together a program that included visits also to Ukraine, as well as Russia. I believe the situation then was entirely too chaotic to conduct very successful meetings, although it always pays to get in on the ground floor, and perhaps the visit was useful for providing a better perspective to the Americans on the delegation. As ministry staff could no longer assist as well as before, we found ourselves calling directly for senior appointments. One of my assistants soon was on a first-name basis with Gorbachev's appointment secretary, calling him not only at the office, but also at his dacha—a heady experience, I would think, for a first-tour officer. By December the Soviet Union had collapsed. The flag went down on the Kremlin, as I recall, on Christmas, and we were engaged in relations with Russia, then, at that point. We had a lot of things that had to be worked out. We had continued to have a credit guarantee program with the Soviet Union. I particularly remember the last credit guarantee agreement we concluded with the Soviet Union. USDA had wanted to change a few words in one of the agreement provisions, but owing to a communications problem, we didn't get this information until after the agreement was signed. As I recall, the Ambassador and a Soviet Minister or Deputy Prime Minister had signed the agreement, and when I returned to the office I received the message to change it. Those are the kinds of things that can spoil the end of the day, or disrupt a quiet evening. I had to call in a few chits from Soviet acquaintances, especially as the change appeared to be slightly less favorable to their interests, but in the course of about four hours, we were able to substitute a page in the agreement with the revised language, with the concurrence of the Deputy Prime Minister, and all old copies were destroyed. One doesn't want to have this kind of misunderstanding too often.

Anyway, we had this agreement that had been announced shortly before the Soviet Union collapsed, and all of a sudden we didn't have a Soviet Union to deal with. It was for substantial amounts, as I recall. We're talking about a billion dollars worth of trade, or something like that, and we didn't have a country to deal with. So, that was one occasion where we invited all of the republic representatives to get together and, as I recall now, almost all of them signed the agreement. We made up an agreement that simply carried-over the Soviet agreement to the republics. We had to allocate it, and I think they were able to work amongst themselves and come up with some way of allocating the amounts. I've forgotten a few of the details at this point, but I recall that we were successful in making the transfer to them. Ukraine decided to opt out which left a strange situation because they weren't going to get their share unless they signed on. I recall that I made a trip to Ukraine and met with their Grain Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and explained the situation more carefully that they weren't going to be getting U.S. grain on credit unless they decided to sign the same agreement with all of the others. The situation lasted a few months, but eventually they decided to join in, too. So there was a period for a few months where all of the former Soviet Union republics, but Ukraine, were party to this

grain credit agreement, and Ukraine was left out. I should note that the Baltic Republics already were on a separate track, and not party to this agreement. Anyway, there were a lot of things like that to work out in those early days.

Not long after that, USDA began some Food Aid programs with Russia and the former republics of the Soviet Union. They had gone into default on the credit programs. There was a period when payments were sort of erratic, and then payments just stopped. They simply couldn't keep them up. And we went into a different mode—food aid. The first food aid had already begun at the very end of 1991, just about the same time as the Soviet Union collapsed. But this was something the Defense Department had carried out, and it was meal equivalents, I forget what they called...

Q: MRE's. Meals Ready to Eat.

SCHOONOVER: MRE's. That's it. MRE's.

Q: That's what your military...and we use for refugees instead of canned food that are used to sustain people under different circumstances.

SCHOONOVER: Right, right. That program was the beginning. That was the first food aid, but, of course, that was a pittance compared to what we got into later. It made a lot of publicity, but it was small amounts. But in '92, and I can't remember exactly when, USDA started up food aid programs for Russia and the other republics. As best I recall now, the first programs were in the spring of '92, and mostly were directed through non-governmental organizations (NGO's). Larger government-to-government programs, I believe, came along later. I know that by '93 we were engaged large-scale both in government-to-government and NGO programs. I frankly hadn't even briefed on USDA food aid programs in 1990 when I was going to the Soviet Union. That's how far that was from my mind. I didn't even go by the food aid office. And suddenly, we were involved in programs that added up to...if you counted all of the former Soviet Union, I think to over a billion and a half dollars of food aid, maybe a billion dollars for Russia alone. And our largest food aid programs in the world were going on in my territory. About that point I wished I had stopped by our food aid office for a briefing to learn more background on some of the programs. But I soon became aware! So, we had a number of programs. We had some out-and-out grants, and we also had some that were sales for their currency, and some were sales for at low interest rates with long payback terms. Not quite grants, but almost. Anyway, they fell into a number of different categories depending upon the commodity and the country. I think we had programs for each of the republics, but we had huge amounts going to Russia. A lot of the food aid was given through private voluntary organizations (PVO's), or non-governmental organizations (NGO's). And so not all of the aid was government to government. I can't remember the breakdowns now, but the largest amount was through the government, but certainly in terms of the complexity and numbers of programs, the NGO programs were probably more dominant and involved a lot more elements to them. Many of the NGO programs, again, differed in how they distributed the food. Some of them provided humanitarian foods through food distribution centers, but there were other techniques, as well.

Q: We talked about this in your previous tour. One of big problems in the Soviet Union was

distribution. It's got a rich soil, a lot of stuff comes, but getting to the market, as you pointed out, wasn't well done. What about this? Our money. I think we would be very concerned about is the stuff being distributed.

SCHOONOVER: We were. We were, and at the same time we were trying to handle such a huge amount that I would say we probably couldn't scrutinize it as carefully always as we might have liked. We were concerned about how it was being distributed, and made our best efforts. When trying to handle a huge amount in a short period of time, we gave it the best scrutiny we could, but there was a limited amount of time and resources to spend on it. One could design a more perfect formula if there were more time to deal with it. Food aid went through a number of channels and procedures, so there wasn't any single way of handling it. It went through a whole variety of means of distribution. In that sense, if one of them failed, at least you didn't have all your eggs in one basket. The NGO's, for example, some of them would operate individual food distribution centers, and they would work through local authorities trying to come up with lists of needy citizens. And they would check off lists. I've visited some of those centers. I think they did the best job that they could under the circumstances. You couldn't be everywhere in a huge country like that, but there were a great many of them involved working in different assigned regions of the country. So, a great deal of the country was covered in one way or another. If, for example, you have a food distribution center in Yekaterinburg, that's the Urals region, it doesn't necessarily mean that all of the people in the Urals region were getting access to it. You do the best you can, and some areas get left out.

Q: We weren't alone in this. Western Europe was making contributions, too. Or not?

SCHOONOVER: They did. They did get into it eventually. I believe that they were a little slower off the mark than we were with any substantial programs. They were watching us I think before they decided on a large-scale involvement. I mentioned direct food distribution as one of the means of handling food aid. The Russian government set up a Humanitarian Commission, so from the government level, another way that we handled food was to make it available to the Humanitarian Commission, and then they became responsible for the actual distribution. That's probably one of the areas where I said if we'd had more time to study the system, we might have been able to do a better job. But anyway, we worked with the only government unit that was available in terms of direct humanitarian distribution, and perhaps they did the best they could. But keep in mind, they were just created suddenly and out of nowhere, and they probably didn't have the experience or know-how to handle it real well, and they were dealing with the politics of the aid that existed among different provinces and organizations. So, how well they did...that book probably is still waiting to be written.

Q: Of course, we'd done this what, in the 1920's, hadn't we? Under Hoover, I think. He wasn't President. He was in charge of helping feed the famine in the Ukraine, wasn't it?

SCHOONOVER: Right, right. But the 1990's were 70 years later. There was no one around who knew the drill from then ...

Q: When you do something like this, in a way its something I'm sure that's certainly been forgotten by Americans what we did. Do you think there was much credit given to us within the

Soviet population or not?

SCHOONOVER: Yes, I think there were a lot of people who were aware of our assistance and were grateful. I think there were a lot of people also who were disgruntled because they would hear about the programs, but didn't see them personally.

I think food aid has mixed effects. A lot of people benefit from it, and they're grateful. Some of these elderly people, you never hear from them, but they're grateful in their hearts that they have received the aid. There are other people who hear about the programs all the time but never see anything of it, and they're disgruntled. And there were others, including opponents of the programs, who tried to use it for political advantage. We had other ways of handling much of the assistance. For the bulk of the aid, the huge amounts of grain needed just to keep the mills and bakeries operating in the country, it wasn't a question of little individual food distribution points or working with the Humanitarian Commission. Here we worked with the Grain Minister of the Russian Federation and simply made grants or long term credits or other programs directly available through the Grain Ministry to provide grain. So, in this case, we were back to something more like the central distribution system that had operated in the past. That Minister didn't change, at least initially. He was the same person, who had been the Russian Grain Minister in the Soviet Union, and he knew the drill, and he knew how to get it to the mill. So, we worked with him. I'm probably talking too long.

Q: No, no, no. This is very, very important.

SCHOONOVER: Some things are just occurring to me as we talk about it. There were still two or three other ways that we handled commodities. I've talked about directly supplying the Grain Ministry, I've talked about the Humanitarian Commission, and I've talked about the distribution by NGO's. I remember in the case of butter, we had some surplus butter that was made available to Russia and it was monetized. I believe one shipment of butter went to the Humanitarian Commission, but in another instance, I think it was the old Soviet (now, Russian) foreign trade organization that had the nominal responsibility for it. They, in effect, said you handle it. So, basically our office had to contact different organizations in the distribution system and sell the butter to the organizations, nominally approved by the trade organization, which had proved relatively ineffective in actually handling the butter itself. We basically had to do it. So, we were marketing butter. Now, this was a different type of food aid. In this case it was actually being sold, perhaps at prices that were not so high, but it was being sold, and the funds then were to go into an overall fund for rural assistance programs in Russia. We can get into that when we get into technical assistance programs. Finally, we had one batch of commodities that was sold on the newly forming private commodity exchanges because we were trying to promote the development of markets. I won't say that was entirely successful, but it was an attempt. When there isn't experience with private markets, I think there can be a lot of sort of, I hate to use the word collusion, but it's a different situation. They were not used to competing with each other on prices. And so, I would say it was probably not an entirely successful experiment, but that was tried once with some of the food assistance. I probably left out something. We were trying many different ways to handle the food assistance.

Q: Did you find good coordination or problems with the non-governmental organizations? Were

they able to say OK, we'll take care of the Urals, you take care of the Caucasus or things of this nature, or did they double up?

SCHOONOVER: The NGO's were basically American NGO's who then went in and worked with Russian organizations, perhaps Russian NGO's, which were just forming. The initial negotiations with the American NGO's were handled out of Washington, rather than out of our office in Moscow. So, I was not really involved in that. I think there was some guidance, at least, in the selection process, an attempt to ensure the different regions of the country were covered. I don't know whether the NGO's among themselves did the dividing up or whether it was a more competitive process. But, for example, an attempt was made to ensure that someone would be working in the Volga region, someone in the Urals, someone in the Far East, someone around Moscow, and I've only been talking about Russia. Similar things were going on in the Ukraine and western republics, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

Q: When you were doing this, all these republics were brand new. Was there a withdrawal process of our embassy in Moscow or something happening in Turkestan or something like that? It had to be a process rather than all of a sudden...

SCHOONOVER: A process. It was. At first, we only had one embassy, leaving out the Baltics. I didn't have anything more to do with the Baltics after '91, so from the beginning of '92 I had three fewer countries to worry about. Apart from that, the only other republic, that is, country that had an embassy ready to go immediately was Ukraine, because we had had a Consulate General in Kiev, and they already had a site there, and they were ready to pick up and begin operations immediately. I don't remember when the first U.S. Ambassador actually arrived, but we had a presence there. In the other republics, now countries, we had no presence. As I recall, we had fly-in set-up embassies, and this took place in the early spring of '92. One week we would set up embassies in all of the Central Asian republics, or all of the Transcaucasus republics, or in Belarus or Moldova. Anyway, by the time we reached mid-'92, I think we did have embassies operating in all of the countries, sometimes from very temporary quarters. I remember going out to Minsk with our Economic Counselor at the time, helping a little bit to set up the embassy in Belarus. We took a fax machine out and rented a hotel room, and that was sort of the initial spot on the ground. And then a group came in from Washington, from the U.S., and actually did the full thing, but we had the first little operating presence from out of Minsk. As I recall, he went on to be our ambassador there later on, but anyway that's a separate story.

Our Agricultural Office at the Embassy in Moscow was still responsible for all of the countries initially, except for the Baltics. Now, this worked in various ways. First of all, Russia alone was big enough to cover. There certainly were enough programs in Russia, what with our largest food aid programs, and then technical assistance programs as well, plus all of the usual things that an Agricultural Office does. I certainly didn't need any other countries besides Russia. Russia was enough. But initially we had no one else responsible for the other countries, so I tried to visit some of them, but it was impossible to visit all of them. Several times, officials from these other countries would visit our Agricultural Office at the hotel to bring their business before us. I remember once having two Ministers waiting in line to meet with us. I think by now most of the other countries have been split off one way or another for coverage by Agricultural Offices in other embassies. I'm not sure whether or not USDA has anyone in Ukraine right now. I know for

a while they had a separate Agricultural Attaché in Ukraine, and I believe that is still the case. I know when I was in Moscow I recommended an Attache in Ukraine and also an Attache responsible for Central Asia, either in Almaty (then capital of Kazakhstan) or Tashkent in Uzbekistan. They did not achieve that coverage while I was in Moscow. I was still responsible for all that territory during my tour. I think USDA covers Central Asia out of Turkey now, but I'm not sure. I believe that our office in Moscow still is responsible for Armenia, Georgia, and Belarus, as well as Russia. During my tour in Moscow, most of our Ambassadors and Embassies in the other new countries welcomed our involvement and urged us to spend more time than we were able on their country. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, I never made it to some of the countries, period. I usually tried to cover the bigger ones regularly or others whenever we had a major issue. I think the only one, I recall, that was really turf conscious was Ukraine. One U.S. Ambassador in Ukraine said he didn't want anyone assigned to Moscow responsible for Ukraine, and told us not to visit there. After he left, our next Ambassador in Kiev welcomed us again, but for a while we had a turf issue. These things happen, you know, in the U.S. Government, and that did happen to me in one case, and for a year or so I didn't visit Ukraine. During this time whenever I had to conduct business with Ukraine, I either had to do it by telephone or through the U.S. Economic Counselor in Kiev or however I could best work it out. Then I went back to visiting again. I tried to get to Ukraine about every three or four months, I guess. That clearly was one of the major countries beside Russia.

Q: That was the bread basket.

SCHOONOVER: Right. And again, we began having a lot of programs there. It was just a slightly smaller version of what we were doing in Russia. But at least by that time I had developed enough contacts when I really had to do something, I got on the telephone and since they also spoke Russian, I could do it. That's a little side note, by the way. When I went to Moscow in the beginning of 1990, there were no Foreign Nationals at the Embassy in Moscow. You may recall they had been withdrawn a few years earlier and...

Q: That was the Marine Sergeant?

SCHOONOVER: Right, right. That was before my tour. But anyway, there were none in 1990 when we arrived. Russia was one country where one, indeed, needed the four rating in language. You needed Russian to do your business because there was no one to help you. The Embassy had brought in some contractors, some Americans, who did service work at the Embassy, but when it came to having meetings with Russians or other republic officials, or just any business that had to be conducted, basically one needed Russian. There was a brief period, I guess, when we had some foreign affairs staff at the Ministry of Agriculture who spoke a bit of English, and we could do some English language business, but that was a limited part of our activities and most of the time we had to get on the telephone anyway. When things began changing so rapidly, we didn't have time to get around to pay visits to everyone. We had to be able to grab the phone and call an official in this ministry or that ministry or the quarantine bureau or wherever, and do our business, and we had to do it on the telephone. If we didn't have enough Russian to do our business on the telephone in Russian, we could not be effective. So, that's probably the only tour where it was shown so dramatically. In most of the other countries we could operate through interpreters at meetings. It was very helpful to have the language, but it wasn't 100% essential.

But it was 100% essential in Moscow at that time. About '92 we began reacquiring foreign staff, not full Foreign Nationals at first, but just through contracts with one of the Russian organizations. I can't remember precisely when it began. I know in our case what it meant was our office acquired a driver. Again, we had had no drivers, either. We not only had to speak the language, but if we wanted to deliver an envelope to the Ministry of Agriculture or elsewhere, we went out, got in the car, drove to the ministry and hand delivered it ourselves. There was no one to run any errands for us. So, I remember that through a contract about '92 or '93, we acquired a driver who could run some of those errands for us. He also could go out to the airport to meet visitors or take them back. It was a tremendous relief to have someone who could do these things for us instead of having to do everything ourselves. Then eventually this began to change. By the time I left in mid '94, I think we were contracting directly with foreign staff, and were considering hiring them again as Foreign Nationals. I know by then we were establishing a much more permanent arrangement with the Russian staff in our office. And in Kiev we had hired a Foreign National. But our arrangements were still evolving during the last year that I was there.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop, David. And you want to put at the end we're still talking about after the fall of the Soviet Union and the work you had done. You want to mention any of the things you want to talk about next time?

SCHOONOVER: Well, we can finish off Russia and some of the programs we were carrying on there. From Russia I went on to Korea and a couple of years back in the department, and then I retired.

Q: So we'll finish this off next time.

SCHOONOVER: Let's try and do that.

Q: Great!

Q: Today is the 8th of March, 2005. David, you were in Russia from when to when this term?

SCHOONOVER: This term was from the beginning of 1990 until the middle of 1994, so I experienced about two years of the Soviet Union and two and a half years of Russia. Apart from Russia, I also managed to spend time in all the other republics or newly independent states, except Moldova, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, and I had been in Moldova and Azerbaijan during my first tour, but somehow I never made it to Tajikistan.

Q: I don't know how much we covered the last time here.

SCHOONOVER: We pretty much finished the Soviet period, and covered some of our work during the post-Soviet period. I had a couple of thoughts about our programs, and I wonder, maybe, if I could begin with them.

Q: Absolutely.

SCHOONOVER: Perhaps these thoughts apply a little more generally than any specific tour, but I think I can relate them to the Soviet and Russia experience. I'd like to mention the role of exchanges and study programs for people in our assigned countries, and how important they were to our work. I think it's worth focusing on them a bit because I haven't really brought them up in any of the specific discussions so far. We made use of the International Visitors Program that USIS was handling at the time, and soon after I began my second round of overseas experiences, we also had a USDA-administered program. We called it, for short, the Cochran Program because it was Senator Cochran who fostered the legislation for it. I think the official title, at least at the beginning, was The Middle Income Country Program. It enabled us to do study tours, training programs, and exchanges for countries that had "fallen between the slats". They weren't rich enough yet to do their own programs in the United States, and they weren't poor enough to qualify for some of the AID related programs.

Q: Was this an agricultural focused program, or was this broader?

SCHOONOVER: Well, the International Visitors Program, as I mentioned, was a broad one for which everyone in the Embassy competed. The Cochran Program was an agricultural-focused program, but broadly interpreted. It was not focused solely on technical training, but enabled us to provide broader developmental experience for the countries. It was pretty broad. We could do technical training, but we also could get into institution building activities. Also, the program could be used just for an orientation experience for those who had never had the opportunity to be in the United States or see a marketing economy functioning, for example. And also, it could be oriented toward market promotion and development. It was broad in its application, but it was only for agriculture. The program was administered entirely by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These programs were extremely valuable. Let me give you just a couple of examples. I'll drop back to China. One of the first times that I used the International Visitors Program, we sent someone from the Rural Development Research Center in China, a very senior official, to the United States for about a month, and he had the opportunity to meet with policy officials in Washington and meet with policy research type officials in the universities in the United States. That proved to be extremely valuable later on. That particular research center was basically the research arm of the Communist Party in China on rural affairs, and it developed policy recommendations for the Chinese leadership in agriculture. The visit gave us tremendous access to the policy staff level people in China, and opportunities to get first hand explanations of the policy paths they were pursuing. It was an extremely valuable contact for us. And that was just one example. There were a number of others, and each one differs. When we began the Cochran Program while I was in China, in the beginning, it was only for Guangdong Province and perhaps a couple of neighboring provinces in South China. When I moved on to Moscow, and when the Soviet Union collapsed, we made great use of the Cochran Program to send people to the United States. It was an opportunity to provide some training, some exposure, some experience, and also a great way to develop or strengthen contacts. I can't remember the precise numbers, but I think at its peak, we may have been sending about a hundred Russians a year to the United States under the program, and substantial numbers from the other former Soviet countries as well. I was involved with some of those. I remember going to Kiev, and participating with the Cochran Program training officer to select people from Ukraine.

Q: There in Russian and Greater Russia and former Soviet Union, there in the period when you

were there in the '90's, what sorts of things were the focus? You had these large collective farms, which had not been overly successful. I'm told one of the problems had been getting the crop. We've discussed this before. Of getting the produce distributed. Getting it out to the folks who eat it or want to sell it.

SCHOONOVER: The focus, I would say, as we moved from Soviet Union to Russia, was primarily on institution building. This does relate to what you're talking about, because a lot of the problems were related to the institutions, and as we carried out these programs in the early years, the first couple of years of the Russian Federation, we were primarily interested in institution building for our technical development and training focus. We had many programs, not all of them carried out through the Cochran Program. I cited that as one example, but we had also legislation that provided for funding for the Department for the Emerging Markets Program. Some of these titles get changed over the years, so I should talk generically about the programs and not dwell too much on specific titles. There were a number of programs that served the purpose of providing some funding for carrying out technical training and development activities. Some of them brought Russians and other former Soviet countries' personnel to the United States. Others were for carrying out training and activities in Russia and in these other countries themselves. To give an example of an activity that relates to what you were talking about, we had one program for trying to establish wholesale markets for agricultural products in Russia. And we had people from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, as well as other agencies and universities, who were trying to advise, to help, in the establishment of wholesale produce markets in Moscow and in some of the other regions. I primarily focused on Moscow, but with the idea that it possibly would provide an example for some other regions. We had people who spent quite a few months there, perhaps half a year, working with Russians. That was one example. We had others, for example, trying to set up commodity exchanges. These are instances that relate to the marketing of products and to attempts to improve the way products went from the farm to the consumer. We were attempting to help them create a totally different system from the way it had been before, when the collective and state farms simply were assigned everything, and there was very little incentive built in. Consequently, there was very little incentive to do a good job in taking care of the produce. It was a different ball game in the new Russia. There was an attempt to establish markets. I'll acknowledge that the way a lot of the things turned out had a quite Russian twist to them, and a different twist probably from what we envisioned. Nonetheless, it was in a different system than what had existed before we were involved with them. Markets are just one area. We also were working with them on things like land legislation, for example, trying to give them a basis for making adjustments in the way they were dealing with their land and to give them the legal and technical background to do it. In this particular program we took people to the United States, and gave them training there, but also brought some people into Russia and other former Soviet countries to share experience. At the micro-level, we also had placed a couple of American farm families in a rural area an hour or two from St. Petersburg to help private farmers get established. I visited them on a couple of occasions—in particular I remember celebrating with them the completion of their harvest—but also tried to bring some of their concerns to the ears of higher officials. There were too many projects to try and deal with all of them, but I might mention a few interesting vignettes from my involvement in these technical assistance activities. One involved a former U.S. Agriculture Secretary who at the request of USDA brought a small delegation to the former Soviet Union about a year after its collapse to develop some technical assistance activities, particularly in the

areas of food processing and marketing. In a short period of time he was scheduled to visit not only Moscow, but also Novosibirsk in Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. In view of the difficulties we were experiencing with public air travel at the time, it was decided that we should charter a plane for the visit. We ended up with a plane from one of the oblasts or provinces, which had been equipped for aerial agricultural photography and a small crew, for whom we developed a genuine affection. The banking system at that time was undependable, and the ruble was going through a period of rapid depreciation, so one of my assistants was required to carry a grocery bag filled probably with several millions of rubles to the airplane leasing company. And during the trip, we encountered some sticky issues with airport service fees, particularly in the other newly independent states, which required substantial additional amounts of cash, although the other countries usually wanted dollars, and not rubles. Another vignette concerns my trip to Armenia to review USDA's program there to assist with the development of agricultural extension services. I think this was January '93, when Armenia was experiencing severe energy shortages, and most homes and offices were getting by with the minimum of electricity and heat. My plane from Moscow finally boarded about midnight, and a number of passengers carried cans of fuel onto the plane. Then the attendant, who was wearing clearly visible revolvers, asked people to reseat themselves to better balance the plane, as we were overloaded. We survived the journey, but arrived about three or four A.M., and my contact there, having been told that the flight had been cancelled, had gone. From the dark airport, and carrying the pouches that I was delivering to the Embassy, I caught a ride with one of the free-lance taxis waiting outside, who promptly told me that Yerevan was dangerous by night, and that he himself would not ride with a stranger as I was doing. As I was staying in private quarters and not at a hotel, I had to seek a place for the night, and ended up bedding down on a sofa at the barely-heated apartments of Doctors Without Borders, one of the non-governmental organizations helping Armenians with some serious medical issues. I'm still grateful to the organization. This is the kind of experience that leaves a deep impression, and I was happy when dawn came, and I proceeded to find the Embassy. I had some similar questionable experiences flying into Almaty late at night and proceeding on my own to take cars to find hotels. In hindsight, I might not do again what I did then, but one sort of became accustomed to living an adventurous life. While speaking about visiting former Soviet countries other than Russia, I also will mention a trip to the Kyrgyz Republic to negotiate an agreement for a joint council on agricultural development, which would use some of the monetized funds from our food assistance. This trip was much less adventurous, although on our nighttime drive between Bishkek and Almaty we were stopped and searched at checkpoints, whether for drugs, weapons, or what I don't recall now.

On technical assistance, we also were working through a number of U.S. non-governmental organizations, NGO's, providing some funding, and they in turn were working with a number of the Russians who were involved in land legislation. We carried out these training programs in many different ways, both directly as I said, either bringing Russians to the U.S., or bringing Americans to Russia and the other countries, and also by providing funding to Non-Governmental Organizations who in turn carried out a number of the programs. There were an immense number of programs going on to provide technical assistance in agriculture. The market development associations, or Cooperators, that I mentioned earlier in China, also were carrying-out programs, which provided a great deal of technical assistance in upgrading use of grains for food and feed, and for improving efficiency in livestock feeding and production.

Q: Did you still have the feeling at this point that Russia/Soviet Union the economy is essentially collapsing, but getting ready to revive in a new form? This was very much a very difficult transitional stage, or was that a way to characterize it?

SCHOONOVER: This was a fascinating period. As far as the first part, the collapse of the Soviet Union, no one could have predicted precisely what was going to happen, I think. Certain things happened that triggered the actual collapse. You could see the problems. You could see the failures of the centrally planned system, the way they were trying to carry out things, but certain things had to happen, and the attempted coup in August of 1991 and related developments led to the actual date of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ferment that went on then in trying to establish new systems was tremendous, and it was very difficult to try and comprehend everything that was going on. There were so many factions and schisms, and movements and activities. In an established country, one works with the government, one has knowledge of certain groups in society and culture, and one has a pretty good feel for what is going on in the country. You can keep up contacts with a set number of people whom you know. In the early year or two of Russia, I'd say that was pretty hard to do. We did the best we could, we had our contacts, but the government contacts often weren't necessarily all that good in being able to tell us what was going on. We tried to stay in touch with different research centers, different groups in society, business contacts and so forth. We did stay in touch with the government, both the legislature and the executive organs, and with farm organizations and different people, but it was a very fluid time during that period. We tried both through our direct programs and through the NGO programs to identify those people who looked like they would be influencing policy in the years ahead. Sometimes that was successful and sometimes it wasn't. I can give you one example, and I'll go back to the exchange programs and how one of these activities was successful for us, in the very early months of Russia. We sent a Cochran Program team to the United States from the Agrarian Reform Institute, which was working on land reform issues and land legislation. About a month after they came back, the head of the team became the Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation. So, this made a tremendous contact for us to have picked him out in advance, not knowing that this was in the offing. I doubt that he knew it himself at the time, but it gave us tremendous access to higher levels in the Ministry of Agriculture. I should mention one other thing that just occurred to me, concerning the way we were working with them during the early post-Soviet years. We had a U.S. policy advisor assigned directly in the Ministry of Agriculture on the Minister's staff. He was not from the U.S. Government, but from a U.S. university, and financed by the U.S. Government. He was there for about a year, I believe, I can't remember precisely, working with the Russians in those early years. He tried to be a sounding board and to give some advice and recommendations, and reactions to proposed policies. A policy advisor in a position like that has mixed results, I would say. The Minister, obviously, is not going to turn to the American advisor all the time for his advice, but I think he did sometimes. I think he had a staff person who worked quite well with our policy advisor, and they had a good relationship. And that person in turn could influence the Minister. But in that kind of a situation, I don't think the Minister wants to be seen as always turning to the American policy advisor, and particularly in Russia, it was quite a new experience. But just the fact that we were able to do that showed how drastically things had changed from just a year or so earlier. By the way, we also placed a policy adviser in the Ministry of Agriculture in Kazakhstan.

Q: One of the problems with the Soviet Economy—and perhaps you had to go through it—but it was the opportunity for people who were well connected and all, the so-called Oligarchs or something, people who were essentially able to grab hold of great industrial combines and all that and turn it to profit. They became instant billionaires. They're working this out as a system now. How about in the agricultural field? Was this happening, too?

SCHOONOVER: When I left Moscow I would say agricultural reform was still in its early stage, even though I spent two and a half years there after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The names changed and some things changed, but the collective and state farms were to a large extent still there. Now, the rules of the game had changed some, and they were called something else. But it takes much longer than what Americans like to think it does to change institutions that are entrenched as they were. So, this is a way of answering your question, I think. I don't think that the changes that might have permitted reform had really taken place in agriculture in the farms themselves. They had some land legislation, I recall, but they had not actually gone so far as to just say privatize the land and turn it over to people. In one sense, that would have been parallel to the Oligarchs taking over the industrial economy. They had not permitted that to happen to the land. Farms were still very much the same, although now, perhaps, they were called Joint Stock Companies or something like there, but it was very much still the collective or state farms that were occupying most of the land. There was a growing development of private farms, which were largely occupying the land on the fringes, land on the margins, and occasionally they were getting a farm that was so bad that it was dissolved and turned over to private farming. On the whole, the collective and state farms and their people were still in place.

Q: Of course, in a way, the trend everywhere, has been to large farms anyway. Into the agrobusiness and the small farmer in the United States is a diminishing breed, and in Europe all their tremendous efforts are to keep the small farmers, but basically these people are not there, and they're going and it's turned over to large businesses. But these are much more efficient businesses than one thinks of the collective farm.

SCHOONOVER: One of the differences one observed immediately is that there may have been farms in the United States and in Russia that were approximately the same size--there were Russian farms that were much bigger, too—but the operations were different. The American farm of perhaps a thousand or a few thousand acres was probably run by one farmer, perhaps assisted by his sons, or perhaps he might have had one hired worker, but basically it was still a family farm, even though quite large. That same farm in Russia might have had 500 people working on it. It was a very labor inefficient operation. The Russians still had to go through the transition of moving the surplus labor off of their farms. Surplus by our standards, but, of course, by their standards if it were all moved immediately, why the whole thing would collapse. They wouldn't have enough labor to get things done. One has to upgrade the level of technology, the efficiency of the operation, to be able to do that. The Russian and American enterprises were very different types of farms. One was a very inefficient operation and the other was a very efficient operation.

Q: What about companies like International Harvester or McCormick or Caterpillar and all? Were they finding a market for their farm equipment?

SCHOONOVER: There were some farm equipment shows and exhibitions. There were approaches by American equipment companies first to the Soviets, and later to the Russians. I might add, by the way, that this is more the Commerce Department's sphere of marketing responsibility to assist American firms in their promotion of agricultural technology. But we helped out, too. There were some attempts to sell equipment, but I believe right at that point in the years of transition from the Soviet Union to the new Russia, there was not that much opportunity for U.S. farm equipment firms, owing in part to Russian capital shortages. I'm not sure what has developed in subsequent years since I left Moscow. This was a period of much turmoil--the rules were changing, and no one knew what the rules were--and it was very hard to work with organizations, which didn't know if they were even going to exist tomorrow. So, it was not a good period for building a stable marketing relationship.

Q: One of your big jobs is to estimate what the grain production is. How about statistics?

SCHOONOVER: There was a brief period where there weren't many statistics because the Soviet statistical system collapsed and the Russian and other systems hadn't settled into place yet very well. But after a year or so Russian statistics started coming out and I would say the quantity of statistical information was as great and/or greater than it had been before. It just took a short period of adjustment to move from the Soviet system to the Russian reporting system. There was a lot of statistical information available, certainly, by the time that I left Moscow in 1994. I should underscore that the most important focus of my stay in Moscow during the first half of the '90's was food aid and the technical assistance programs. By technical assistance I'm speaking in a very broad sense, not telling a farmer how to produce a crop, but institution building, establishment of markets, working on land legislation and assistance of this nature. So, food aid and technical assistance were by far the dominant elements of my work during that period. Reporting was still important, as were trade development and promotion, policy representation, and scientific exchanges--a lot of things were still important, but the dominant focus was food aid and technical assistance.

Q: How did the Food Aid program... I mean this was apparently a temporary program. Russia is a food producing country.

SCHOONOVER: It wasn't very clear during that period how long food aid was going to last, and how long U.S. funding would last to keep providing food assistance. But during that period a tremendous amount of food assistance was provided. I believe food aid did phase out after I left, but it was extremely important during those first years of Russia and the other newly independent states.

Q: This is Tape 5, Side 1 with David Schoonover

SCHOONOVER: We were talking about the food assistance that was going into Russia during the first couple of years of the Russian Federation after the fall of the Soviet Union. And, as I recall, around a billion dollars annually of food assistance went to Russia, and very significant amounts to the other countries, but in total to them, perhaps not quite that much. If I recall right, there were maybe six or seven hundred million dollars worth going into the other countries, also. As we discussed previously, a number of programs were used to move this food assistance. As a

government representative we were directly responsible for some of it. Some of it was moved by sales or grants. When I say sales, generally I mean long-term loans. Also there were outright grants to the governmental authorities. Food products were made available to the Humanitarian Commission or to trade organizations, essentially with our direct oversight on how they were distributed. Others were made available to U.S. non-governmental organizations, and they, in turn, carried out the food assistance program. Some of these were direct distribution programs to poor people through relief centers. Other donations, at the other end of the spectrum, were monetized food assistance, where food aid was sold to organizations in the country, but then the funds were used for humanitarian purposes. As a consequence of this monetization, I found myself in a somewhat strange position as an Agricultural Minister-Counselor of overseeing the funding of diverse humanitarian projects. For example, the Humanitarian Commission sold a butter donation and acquired funds. To use these funds, the Health and Welfare Ministry developed lists of proposed projects, such as assistance to hospitals and various sorts of organizations that were working on medical assistance. I remember a project to manufacture artificial arms and limbs, for example. We would have a long list of projects, which we had to review and approve. There also were other organizations carrying out monetization projects. We created a joint council, of which I was a member, for Russian agricultural and rural development, I can't remember the exact name, to fund projects using some of these Russian-held funds. Members of the council included both U.S. and Russian Governmental and non-governmental organization members. I would say the council was a unique undertaking. It was rather difficult to identify and place Russian non-governmental organizations on the council, as they were in early stages of development, but we did have 2-3 representatives, including a representative of the Russian Orthodox Church. This council of about a dozen members, in total, reviewed various rural development project proposals for use of these funds. One interesting side note, I recall that the Russian First Deputy Minister of Agriculture and I jointly interviewed applicants and decided on the Executive Secretary for the council. That sort of confidence building came in handy a few years later, when he came to Washington as the Minister, and he and I had to work out the final details on an agreement. But, let me not jump ahead. A tremendous amount of activities were going on during my tour. They were extremely busy times.

Q: I would have thought that it also would be awkward for dealing with your Soviet/Russian counterparts. Here's a proud country and all of a sudden it's getting food aid and all this sort of thing from a country that had been its #1 perceived enemy. Did you find this difficult dealing with the diplomacy of doing this sort of thing?

SCHOONOVER: You know, reactions to the food aid varied a lot. I think still there in the system there were officials, who resented it very much. There were others who were very glad to see us, very glad to receive that assistance. There were individual people who really appreciated the food aid. For example, elderly people, who were receiving food assistance through some of these distribution centers, really appreciated the aid. There were others, and you would see articles in the newspapers, who very much resented the food aid. The reactions were very mixed.

Q: By the time you left...you left in what, '90...?

SCHOONOVER: Summer of '94.

Q: '94. Did you see a new Russia emerging?

SCHOONOVER: Ah, yes. There were a lot of things that still had to happen, but it was a very different place by the summer of '94 in contrast to what I saw when I arrived there in the beginning of 1990. There was a blossoming of private entrepreneurship that one could just see on the streets of Moscow. One could see newly opened shops that looked very modern, very different from the old Soviet stores. One could feel it in discussions with people and officials who were thinking differently from the Soviet officials with whom I dealt in the early years. On the other hand, there were some old timers who still wanted to turn the clock back, too. So the changes weren't uniform by any means, but Moscow had a very different feel when I left in the summer of '94 than when I arrived.

Many of the changes did not come without problems. As you recall, in 1993, Yeltsin encountered serious differences with his Vice President Rutskoy and parliament chief Khasbulatov. The opposition entrenched themselves in the Russian White House, just across the street from the Embassy compound, and Yeltsin used tanks to blast them out of the building. The sounds of the tanks firing, and images of smoke and fire rising from the White House, are still vivid in my mind. There had been rowdy demonstrations in Moscow, and near the Embassy streets sealed off by Russian militia. On a Sunday afternoon in early October I went to my office at the hotel, and when I returned, there was a strange emptiness on the street. A guard let me in the compound—I noted that the Russian militia were on the inside, which was a great departure from normal--and told me quickly about the fighting that had taken place there that afternoon. There was sporadic shooting still in the vicinity of the compound, apparently instigated by those favoring the opposition. That evening, demonstrators attempted to storm the Moscow radio tower, and people were killed. Our Embassy staff evacuated the street-side buildings, and huddled in the gymnasium below ground level. As I recall, the standoff at the White House lasted a day, and the next morning, we heard the sounds of the tanks firing, and a lot of shooting. One of our Marines was hit, but otherwise our Embassy staff was safe, but on the outside, a number of people were killed, including some Americans. As you know, the opposition gave up and emerged from the burning White House, but some think that Yeltsin's image was damaged somewhat by his handling of the incident.

JOSEPH R. MCGHEE
Deputy Director, Office of Soviet Affairs
Washington, DC (1991-1992)

Joseph R. McGhee was born and raised in Pennsylvania. He attended Yale and Columbia University and entered the Foreign Service in 1975. He served in Rome, Prague, Panama City, and Bonn. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: You left this hot spot in June of '91. Where did you go?

McGHEE: I went to be one of the deputy directors in what was then EUR-SOV, office of Soviet

Affairs. It was still the Soviet Union then.

Q: When did the Soviet Union cease to be the Soviet Union?

McGHEE: Just a few months after I got there. I arrived in that job early in July. I had to come over there early because the President was traveling to Moscow for a state visit with Gorbachev. At that point the main sort of tangible results that were expected were a series of cooperative agreements in the transport field and in developing low income housing and things like this.

The office of Soviet Affairs actually had five deputy directors: a senior deputy director who was John Tefft and then one for internal issues, one for external policy, one for economics and trade, and one for all the stuff that nobody else wanted to do. That last one was mine. They needed someone there at that time to supervise the finalizing of all these agreements that were going to be signed: there was one on space, academic exchanges. It was quite a long process. These things all had to be prepared in English and Russian and then the text had to be justified, compared and we had to make sure they all said the same thing in both languages.

It was a long process but we got the President off. He made his visit and it went off fairly well as I recall. The President came back and then after that Gorbachev went off on vacation to Yalta in the Crimea. He was seized down there during a coup attempt. This was in about August.

Q: So really you were just brand new on board?

McGHEE: That's right. There was a task force and so for three days or so everything was very touch and go as to whether this coup was going to succeed and whether Gorbachev was going to be hauled off and imprisoned or worse. Yeltsin was on a tank out in front of the so-called Parliament or white house and all of this. My job was running the task force during this period.

Q: What was the atmosphere? In the first place was there any indication from your perspective before it happened, was there any tip-off or any concern, and then what was our reaction when it unfolded?

McGHEE: Our immediate reaction was surprise and dismay. There was real difficulty getting a handle on it initially because it was not very clear who was in charge. I don't think it was even clear to the coup plotters who was in charge. We didn't have an ambassador there at the time. I believe that Matlock had left and Jim Collins was in charge. He was in contact with some of the people involved in the coup by phone but in particular, of course, he was in contact with Yeltsin. At a certain point there was a phone call from the President backing Yeltsin and the notion of democratization. Yeltsin at the time was I believe Prime Minister or President, I don't recall quite what his title was, of the Russian Federation within the Soviet Union but he really took charge and of course the coup collapsed. People came out in the street, if not in support of Gorbachev, at least in opposition to the coup.

Of course Gorbachev didn't fall right away. He came back to Moscow and was still President and head of the Communist Party for a time but it was clear that his credibility was really fatally undermined by these events. Gradually over the next couple of months, he gave way to Yeltsin.

It was in this process also that various component parts of the old Soviet Union began to fall off.

Q: While you were on the task force was it more again a watching brief? Was there anything we felt that we could do?

McGHEE: Watching was a huge part of it plus we were scrambling around to stop various agencies from dispatching people off to Moscow helter-skelter. Our embassy there had its hands full. We had an open line around the clock with the embassy. Rosemary Forsyth who was my deputy on my shift of the task force was on the line virtually constantly. She was a real asset because she had just arrived back from Moscow so she knew everybody including who did what in the embassy so she could yell down the phone, get me so and so.

The other thing was keeping the White House, the secretary, and everyone involved closely informed on what exactly was taking place in Moscow and getting instructions to Jim Collins in a rapid and organized manner. Obviously we tried to get everything we could out by cable but there were times when events were unfolding so quickly that this all had to be done over the phone.

The other thing was press. There was a huge amount of press attention, obviously, and attention to the U.S. reaction. There was a real need to ride herd on the Department to keep people from talking through their hats. There was a lot of contact with the White House and the situation room there. It was very busy and it was very fast. Three days and that was the end of it.

Q: Here you had been dealing with one crisis and next thing you knew you were dealing with another one and you were trying to pick up information. You had Gorbachev, and then Yeltsin was coming up and we had sort of put our cards on Gorbachev. Was there concern about Yeltsin when you arrived because he had been portrayed at one time as sort of almost a clown or a drunk or something like that or did this change?

McGHEE: He has been variously portrayed as a drunk off and on, that was no secret. He had been mayor of Moscow and at one point rather close to Gorbachev but Gorbachev had unloaded him earlier that year or the latter part of the year before. Yeltsin had gone to this position in the Russian Republic government where he had a much lower profile but nevertheless he did come to the States earlier in that year in 1991. He was not invited to the White House or at least he didn't see the President and that of course was taken as something of a snub. So there was this concern there that Yeltsin would be hostile, if not towards the U.S., at least towards the administration that was in charge at the time. In fact none of that panned out and if Yeltsin had been prone to pursue some kind of a vendetta it was just the speed with which events unfolded that precluded him from doing anything but trying to make the right decision which by and large he did.

Q: While you were on the task force did you pretty much sort out information that was coming in and getting it to the right people and to make sure our press office was saying the right thing?

McGHEE: That's it, yes.

Q: Was the CIA contributing much to this process?

McGHEE: Yes the CIA did contribute information at various times on who was where and what they were doing. There was plenty of information available. It wasn't particularly information that was of great help to us on the task force and it was always information of that kind where unless you know what the source is, the information itself is devalued. Of course we never knew what the source was so it was very difficult to tell in the confusion whether they had it right or partially right, and what parts were right and what parts were wrong. They did have some pretty good information that proved to be quite correct on who was where and what was going on.

Q: Did we seem to have a fairly good fix that the coup was not going to be a fait accompli; that it might not work?

McGHEE: It became clear fairly early on that there was going to be opposition in spite of the fact that there were some uniforms among the coup plotters. They had not done the spade work in terms of assuring that the key military units especially those around Moscow, were aboard for something like this. As it became clearer that not all of the military was prepared to accept that and that there was going to be at least some resistance from the population at large as well, then it became increasingly clear that the coup plotters were in trouble. This developed I would say in the first 24 to 36 hours that the extent of the coup plotters problems became increasingly evident.

Q: After the coup was settled what was your job after the task force was over?

McGHEE: My job remained essentially what it had been which was the deputy director in charge of all the things no one else wanted to do. Part of that was the consular function. We had a visa operation in EUR-SOV that was run by a senior civil servant, Gladys Boluda and I supervised that although it meant essentially doing whatever Gladys told me to do.

Another thing was this question of exchanges. Lots and lots of NGOs, non-governmental organizations, and also government agencies, NASA, NOAA, Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture, you name it every agency that had anything going on in the Soviet Union wanted to get someone in there and start making connections with the new people if there were going to be new people etc., etc. We had to hold all of them off for a couple of weeks while things got back to normal in Moscow.

Basically we then had to establish some sort of control over the follow-on business because as countries started to drop out of the Soviet Union (the Baltic states, the Caucasus, the Stans, Ukraine, Belarus) they began to hold these referenda on the future for all of these countries and of course there was a real land rush to get in on the ground floor with all of these newly independent states. We had to make decisions about embassies, were we going to open them, how big are they going to be, etc., etc. Then we had to somehow maintain some control over this process of suddenly multiplying all of these cooperative projects that all of these agencies had, as to how they were going to go into these newly independent states and ensuring that it was done in an organized manner, to begin in a big way on the ground floor with these new countries but we also wanted to maintain some control over who was doing what and ensuring that in the rush to get out there that we didn't tread all over the Russians toes for example.

One of the things that I did was to oversee the EUR-SOV's participation in the process of identifying and implementing aid or assistance, sort of a presumptive new Marshall Plan for the former Soviet Union. Another was getting ready to send new embassies out to all of the new independent countries which was a long and convoluted process and it involved congress and getting money. The administration, by which I mean James Baker, had foolhardily, in my view, made a pledge to congress that he was going to staff all of these new missions, there were 15 of them, without requesting a single more additional position or any more money. He was going to find it all somewhere out there. Congress was perfectly willing to authorize virtually anything we needed and I thought at the time when I was dealing with them on this, that we should take what we could get while we could get it.

Q: What was the motivation do you think on Baker's part?

McGHEE: Of course I have never spoken to Baker but I sort of thought that at the time he was thinking about running for President and he wanted to demonstrate what an efficient hard-nosed administrator he was. What it meant was it just made everything that much more difficult. Positions had to be made free by disencumbering them somewhere else and then they had to be allocated among all of these new missions. It also meant that what we got out there initially didn't correspond to what was needed but rather to what was available. Obviously sometimes you have to do that but this was a case where we didn't have to do that, we just decided unilaterally to inflict it on ourselves.

Q: What was the ambiance or spirit of the European Soviet Affairs when it started to unravel? Was there concern that this was going to make things more difficult or this was a good thing because this was the disarming essentially of our mortal enemy for a long time? What were you getting from your colleagues?

McGHEE: I think there was concern that this was going to be a huge mess and in fact it was a huge mess. There was concern that the Russians were going to try to resist these independence efforts especially when Ukraine went. Concern also over the fact that every one of these new states had a sizable Russian minority that still looked to Moscow for leadership and just the sort of inertia that exists anywhere. It existed in Germany too, adjusting to a new situation where there was no longer an East Germany.

Think of all the people who had spent their whole careers worrying about the Soviet Union and suddenly there was no longer a Soviet Union. There was a lot of old thinking that had to be got rid of and certainly while I was there, it was not in any meaningful way gotten rid of. You couldn't even get people to stop referring to the Soviet Union and start referring to something else. I really wasn't there long enough to see the middle transition to the new situation.

In any event it was extremely chaotic. I don't mean to say that the office was badly run or anything like that, it was just a function of the situation. The situation was new and there were new and unexpected elements cropping up every day. Obviously our first concern was what was going to happen to the Soviet nuclear arsenal and that took up lots of time and lots of effort on the part of many people. Then trying to decide what on earth we could do for these people.

There was a lot of big talk about, as I said, Marshall Plans and new world order, and new relationships and things like that, but on a basic level there was no money to do any of these things. The agencies involved and even the NGOs were of course completely surprised by this and weren't ready to expand immediately into 15 new countries. The one organization that was quickest and most efficient in responding to this was the Peace Corps which managed to have people lined up and ready to go for that coming summer in I believe it was three countries. Plus they were fighting almost immediately in the Gladys Boluda so there was a lot of pressure.

Q: Having come from the Iraq-Iran business, were you at all concerned about Iranian influence or were you seeing this translated into concern about Iranian influence into what one would call the Stans: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan?

McGHEE: Actually the focus of where Iranian influence was of greatest concern was Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijanis have a long history with Persia because they are right there bordering the Caspian Sea. They have a substantial border with Iran and they have lots of oil. They were under attack almost immediately by the Armenians over Nagorno Karabakh and what have you; this long simmering ethnic dispute there in the southern Caucasus. There was concern that Iran would step in and stir up more trouble.

In the Stans, the Stans very quickly established good relations with Turkey. They speak basically Turkic languages out there and there was kind of a cultural link with the Turks. Also there was some resistance to democracy in the Stans which we were trying to turn around. In the case of Tajikistan which borders on Afghanistan there was overflow from the war in Afghanistan and almost immediately a civil war in Tajikistan. These were all things that were of concern. The Turks got out there very quickly and we were right behind them along with the Germans and some others. I would say that the biggest concern with regards to Iran in particular was Azerbaijan and I think it still remains that way.

Q: Were there any other either events or issues that particularly concerned you? In the first place, how long were you with the Soviet desk?

McGHEE: I was there until February and then I had to go to German language training.

Q: This would be February '92?

McGHEE: That's right.

ROBERT S. STRAUSS
Ambassador
USSR (1991-1992)

Ambassador Strauss was born and raised in Texas and educated at the University of Texas. After a stint as Field Agent with the FBI, he formed his own law firm in

Dallas, where he became engaged in Democratic Party politics, eventually becoming Chairman of the Party. This brought him in close contact with both Democrat and Republican leaders and Presidents, who sought his advice and used his talents in Trade Negotiations and Middle Peace Negotiations. In 1991 President George Bush, a Republican, appointed him Ambassador to the Soviet Union, where he served until 1992. Ambassador Strauss was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, we left the last time when you were in, could you tell us how this appointment to Moscow go, and when did this happen and come about.

STRAUSS: One day I got a call in my office from an old friend who was Secretary of State, Jim Baker. He said, "Bob, come over and have lunch with me today." I said, "Jim, I can't today. I have a date already." He said, "Well break it and come over here and have lunch with me. I need to talk to you." I said, "Jim, I don't break dates. If I can be with you, I don't like to break dates." He said, "This is important, very important. I promised the President that I would talk to you about a matter before he gets back in town from a trip he is on. He will be back in mid afternoon, and he is going to want to talk to you."

Q: This is President George Bush.

STRAUSS: George Bush senior. That piqued my curiosity, so I said, "Well I will cancel it and come over." I went over and sat down. We had a nice lunch. Before we got really started I said, "What the hell is this all about." He said, "Well, you know we have been looking for an ambassador to the Soviet Union for over a year, and nothing satisfies the President. He called me this morning about seven o'clock and said, 'I have got our man; now all we have got to do is land him.'" I said, "Well what can I do to help?" He said, "Well, you can accept. You are the man." I said, "Are you out of your damn mind, and is the President out of his damn mind." He said, "No, he said he had been thinking about it and didn't know why he didn't think about it earlier. You are a perfect person to go for him. You know Gorbachev." I said, "I couldn't consider that. I am in my seventies, as is Helen. It is just not something we can think about." He called in the woman who worked for him, did his press stuff.

Q: Margaret Tutwiler.

STRAUSS: Tutwiler.

Q: I have interviewed her.

STRAUSS: Yes, she is splendid.

Q: Boy is she professional.

STRAUSS: Yes, she is a real pro. I said to them after I, Bush knew, I mean Baker knew that Margaret and I were good friends. I had been helpful to her, and she has been helpful to me. So he had her come in as we were having lunch. The three of us talked about it. I just really didn't

seriously consider it. I remember Baker saying to me, "At least you will go over and meet with the President about it." "Well of course I would. I didn't want to be arrogant about it. I just think I am the wrong person. I don't know much about Russia. I don't know anything about this. I am too old. Baker said, "Fine." So at three o'clock that afternoon I went over to speak with George Bush. He told me how much he wanted, he said he wanted me to do this. I told him I couldn't consider it. He pushed some more, a long meeting. I was uncomfortable saying no to a President. Finally I said to him, "Hell Mr. President," keep in mind George Bush senior who was president then, and I are old friends. We chaired our respective parties at the same time. We were very close, good close friends, very good friends. Anyway, I finally said, "Hell, Mr. President, I didn't even vote for you. You don't want me." He looked back and said, "I cannot believe you voted for that other fellow." I said, "Damn sure believe it because I did. I didn't have a bit of trouble. I never considered voting for you." I laughed and he laughed. He said, "Well you just blew it, Strauss." I said, "Why?" He said, "You are the only person since I have been president who sat in that chair at this desk and looked me in the face and said he didn't vote for me. Now a lot of them sat there and said they did. I know that, but you are the only one who had enough guts to say he didn't and do it with a smile." So he said, "Now I know you have to go over there. I need somebody over there who can do business with Gorbachev." That would have been his theme. He needed it. He said, "The limit to what we can do over there now; we don't have a budget; we don't have this; we don't have that, but if you know, you have been in Europe a lot. You have worked in Europe, and you know the heads of the government in most of those countries. The signal that you are leaving at your age and stature in life, station in life, that you are going to Russia for me will send the right signal. We are serious about really helping the Russians. It will really send the right signal to President Gorbachev." So he said, "Tell you what. Why don't you and Helen come to Camp David with me for the weekend. We will talk about it." I said, "No, Mr. President, I wouldn't consider doing that. That place is too seductive. You get up there; you can't use your good judgment. There is no chance. I have got to stay here." We laughed some more. He said, "Think about it overnight. Let me call Helen. I will talk to Helen about it." "Don't call Helen; I will talk to her about it." He said, "Let me talk to Helen," and told his secretary to get her on the phone. I said, "Not now. Give me 24 hours on this." I was worried about Helen saying, agreeing to anything he asked her to do. But anyway we had a couple of meetings over there, and I finally decided I ought to go. Larry Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft both had considerable influence on me. I ran into them in the hallway when I went in for my second or third visit with the president. Eagleburger said, "You know, Strauss, the main reason that you ought to go is it does send a signal. Nobody else is sending it as well as your going. People have more background more knowledge, but this sends a signal and it will be well received. So I eventually before that week was out, I called him and said that, told the President I would go. I said, "I just have two conditions. One is that Helen goes with me, and the second is that I can take Vera Murray as my assistant. She has done everything with me for so long." He said, "Strauss, if Vera won't go with you, I don't want you over there. You can't work without her." We laughed some more. That's how the appointment came about.

Q: Let me just go back a bit. you said you knew Gorbachev. Can you talk about up to this point, we are talking about what year now?

STRAUSS: Well, we had to be talking about this was very early '71.

Q: '81.

STRAUSS: '81 yes.

Q: What about, not '81, '91.

STRAUSS: '91.

Q: Boy, this shows our joint ages here that these decades sort of get, yes, '91. Prior to this in '91, what had been your contact with sort of European leaders, particularly Gorbachev. We are still talking about the Soviet Union.

STRAUSS: I had, Nancy Reagan had called me to get an invitation to sit at the table with Gorbachev when Gorbachev made his first visit over here. I have told you this story about going upstairs at the White House. We discussed Don Regan and the fact that she wanted to get rid of him and wanted me to convince the president he needed to do it for his own political survival. That is on tape here we have. She, you remember the last thing I said in there when I sat down at the table with Gorbachev with that big state dinner and all those Republicans in the room. I knew a thousand people in there who wanted to be sitting next to Gorbachev, one of the leading Democrats in the country, how stunned they all were. So I had met him then and I had spent a little time with Gorbachev on that visit. Later I had, the office had come over. No, I hadn't seen the office; I hadn't gotten to know the office then. So that was about the only thing I had.

Q: When you met Gorbachev at that time, was he at all interested in the American political situation?

STRAUSS: He knew a good deal about it from our conversation, mostly our dinner conversation that one night. I don't remember having any other...

Q: I was just wondering whether you had the feeling, as you say he knew, he understood. The fact that you were a Democrat was important.

STRAUSS: Oh yes, he understood very vividly. I had been to Russia and had dinner with him, a small dinner of about 12 people in connection with the Russian Business council. I had gone over with about a dozen business people who were doing business in Russia at the time or trying to. So I had that evening with Gorbachev, a small dinner. So I had limited experience, but it was something, and it got press. So President Bush knew about it. I liked Gorbachev a lot then. Everyone did. Gorbachev was real I think.

Q: I recall just being on the street by happenstance, and all of a sudden this limousine came by and there he was waving at everyone. I mean he seemed to be having a delightful time.

STRAUSS: An amusing the story, he stopped right, the traffic, got out and greeted people. It happened to be in the building where Duke Ziebert had his restaurant, Duke's. I used to eat in Duke's regularly, and the mob around there. I said later to Duke, "You know why he stopped here and got out and all the people got around him?" He said, "No, why?" I said, "They had

planned to go in and have lunch there and all these people got around him and were saying, 'whatever you do, don't eat that lousy food in that lousy place.'" Duke didn't think that was as funny as I did, but we had a good laugh out of it. But anyway, I had another condition on that for the President. I said, "You know, my daughter, our only daughter is approaching the age of 40 or is 40, and she is pregnant. My wife is not about to leave here until that baby is born the first of September." I think I said the first of September, something like that. He said, "We can work that out. I know you are not going to go without her." I said, "No, I am going to stay here with Helen on that." So he didn't have any trouble with that. Strange that story didn't break. Bush called a press conference which he had out in the garden there and had a couple of hundred press people show up for it. They didn't know what it was about. I walked out. He announced that I was ambassador to the Soviet Union that morning. It was a big story for a lot of reasons. Number one, our relationship with the Soviet Union then, primarily here is a leading former Democrat, who was one, being offered and accepting a job as ambassador to the Soviet Union in this Republican administration. So it made for a good story. It was very well received. The press has always been kind to me, overly kind. I am about the only fellow I know in public life who never curses the press. They have always been generous with me, overly so. Helen and I started to get ready, and one thing we needed to do was take some Russian lessons and briefings over at the State Department. So I started getting briefings with various people at the State Department on Russian, Soviet issues. I also started language lessons; Helen and I both did that with a very good man that they provided. The time came for our summer vacation. We always spent about a month, half of July and half of August, most of August out on the west coast in a little cottage we have out there.

Q: Where is that?

STRAUSS: Del Mar, California. So Helen and I had been out. I had the man, the language tutor, come out at my expense, not the government's, and stay there for two weeks to give us both some intense Russian lessons. Two or three hours in the morning. That is wearing.

Q: That is very wearing.

STRAUSS: And at our age it was even more wearing.

Q: That is one of the things we all learn. The older you get, the harder it is.

STRAUSS: Exactly. So we spent, we were in the middle of the lessons when the coup came in August.

Q: The coup in the Soviet Union.

STRAUSS: Soviet Union.

Q: When the military and other groups tried to oust Gorbachev.

STRAUSS: Tried their best, exactly. In fact they took him physically. I guess he was in his home on the Black Sea there when they took over the home and stayed a house prisoner of theirs. So

the phone rang. We were out for dinner with our tutor as a matter of fact. When we got back the phone was ringing. It was the White House calling saying that this coup had taken place. The President wanted me over there the next day, to leave the next morning. It was 9:00 at night I guess, when the phone rang in California, so midnight here. It was Brent Scowcroft who said the President wants you to come in tomorrow and stop and pick up Jim Baker, Secretary of State Baker who is fishing in Wyoming or Montana. I forget which. They can pick him up and bring you all back here, and you can get the last briefing and get sworn in. I had been sworn in, I had already been confirmed by the Senate.

Q: I assumed there was no problem there.

STRAUSS: I had no problem at all. So we did that, but Helen didn't go over. I went over without her, and stayed about five or six or seven days. About that time the baby was born. I rushed back home to be with my daughter when she had her child, and stayed there a couple of days. Then Helen and I went back together. A funny story happened when we went back. We got there, and of course tanks were in the street. We flew overnight to get there, and then the drive in the morning, worn out. It was a sight, bombs everywhere, tanks still in the street, Gorbachev still in captivity. They call house arrest captivity, and he did. I remember I went straight to the embassy and met with the staff. Jim Collins was out there, my deputy. I hadn't known him before, but he was very highly recommended by everyone. I had just met him; I had no experience with him. They suggested that rather than stay at the residence for the ambassador I ought to stay in the compound at Collins' house which I did. We started to work. The first thing that happened when I got there, Collins said to me, "The staff is here. They have been waiting. They are waiting for instructions and advice. The White House has called, and they are waiting for your impressions." I thought to myself this is a nice start for a fellow who doesn't know anything about Russia and even less about the Soviet Union. I said to somebody there, Collins I think, I said, "Why don't you see, I am sure we won't reach him, but why don't you see if you can get through on the phone system and we can get Ambassador Dobrynin." Who you are going to call, and he was the longest serving ambassador to this country, represents the Soviet Union and was a key player I think. As a matter of fact, I think Ambassador Dobrynin had much to do with keeping Russia, the Soviet Union and the U.S. from coming to grips with each other. It was the kind of communication they our presidents had with the Soviet Union through Dobrynin who told each side what they need to hear to keep them from each other's throats. I'll be damned if two minutes later, you rarely get anybody on the phone in those days when you tried because the system wouldn't work, and the phone books, but I'll be damned if in two minutes they didn't have Anatoly Dobrynin on the phone.

Q: By that time Dobrynin had moved. He was part of the Politburo at that time.

STRAUSS: Yes he moved back. He had given up his ambassadorship to this country. He was very close to the government but not in it. I said, "Anatoly," and he started laughing, sort of chuckled the way he did. "I thought I would hear from you, and I am glad to hear from you. What can I do for you?" I said, "Anatoly, I have got to tell our government, give our government some advice on how to play this thing. You know, I don't have to tell you, I am going to have to get that good advice based on other people's judgment better than mine. I would like to know what you think I ought to do." He said, "Bob, the best thing to do is do nothing. I think in 48

hours this coup will all be over. It has no leadership. What little leadership it has, they are petrified and drugged.” He just was very critical of the whole thing. He said, “I think the best thing you can do is nothing.” That made more sense to me than anything. I went up and told Jim Collins that. He said, “I think he is exactly right.” That is what we did. I called and talked to Jim Baker as I recall. It could have been Brent Scowcroft. I think Baker had gone back out on his vacation, maybe he hadn’t. Anyway I called either Baker or Scowcroft or both. I remember talking to Scowcroft. I had a long relationship already, and gave him that advice, the best thing to do is nothing. He approved course B. The best advice I could give him, don’t say anything; don’t do anything. Let it play out.

Q: Well this is like the three ton elephant. If you start tramping around you often do more harm than good.

STRAUSS: Oh yes, no question about it.

Q: I would like to go back just a bit. When you got together, I mean here is a coup. You go to the White house. What was the impression? What was the mood and the analysis that you were getting from the people in the White House about what the hell was happening and what did this mean?

STRAUSS: They obviously were terribly concerned about it, and the best advice they had was that these people simply despised Gorbachev and his reforms, and would do their utmost to get rid of him. But they had serious doubts that they would end up successful, be a successful coup. As a matter of fact, that very day while we were talking, a group of people were going down and thought they could get access to Gorbachev to talk with him, people representing various institutions in the government including several ambassadors, a couple of ambassadors from foreign countries. I was to go. I hadn’t been there, but I was on their list to fly down and see him. Jim Collins was to go, my deputy in my place. But there was - consternation is not a strong enough term. There was no panic. George Bush was very calm about it, very cool about it.

Q: Did you get the feeling that this was a, I mean obviously you knew most of the players, but did you have the feeling that here was a, in foreign affairs here was a White House with a president that really understood situations, when to let go and when not to. I mean you know, in other words, a White House that was comfortable with the crisis.

STRAUSS: Yes, I guess I would agree, that is right.

Q: I don’t want to put words in your mouth.

STRAUSS: I think that is right. I think George Bush was, generally speaking, comfortable. You see, this was the second year of his presidency and going into his third year really. He was comfortable, and he had good people. Jim Baker he had tremendous confidence in. They both had confidence in Larry Eagleburger, the Secretary of State and the deputy secretary respectively. Brent Scowcroft had a world of experience and sophistication. So he had a first rate team at that time.

Q: Well now, during this time, I mean this is before you went out. There had been people in the White House, kind of within the staff who tended to put their money on Gorbachev and in doing so, this is a staff problem often sort of denigrating Yeltsin and all that. Were you picking up any of this?

STRAUSS: No question there was a great deal of that there. There were people in the Bush administration at the highest levels who did not want him to have anything to do with Boris Yeltsin. As a matter of fact after I was appointed, and before I served, went over to start my service, Yeltsin came to town. They didn't want him to see the president. They were concerned it would send Gorbachev. As a matter of fact Yeltsin couldn't even get in to, he was going in a space bowl in Houston. They couldn't get him permission to do that. You could drive in off the highway. If he had just driven in off the highway and not asked, he would have been fine, but he asked, and they turned him down. I had to call Brent Scowcroft. He said, "I'll take care of that. That is dumb." He arranged for it. So that was the time...

Q: I mean this often picks up in a lower level. Policy can sometimes be affected by people who are just closing doors and all that.

STRAUSS: Oh, not sometimes; frequently I would say, more often than that sometimes, no question about that. There was a negative reaction to Yeltsin from top to bottom, just sort of a left wing radical. You remember there was the press saying at the time, they began to say that Bush was staying with Gorbachev too long because Gorbachev is already beginning to get in trouble. Just about the time I arrived Gorbachev was getting into trouble, so it was just beginning that. There was no big story yet.

Q: Were you picking up before you went out there, was anybody at the State Department or National Security Council saying power may be moving you know. Don't discount Yeltsin.

STRAUSS: Yes of course that was there, but people thought Gorbachev was a lot more secure than Gorbachev was is a better way of putting it. And Gorbachev was not as secure as he thought he was. Yeltsin was a major player already. What had gone on after that, I think he had not shortly after he became president of Russia. He may have been already.

Q: Just put this, in the Soviet Union there were presidents of the various republics. Russia of course was the major republic.

STRAUSS: The major republic. Yeltsin and Gorbachev at that time still on the surface still had some semblance of cordial relationship, but it deteriorated quickly. Keep in mind I am talking about August. By the end of the year on Christmas Day, Gorbachev gave up his job. Yeltsin pushed him out of his job is a better way of putting it.

Q: Well Yeltsin had, I mean when you got there at the embassy you were finding a different mood than say in Washington about this Yeltsin-Gorbachev power relationship, because Yeltsin by the time you arrived had already stood up on top of a tank and said no. I mean...

STRAUSS: Yeltsin was the popular figure in the country, no question about that. An interesting

thing happened about that. I guess it was about my third day there or fourth day there. They had a big memorial service for three young men who had been killed in the coup. One of them was Russian Orthodox; one was, I think, Baptist, and one was Jewish. They had people from three different faiths there at this big memorial service. When I went over there, Collins didn't go with me. But Jim Billington of the Library of Congress happened to be in town, and he went along with me.

Q: Quite a scholar in Russian culture.

STRAUSS: Great scholar, yes, and was very helpful in what to say when we had a chance. When we got there, there must have been, hell I don't know how many hundred thousand people. Biggest crowd I have ever seen. I would have estimated a quarter of a million people they had in this big place. They had all the ambassadors from various countries who were going to meet and sit together during this service to show their support for Gorbachev, who had been out of captivity now two days. When Billington and Vera and I and the security guys started walking toward where the ambassadors were supposed to meet, there was something way over towards the edge of part of that crowd, and I turned behind and I looked around. I saw a flat bed truck with some type of microphone on top of it. Just a flat bed truck out there, that was the stage. I said to Vera, "Vera I think that is the stage. I bet you that is where things are going to take place. I don't want to go over there and sit in the bleachers. The action is going to be up on that truck." I told the security people, "Let's go over there." I turned to some of the ambassadors and said, "Do you want to go with me?" The Italian ambassador said he would like to go. So he and I and I think Billington went with us, I am not certain. But we all went over towards that flat bed truck. We got within 50 yards of it, and there were ropes. The security people said, "These are ropes here, Mr. Ambassador." I said, "Well lift the damn rope up and let's go under it, or push it down and let's get over it." I turned to Vera and said, "Vera, this is just like a Democratic convention. Everybody is in charge, and nobody is in charge, so if you act like you are in charge, you will be in charge." She laughed. Of course I was exactly right, and we then got right up to the edge of the truck. There were a lot of security people there and heavier ropes. We had the same discussion. I said, "Lift them up and go on." So we did. When I got to the end of that flat bed truck, the whole Russian power establishment, what little there was left of it was back there. The first person I saw, one of the persons was Gorbachev. I went over to greet him, and he greeted me. Very warm, and he said he was glad I was there, that he had been expecting me and was glad I showed up. I said, "Well so am I. Who is going to speak here today, Mr. President?" He said, "Well, I am going to speak. The mayor is going to speak, and each member of the clergy is going to speak for two minutes. It will just be a 40 minute program," something like that. Less than an hour program. I said, "Well I would like to speak. I have a message from President Bush" He looked kind of stunned and kind of said no. I said, "Mr. President, let me tell you what is going on in this world and in your country. People are wondering about you, what is going to happen to you, senior people having just attempted a coup. Nothing could be as important to you as having a representative of the President of the United States stand up and give you his support for you as President of the Soviet Union." His eyes lit up just as if a light went on. He said, "You will speak just before me." I said, "Thank you. President Bush would like that. He wanted to show you his support and the world his support." So before a couple of more minutes had passed down came a kind of a rope ladder. I found myself helping the clergy one by one get up and down on the ladder and helping this one up and that one down. I laughed and said, "Vera it is just another, I

told you about the Democratic convention. You never know what is going to happen next.” After a half an hour or so, less than that, I spoke. I had a guy Hopkins who was my interpreter. He said he was a nervous wreck. He didn’t have time to prepare for this, but we had it all written out. Collins had it prepared for me before I left the embassy. I had marked it up some as we drove over, so it was a fairly scratchy three minute remarks is all it was. Three or four minutes. But I remember getting up and looking over that crowd and thinking hell his crowd is three or four times bigger than I have seen in Times Square during the Democratic convention. We got through it, and it was played over and over on CNN and other networks around the world. It was very meaningful to Gorbachev. The White House was tickled to death. I talked to Brent Scowcroft. I don’t think I talked to the President then. They were delighted that we showed this U.S. support. So my ambassadorship was launched in a very positive way.

Q: I wonder if something here, I wonder if you could talk a little about your working relationship with Vera. She is here today, and here I think it should be for the record.

STRAUSS: Yes, I thought we covered this earlier.

Q: I think maybe we have.

STRAUSS: Well, let’s do it anyway. It will be covered twice. When I took over, became treasurer of the Democratic National Committee in Washington in 1970, it was a mess. Fred Harris had been chairman and had no discipline, none, and the staff had none. It was a shambles. They were poorly trained. They were nice people. Some of them were and some of them weren’t, but it was obvious we had to get rid of a lot and better utilize and order what was there. About the second or third day I was there, this lovely woman whose name is Louise Roberts, had been Fred Harris’ secretary I think, or she had been with Pat O’Connor who was treasurer, his secretary. She was my secretary and I said, “Louise, who is that woman on the switchboard out there? She is the only person out here I have talked to that has any sense.” Louise came back in a few minutes and said, “Her name is Vera Murray. She is a temporary employee here; she is filling in.” I asked her to come back. I said, “Miss Murray, I need to talk to several hundred people in the next weeks, important people, difficult to reach. I need someone who knows how to talk on the telephone. You are the only one I have seen around here that looks to me like you have a talent for that. How would you like to come back here and work for me?” She sort of in a suspicious way said, “Well what would be expected of me.” That was about the time we had the scandals with secretaries who couldn’t type. She said, “You know, I am not a secretary. I don’t take shorthand. I don’t type.” I said, “You won’t be expected to. It is probably not what you suspect would be expected of you. I would expect you to talk to people for me and get me in touch with them in a professional way.” I said, “Why don’t you try it for a few days and let’s see if it works out.” She said, “Well, that is fair enough. I can do that.” Well then it was a few days job, and it is 30 odd years and we are still together, been everywhere together.

Q: Well now, when you got to the embassy, who did you find were the major players from your point of view in support and all at the embassy?

STRAUSS: Well, Jim Collins, my deputy, was in a different class than any of the rest of them. There was nobody in his class. I don’t remember the other’s names. There were staff people

around there. If I took time I could dig them out. They were, there was a fellow named Ken Yalowitz I remember who went over and ended up being ambassador to one of the smaller republics after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Several of the fellows were very able. I had a lot of talented and able people around there. So we add names. We had a very substantial CIA operation there that kept to itself that we were responsible for.

Q: Talking about this, I mean obviously this is an unclassified entry, but various ambassadors have had various relations with the station as the CIA establishment is called abroad. In general terms how did you find your support there and its performance?

STRAUSS: Well I was unable to really pass judgment on their competence because I didn't have an opportunity to grade them carefully. I thought that they were fairly good. I never had tremendous confidence in them. I used to go back in their shop they had there, the offices they had in their place. I did it frequently and used to tell them the telephone system was so poor around there, they had a better telephone system... They were nice people. We didn't really monitor them. I got along with them fine, but they didn't ask for anything they shouldn't have, and I didn't volunteer anything I shouldn't have.

Q: I am just wondering, you are looking at this when you arrived there, was there a sense of God, I mean this whole structure that we have dealt with for the past 50 years or so was coming apart, or was this looked upon as well this is one of these glitches, and we are going to end up coming back to sort of the old Soviet-American relationship?

STRAUSS: I don't think there was any question in anybody's mind that it was going to be very tough to hold the Soviet Union together. There was a general feeling that Gorbachev's time was limited. There was criticism in this country that Bush was staying with Gorbachev too long, too close to him and trying to conduct personal diplomacy instead of nation diplomacy. Those were the kinds of things that were going around. I guess I saw Gorbachev every couple of days, which was amazing. No other ambassador did. I did for two reasons. The primary reason was I represented the United States of America. The second reason was he liked me. We got along; we spoke the same language. I came nowhere near a peer of his, but well a person of stature in his own country, and he treated me that way. As Bush said to me at the time he sent me over there, "I am sending you over there for a particular reason, to establish the kind of relationship, warm with Gorbachev, that he needs - that he talks straight to you and you talk straight to him, and that if he speaks to you, he is speaking to me. That is what I need desperately." He said, "We have had an ambassador over there who is a splendid ambassador, but he will never have the kind of personal relationship with Gorbachev that you will have." Of course he was a fine ambassador who preceded me, a career man who knew more about the Soviet Union in his little finger than I knew in my whole body, but he wasn't a particularly personable fellow in terms of relationship. Jack Matlock was his name. I don't know him very well. Whenever I saw him he was always courteous, and I was too. A disappointment came up. I called him. Of course, I had no background over there. I said, "You know my wife really doesn't know anything about this job. The call is to see what we need to take over there, sheets, food? What are the demands made on her?" He said, "Well my wife is very busy now and doesn't like, she is busy with her photography. I will have her call." I said, "Fine." She didn't call, and I called him again in Russia a few weeks later. He said, "I have talked to her, but she just doesn't have time. She is

tied up with the fact that we are going to be moving in a month or so, and she has a lot of her photography that is taking a big part of her time.” I thought to myself this is the nuttiest thing I have ever heard. She never talked to my wife or me.

Q: It is unfortunate.

STRAUSS: An interesting thing happened on that. Tom Watson who was head of IBM and was ambassador there for awhile...

Q: Yes, he had been put in there by Carter, I think.

STRAUSS: I guess he had, by Carter.

Q: I think the idea was somebody who was a businessman and maybe this is time to do business.

STRAUSS: That is exactly right. But anyway, I got a call one day from his wife that I knew had been with him. He and I talked and then she called and said, “Mr. Strauss, I just returned from Russia recently, and they insisted that we stay at the embassy.” She said, “The sheets were torn, weren’t clean. I hated to put my head on the pillow case. It was ragged and dirty. You better tell your wife not to count on much of anything over there. I think the ambassador’s wife has let this thing run down there terribly. I was sorry we spent the one night there.” So we bought a bunch of sheets and pillow cases, everything you can think of and brought them over. I will never forget that lovely lady.

Q: A question, sort of a broad one, but one of the things I have noticed in my interviews that often is lost, and that is a political, and I emphasize political, not just a career person who maybe sold automobiles but somebody who has been involved in politics can often establish a rapport with leaders, maybe quite diverse systems, but no matter how you do it, the leadership is political. Did you find when you were talking with Gorbachev, and later on that your political experience sort of kicked in?

STRAUSS: I think that is an understatement how important it was. It was important to Gorbachev. With Yeltsin it was of vital importance in helping Yeltsin plan his trips to this country and state visits, things like that. We will get into all that. I probably ought to move into that. A couple of stories. When Helen and I came back a couple of weeks later, after I went home and stayed about a week. The baby was born, and we came back.

Q: Was the baby a boy or a girl?

STRAUSS: A girl, thank you.

Q: I think we should allow you to get on, does it have a name?

STRAUSS: Yes, Natalie Strauss is now, I guess, 11 years old, Breen, and the apple of my eye I might add. She is the youngest of our seven grandchildren. Anyway, when we went over there, Helen concerned about the whole venture. Not frightened but concerned. We got to the Spaso

House, the ambassador's residence. Before we could get across the threshold, one side, the big double doors swung open just like a scene out of an opera. There were about six or eight servants on one side and six or eight staff on the other side. The man greeted us in a tux. He said, "Mr. Ambassador, Mrs. Strauss, may I present the staff." He did, one by one. We still had the luggage and the security guy and everything behind us. We hadn't gotten in there yet. He said, "I am sorry I did this so poorly, but," his name was Angelo, he was Italian, but he said, "Mario," I think his name, "always did this. I have never done it before. That is why I did it so poorly." I said, "You did fine, but I expect to see Mario," whatever his name, something like Mario. "I expect to see him. Everybody told me he had run this house perfectly, and I didn't have to worry about it, and he would know how to do everything." He said, "He is dead." I said, "What happened to him? Dead?" I was stunned. I thought he was going to say he was killed in the coup time. He said, "Well he was playing cards and a man came in and accused him of having an affair with his wife and shot and killed him and the fellow he was playing cards with sitting next to him." Helen's mouth popped open, mine too. I turned to Helen and said, "There are two things. You have got all these worries. There are two things you don't have to worry about here. You don't need to worry about me gambling or running around with a wife." That story cured me about gambling or running around with somebody's wife.

Q: Did when you initially got there, were you looking for a power center or was the idea that we were going to do everything we could to show our support for Gorbachev and all, or were any hedging of the bets looking at Yeltsin?

STRAUSS: None. As a matter of fact, the press was already beginning to say, would be critical of President Bush for being too supportive of President Gorbachev, for staying too long with him. What we were worried about was we didn't have any money to do a damn thing. President Bush was not prepared to go to Congress and ask for a lot of money. They needed help. They needed food badly. They needed other kind of support. We knew we couldn't give it to them, so we had to give them more conversation than cash is the way I used to describe it. That was our biggest problem doing something for them, making the Russian people feel like we were doing more. When we had once sent some food over there, we took the food that was left over from that Mideast Gulf War, all that canned food that had been shipped, was shipped to Russia and Moscow and distributed. We didn't have money to buy foodstuffs.

Q: Why was there this problem? Here we had been spending trillions on defending against the threat of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was beginning to look like maybe it was coming around to being, it had supported us during the Iraq invasion of Kuwait and all. Why all of a sudden was the spigot off, there was no money? What was the problem? How did you see this?

STRAUSS: Well keep in mind this was a Republican administration. They were goosey about the conservative wing of the party thinking they were doing too much for those communists. They weren't prepared to take on a fight to fight for that, and didn't, I might add. Our primary concern did not involve a lot of money. I mean our primary thing we could do for them had to be things that didn't involve a lot of money. We got legislation passed that didn't need much help from me, it did some, but Senator Lugar had enough going for him. The first thing we were interested in more than anything else was getting our hands on and getting control of nuclear weapons that were scattered around in four different republics over there, get them all in Russian

hands, which we were able to do and, interestingly, the Congress were a great help in that. They helped, now we have trouble with them, but then they were our strongest supporters. But that was the climate in which we worked. No one wanted to go to Congress and ask them for anything of any consequence.

Q: Well was the feeling that the conservative wing was so anti communist that they couldn't envisage doing something?

STRAUSS: I don't think that is an overstatement. I think that is the responsive statement. I know President Bush was intimidated to some extent by his right wing as most Republican presidents are, just as the left wing intimidates Democratic presidents. The right wing is structured. They have money and organization and structure. They can crush you. In our party the left wing can drive you crazy. They don't crush you; they buzz around you and sting and end up as I said driving you crazy. They don't have the structure or the organization or the money that the Republican right has.

Q: This would seem to be that ideological cohesiveness.

STRAUSS: No not at all.

Q: During your early days there, were you getting any indications or contacts with the Congress? I am not talking about something beyond the presidency, but I mean this is part of your competence. Excuse me. I want to stop this now, we are really talking about the first few days you were in the Soviet Union at that time. So we will pick it up. I had asked you a question about did you have ties to the political system in the United States? We are talking about Republicans and Democrats, but Congress of trying to get them to come along and understand, Gee things are really happening here and let's not...

STRAUSS: That is a very good point. I came back to this country quite often to go to Congress. I had more credentials, more credibility on both sides of the aisle I think than others in this administration had. A lot of things we were working on getting done, a lot of problems we had been solved for ourselves, I came back and solved it. Whether it was a problem of Representative Snowe or senator this or that, I had those kinds of relationships, and I came back here and lobbied for various things. I forget what particular problem it was. I came back and went before the republican caucus and the democratic caucus. I will never forget when I faced the republican caucus Newt Gingrich came up to me and said, "I think you are right, and I will help you. Anything you need over there, you call me, and I will help you." Now I had doubts about Newt Gingrich, but as far as that went he certainly delivered for me.

Q: I have just one other question I want to put in, a sort of philosophical one. Often a bureaucracy likes things, and diplomacy is particularly bad in this form, likes the status quo. They know how to deal with it. With the fast breaking thing, did you find that people were really getting uncomfortable with things changing in something which we had been used to since the days of Stalin. and I'll leave it at that.

Today is February 26, 2003. Mr. Ambassador, let's talk. First, would you like to talk about dealing with the political establishment in the United States because you know, most of these senators and congressmen had sucked off the teat of anti-communism for years? Russia was a great whipping boy and all this. Was this a problem for you?

STRAUSS: No question the statement you just made is 100% correct. But let me lead into this whole thing by backing up just a bit from the statements I just made about coming back to this country. To put it in proper context, while I considered myself to be more agile and sophisticated than the foreign service when it came to solving political problems in the foreign policy area with the hill, I also had enough sense to know that while I had uniquely splendid skills in that area, I did not have skills in foreign policy generally, and certainly not in Soviet Union affairs. I was hesitant as I think I said earlier in this tape some hours ago that President Bush sent me over there. His argument was, he had two or three arguments when I was hesitant about going initially. One was that he needed someone, when I was telling him I didn't know the issues, he needed someone with a background in Russian affairs. He said, "No, you are wrong. I need someone who for one can establish a real relationship with Gorbachev, because he needs someone on the ground. Most of these things we can help with from here, but the personal relationship I need with Gorbachev, you can establish for me and for this country. That will be your strength. And the fact that you understand the political process, that we won't get anything done over there, we are going to have to have some legislative support. There is no support for it right now to amount to anything." So that was kind of the setting in which I went over there. The truth of the matter is, simply stated is that President Bush was right. I was a non-traditional ambassador to the Soviet Union, and yet all the voids I had and all the negatives I had in that area, I had some unique strengths in areas that he thought needed attention, better attention than he could get with just another diplomat. So that is the setting for all this. I knew that people steeped in U.S.-Russian, U.S.-Soviet affairs wondered how in the hell he could turn it over to a rank amateur, or turn the embassy over to a rank amateur. The answer to that is very simple. He had some priorities where I had unique skills. Furthermore he knew that he could get good help for me. One of the things he did, for example, was assure me when I said that I would need the absolutely best number two man you have got, he said, "I will give you the best we have." That is Jim Collins who succeeded me later on with one person in between as ambassador and probably knows more about those affairs than anybody in the country. So with Jim Collins' help I did pretty well. Collins has in his office now, he has a picture with his hair dark. Now it is about the color of yours which is very grey. When I said, "Collins, is that your high school picture you have there with that dark hair?" He said to me recently his answer was, "No that was my dark hair before I met you, before you arrived in Moscow."

Q: Well I have talked to him and am going to get in contact with him in April. Now, what about this Congress? I mean who were some of the players and what did we want, what did George Bush want out of Congress, and who did you see were the key people you had to deal with and the problem people?

STRAUSS: George Bush knew, he felt like he didn't have any money to spend in that part of the world. As a matter of fact he and Brent Scowcroft who was the National Security Advisor both said to me, "One of the primary reasons for you going over there, Bob, is as a signal that we

really give a damn about this country, because we are not going to be able to prove it with aid. We are not going to have an aid program of any consequence, nor did they really try for one I might add. But he said, "This had to signal people in Europe and around the world. Most of the leaders of the world you have met and done some business with over the years. They know I wouldn't send you over there, and you wouldn't go unless you thought you could do something. This sends the right signal that we care and we are going to be involved with you. I get more out of the signal this sends." I think it was Scowcroft once who said, "We will get more out of the signal by sending you over there and you going if you don't do another damn thing. It will be positive." So this was the kind of climate we were operating. Now keep in mind, my primary concern on the day I went over there was to first help stabilize the Gorbachev government. But even more important was to get our hands on the nukes, and get them gathered up. We had, I must say with practically no help from me, because Nunn and Lugar didn't need it, we had the Nunn and Lugar legislation.

Q: That is Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar.

STRAUSS: Exactly, and their legislation was aimed at getting the money and a program together that would enable us to get our hands on nuclear material scattered in four different countries including Russia and three other Soviet countries. We did that successfully, they did. Sam Nunn and Senator Lugar deserve a lot of credit for that. Jim Baker had a good hand in it, and I helped him, so we all contributed, but the two senators played the leading role.

Q: Well now were there groups within the government, well let's talk about first the legislature, congress, that saw everything saying well these are just communists under a different name. They are trying to snooker us. I mean were there some?

STRAUSS: Yes, there were a lot of them. Some of them were sincere, and some was just politics and thought it played well back home. You have to kick somebody, kick the dog, kick the communists. But generally speaking, Congress went along pretty well. We didn't ask for very much, and I think that is one of the failures, and I am a big fan of George Bush senior as you know, a good friend. But I think one of the things they could have done is they could have asked for more in terms of aid. They really needed aid; they were hungry over there. We didn't do a very good job of putting an aid package together. We put stuff that looked good but really didn't have much substance.

Q: Well I sort of have the feeling that no matter what we did, things were so chaotic at that point in the economic sense. I mean you sort of had the communist leaders running around turning into capitalists, absorbing all the money that came in anywhere and sort of looting essentially the system.

STRAUSS: I don't think there is any question that was done, but I also think that there were a lot of people hungry over there then and we didn't really have an aid program. When I am talking about aid, I am not talking about economic programs needed. There was enough structure there to get to build the kind of economic programs they needed, but in terms of just food, those people were hungry there. It was a terrible time. We could have done more, but I think the times didn't permit President Bush to do much more than he did.

Q: We talked about us, but what about western Europe.

STRAUSS: Germany of course. Germany did more than any of us I suspect. They had their next door neighbor. It was an easier sale for them. They had economic interests that were far bigger than ours at the time. They were doing a lot of business over there. I was always amazed when you would go to a hotel, I might have mentioned this earlier. If you go to a hotel in France, you can register in English or in French, but there is also a line in English that tells you what line to write on. The same thing is true in Italy. But in Russia, when I went to a hotel it was in Russian or in German, no English.

Q: Well you mentioned the Germans had economic interests. Of course one of the charges that is laid on us, I am not sure it is necessarily a bad one, but whatever we do is economically motivated. You as ambassador, did you find yourself driven at all by saying we want to get this concession or open up business here? How much was this a factor?

STRAUSS: It really wasn't a factor then. We were really, every day trying to get through that day without something blowing up. By blowing up I don't mean exploding. A program that we couldn't get started or a program that was started and abandoned. Little things like getting our American school going over there was almost impossible. We finally got it done, but that was just a little simple thing and that was something that we...

Q: Did you find either chaos or obstinacy in the Russian bureaucracy or were they at sort of a standstill. They didn't know what the hell to do and so if you don't know what to do, you don't do anything.

STRAUSS: Well you have to realize there was no rule of law. There was no legal system that amounted to anything. There was no judicial system that amounted to anything. There was no way to enforce a contract to try and do business. It was a terribly difficult time. Nothing we would have done would have helped that in the short run in my judgment. I was talking about aid. I think I told a story earlier about our sending in a lot of food that was left over from the Gulf war. I opened it in front of all the television cameras, peach pie or peach cobbler or something. They expected to see potatoes and beans.

Q: Those meals ready to eat, MREs.

STRAUSS: Yes.

Q: A question I put at the end of our last session that you know in the Department of State or anything, it is a bureaucratic thing and you are used to the way things are. All of a sudden after 50 years or so of dealing with the Soviets all of a sudden the thing is blown apart. How did you find people responding? I mean were they still sort of working on the old assumptions? Did you notice a change around in dealing with this?

STRAUSS: Of course there were dramatic interludes where there were dramatic changes. There was a basic change of communism slipping away. There was a basic change of the whole Soviet

Union disappeared on us. There was a basic change of Gorbachev was destroyed by Yeltsin and we start all over again with new people and new initiatives. So to say it was complicated and messy is an understatement. But with all that going on, we established some good relationships. I don't know whether I mentioned this or not, but I was thinking the other day again about the communication system in this country, and telecom problems we have, the bankruptcies and big companies. I remember getting a call from the chairman of Motorola, I may have told this story.

Q: It doesn't ring a bell.

STRAUSS: He said to me, "Bob, there is," I had known him before. He is a fine man. He said, "I am calling on behalf of our whole industry. There is a communications conference. They are allocating spectrums in a big international conference in Spain that is taking place in Madrid as we speak. The spectrum have been allocated in this conference is not nearly big enough to take care of our needs. Can you help? It had to be done in the next 72 hours. This conference winds up in three days, to turn this around." I said, "Good Lord, I don't even know what you are talking about. I don't understand the issue, but I have people here who will, and I will talk with them and see." I said, "But I can't do this just for Motorola." He said, "No, I don't want you to do that. I want the U.S. to get a big spectrum, a larger spectrum than we have. We need that. Once we get the spectrum assigned to our country, we will fight it out among ourselves as to who gets what allocation out of that. You get us the United States to get the right allocation, a big enough spectrum. That is all you have to be for, not for any one company." I remember going to Yeltsin and taking a fellow with a technical background with me who could explain. I couldn't even explain what I wanted. I told Yeltsin what we needed. He had a spectrum much larger assigned to them, and they hated it. We had one much smaller, and we did need a bigger one, and he could get by better with a smaller one. He didn't understand what I was talking about any more than I did truth is. They sent us to his person, Yeltsin did, and told the fellow to try to help right there. Within two days, they agreed to switch spectrums with us, and Yeltsin personally caused that to take place. So in that sort of thing they were cooperative. Again, that goes back, Bush wanted a personal relationship to get some things done. That was my primary responsibility over there to establish that kind of relationship at the highest levels in his government.

Q: Well you were right there, the coup against Gorbachev had already taken place hadn't it.

STRAUSS: Well it was in process.

Q: You had to rush out there because of that.

STRAUSS: Yes. When I arrived, he was still being held by the coup plotters.

Q: By the time you arrived, was anybody that you were getting from our embassy, were we doing anything to thwart the coup?

STRAUSS: No. We hadn't even said what side we were on. As a matter of fact, the Russians settled that themselves. I think President Bush and his team wisely kept their mouth shut for a few days until we could see what to do. As a matter of fact, I know, I am sure I have told this story in here, but I will repeat it. But I remember arriving, being met by Jim Collins. As a matter

of fact he drove me to his residence I think it was. No I know it wasn't his house, the ambassador's residence. I don't think it was even the main embassy, but whatever it was, when I arrived and walked in that room, Gorbachev was being held by the plotters. Jim Collins said to me, "I have gotten the staff together. We need to make up our mind. We need to give them some guidance. What do we do?" I said, I wondered to myself now, of all the people in the world to be picked to decide what our country is going to do, I am maybe one of the worst. I said to Jim Collins, "See if somebody can get Dobrynin on the phone." I knew Dobrynin back in this country, had dinner at the Russian embassy many times. He and I had become friends. The Russian telephone system never works. There are no phone booths. There weren't then. If you got through it was a miracle and it was usually a wrong number. I'll be damned if the Lord didn't help because in 30 seconds this young aide out there came back and said, "Ambassador Dobrynin is on the phone, Mr. Ambassador."

Q: He at that time was part of the politburo wasn't he?

STRAUSS: Yes, he had come back. I said, "Anatoly, Bob Strauss." He laughed. He didn't laugh, he chuckled, and said, "I have been expecting to hear from you where are you?" I said, "I am right here in Moscow, and I want to tell you that I have just arrived within the hour. My people and my government want to know what is going on and what to do, any recommendations we have at the embassy. It is rather strange for me to be calling on a Russian to help make this decision but I need you. What should we do?" He said, "I will tell you what you should do, Bob. Do nothing. I am privy to some things taking place, and I think if you can keep from saying anything and doing anything for 48 hours, this might blow over. These are irresponsible people who don't really know what they are doing that have our President." I said, "Thank you, Anatoly, that makes sense to me." I turned around to Collins and told him what it was, Anatoly said do nothing. Collins thought that was very good advice too. That is what we reported to Washington. That again is personal diplomacy, personal relationships.

Q: Which is very important at a critical time. I have to say that the Bush administration showed a great deal of restraint. At the fall of the Berlin Wall, George Bush didn't end up dancing on the ruins of it and all, which is hard because normally the White House wants to crow. We did this and all that which is always counterproductive in foreign relations. It is hard in a way to control and discipline your staff to keep them from running around and saying I caused the fall of the Soviet Union etc.

STRAUSS: As we are speaking, you and I today, in late February the Iraqi situation is coming to a total boil now. I wish we had, I would be more comfortable if we had Bush senior instead of Bush junior. Now there are things Bush junior can do I am sure better than his father can do, but when it comes to the world possibly going up in flames, I would like to have the cool, calm, cautious Bush senior playing the hand for our country.

Q: Well now back to, when Gorbachev came back shortly thereafter, the coup went down. you were sort of sent over at the time to establish good relations with Gorbachev. What was the feeling that you were getting from the people in your own sense? That Gorbachev was a finished figure or were you kind of waiting for him to come back?

STRAUSS: I think people thought generally that Gorbachev was in the twilight. By that I mean maybe he had two years or maybe three years, maybe a year. I don't think anyone dreamt that his fall would come as quick as it did. There is no question that that is what was thought. I thought he would last longer than he did, as did my administration that I was working for, the Republican administration. I remember when I spoke before this large crowd of people at the memorial service there two or three days after. I think we have discussed that already. I remember, I think I have it in our notes here. If not just put it in. When I said to President Gorbachev when he greeted me behind that sound truck or that truck they were using for a platform there. I remember when I said, "I would like to speak; I have a message from the President of the United States." He said, "You speak? Why would you speak?" I said, "Mr. President, I can't think of anything more important to you and the people of the Soviet Union and the world than a message to you delivered to you by your ambassador, by Bush's ambassador, a message from President Bush saying that the United States is behind you. That would be the thrust of my remarks." You could see a light turn on in Gorbachev's confused head then because he was terribly confused still from the captivity. I guess it was the next day or two days after that. You could see in his eyes a light going on. He said, "You will speak right before me." So that was the climate there. We really were worried about getting him. We wanted to be sure that he got re-established as head of that government. That was the first concern. But did he think he was going to last forever, no. Did we think we would lose him in six months, no.

Q: As a political observer, one reason why often professional politicians or people who are quasi professional - I don't know what you would call yourself - are better observers and able to deal with politicians better than say foreign service people who you know, this isn't their world. They report on it, but were you watching, looking at signs of change in the Russian system. Gorbachev is back; Yeltsin had performed splendidly at the time of the coup. How were you observing this power business, and what did it hold for us?

STRAUSS: You could see that Yeltsin, it was a very hard hand to play. Keep in mind that two months before this, two or three months before this at the most...

President Bush strolled in the office informally, preplanned, of course, where he could shake hands with Yeltsin, then head of the Republic of Russia, not head of the Soviet Union of course, and greet him but not be caught with him. The press reported he went to the White House and saw Scowcroft, not that he went to the White House and had a visit with the President. President Bush, obviously properly, was concerned that if he met with him it sent a wrong signal to Yeltsin, to Gorbachev, because they were already jockeying for position. This is long before the coup. After the coup that jockeying became, instead of nuance, became open. Yeltsin started pushing and pushing for power. President Bush, of course, was concerned about that, his people were. They hadn't really established a relationship with Yeltsin. Jim Baker did a good job when he first went over and dealt with him the first time. He was Secretary of State when he went over. Yeltsin liked him almost from the get go. Yeltsin heard good things about Jim Baker, I believe, because I saw Yeltsin regularly, and it didn't take Baker long to show that he was even better than I was suggesting to Yeltsin. He handled it extremely well.

Q: How, I mean you arrived; you already talked to Gorbachev. We are concerned about the Yeltsin-Gorbachev relationship. Gorbachev was sort of our boy you might say. But when you

arrived, how did you establish relations with Yeltsin, and how did that develop?

STRAUSS: Very loosely and very casually. I did not really have a relationship of any consequence with Yeltsin until he came to authority. I couldn't do that. We couldn't get involved in that game going on between the two of them, so the only thing I could do is nod in Yeltsin's direction from time to time. I was openly, and we were openly pro Gorbachev knowing that his days were limited. Keep in mind this coup was in August, and by Christmas of that same year Gorbachev had resigned. The new Soviet Union was in the process of breaking up.

Q: Well now, what were you getting from your staff, from Collins and others in the political section and all about where things are going when you arrived there. I mean were we beginning to take another look at Yeltsin, because you know, there had been this thing particularly from that Yeltsin visit of somehow if Gorbachev was our guy, Yeltsin was a drunkard.

STRAUSS: Radical.

Q: All this. I mean it was denigrating.

STRAUSS: I think erratic is a perfect term.

Q: So were we beginning You know, your staff saying hey we had better look at this guy.

STRAUSS: They of course, were looking at him before I got there. There was a big question about Yeltsin, you are exactly right. I used the term erratic. I think I told the story about Yeltsin visiting in the Seaview Hotel. Duane Andrews arranged for him to occupy one of his suites in that hotel. It turned out to be his daughter's suite who was not there using it. Yeltsin got drunk that night and went out in the water swimming at midnight the first night he was there and got a little publicity around, more than we wanted, so he was a difficult fellow to handle. That was before he came to power, before Gorbachev went out of power.

Q: Well I mean during this time August through December, what were you doing. I mean was there essentially a power vacuum at that time?

STRAUSS: No, Gorbachev, to all intents and purposes, he was the head of the Soviet Union. Now he was shaky, but he had me take the head of Kazakhstan who was a Gorbachev man. He wasn't a Yeltsin man. He later became a Yeltsin person, but many of the other presidents of those various republics were Gorbachev people. Some of them were beginning to be Yeltsin people. Some were beginning more and more to give up on Gorbachev as being the guy who could pull it off.

Q: During this Gorbachev period, you mentioned we were very concerned about disarming nuclear weapons in, actually at that point it was still the Soviet Union.

STRAUSS: Exactly.

Q: But still these were...

STRAUSS: They controlled their own nukes. They had their own nuclear programs in these separate republics.

Q: I mean these missiles were distributed as we had distributed ours through the states.

STRAUSS: Exactly.

Q: But these were under government, I mean these places as the Soviet Union began to fall apart, these elements within the Soviet system turning into independent states.

STRAUSS: That is correct.

Q: Now were you seeing Gorbachev about saying while there was still the Soviet Union in existence, were you seeing him about the disarmament?

STRAUSS: Yes, and keep in mind, more important than me seeing him was Jim Baker was spending a lot of time over there. It was far more impressive to have the Secretary of State making demands than the ambassador who was delivering messages from the Secretary of State, the head of our government. Baker had his hands all over that, and Yeltsin liked Baker as Gorbachev liked Baker. But the minute Gorbachev went, the pressure in the Soviet Union disintegrated.

Q: I think it was December.

STRAUSS: It was Christmas Day.

Q: On Christmas Day the Russian flag went up over the Kremlin.

STRAUSS: That's right, and at that time, I won't describe it as a mad scramble, but there was a great deal of additional intensity that went into the program that Jim Baker was leading. I went as ambassador assisting in getting his hands on those units and also getting Yeltsin to commit, which he did. He was very strong in his commitment. Jim Baker was very impressed as was George Bush with what he produced.

Q: Did you find that from Yeltsin on this issue, was he as concerned as we were about the proliferation, or was this trying to be nice to the United States during this?

STRAUSS: Oh I think he was some of both. Yeltsin knew he needed the United States. Yeltsin gave a firm commitment to Jim Baker that he had control and would keep control. I guess Baker relied on that commitment. He couldn't do anything but rely on it; it was the best thing he had was Yeltsin's commitment. I must say that to be sure there was no misunderstanding, Yeltsin, as Gorbachev before him, delivered on that commitment in terms of nukes, nuclear programs. They were gathered up properly. It took many trips by people back in Washington and efforts by me and others in our embassy, but we got it done.

Q: Were you seeing as this Gorbachev-Yeltsin thing, rivalry went and it was beginning to move over toward Yeltsin. Were you seeing a shift in the Soviet bureaucracy?

STRAUSS: Oh, sure.

Q: Who was the foreign minister at the time? Was it still Shevardnadze?

STRAUSS: No, Shevardnadze was gone. He stayed in all the way, I will think of his name in just a minute. He still comes over to this country all the time. He was the foreign minister is what he was. He was Baker's counterpart. He was most cooperative, very pro American by the way.

Q: Were you seeing a change in attitude in our embassy or staff there? This is too serious to play the Cold War business and let's get...

STRAUSS: I think what you saw there is what you see in any bureaucracy. There is a certain odor that comes before the death, and the odor was in his final year, final months. As a matter of fact, I was back in the States to celebrate Christmas with my family on the day Gorbachev left office and Yeltsin came in. I never would have left my post out there if we had had any notion that that was going to happen. As a matter of fact, very few of the heads of the republics knew it was going to happen. But it did.

Q: What was the sounding that you were getting about within Russia, well the Soviet Union at that time, about Yeltsin? Were there lots of reservations about nomenklatura about, because we mentioned this erratic business.

STRAUSS: He was a wild card as far as many of them were concerned. Keep in mind, he had a personality; he had an image of being a great reformer, so he had a lot of positive things about him as well as the negative aspect of somewhat erratic behavior. He was relentless in his drive for power. When he got power he used it. I say used it, that is a big term, but he liked that power and he had no hesitance about making decisions. He was a good decision maker. Gorbachev was far more a talker in many ways. I was and am a great admirer of him. He was no longer effective, let me say that, as far as the Russian people were concerned. So, though people had a question mark about Yeltsin, they were ready for a change. When things are terrible, you are always ready for a change. Anything would be better than what is going on.

Q: How did you sort of open up your initial contact with Yeltsin? I am talking about after December, he is in power. What were you getting from George Bush, Jim Baker about how to deal with him?

STRAUSS: They were cautious, but they knew they had to establish a relationship in a hurry, so I left my holiday in the States and went back to Moscow. I don't remember the details, but I remember the first thing I did was let Yeltsin's office know I wanted to come in and see him. Within no time it was granted. I had a lucky thing there I may have explained to you earlier in this - I think I did - that he came to this country shortly after I was appointed but long before I was confirmed, and so things he did, I was included in the things he was doing and got to know him pretty well. By pretty well, sitting next to him at two or three dinners and talking and

relating to him as he related to me. I think I told you earlier in this he was trying to get into the Space Center in Houston. I had to call Brent Scowcroft. He was anxious to see it. Scowcroft was National Security Advisor. I called General Scowcroft and told him that it was the craziest thing in the world, a stranger could walk off the street and go in there, no security clearance of any kind required. We had this Russian who someday could be head of that government. That was before he became head of that government, but he was president of Russia, and he couldn't get into that program. Scowcroft said, "I'll take care of it right now," and he did. So that was a big thing in Yeltsin's mind that I had gotten that thing done. He was waiting, and almost as he brought up the problem, it was solved. He also was friendly with, he had come to know Dwayne Andreas.

Q: Dwayne Andreas being?

STRAUSS: At the time he was chairman of the company Archer Daniels Midland. They did a lot of business with Russia. He was reasonably well known in Russia. He was close to and friendly with them. When Yeltsin came to this country, I don't know, how he got in touch with Andreas or who recommended him, but Andreas, my recollection is, loaned him an Archer Daniels Midland plane to get him around. This is before he came into power, and Andreas provided him an apartment where he stayed for a few days at the Seaview Hotel in Florida. I went down and saw him there. So by the time he came to power, he knew Bob Strauss was a friend of friends of his and that sort of thing. When I called to see him of course the American ambassador is going to get to see him anyway. I could have been anybody, but I had the advantage of having a bit of a personal relationship with him. It grew. He was extremely fond of me by the time I left and I was of him.

Q: How did you find, you know, did he grasp the complexities of the situation? In other words you raise issues?

STRAUSS: Yes, he was very bright. He was very good at that, he really was. He was a good listener as well as a good talker. He had good people around him. He was a dynamic figure then. He was far more dynamic, I guess, at that time than Gorbachev who was worn out. People were tired of him. This is a new face, and this was the man who had saved the country from this coup. Remember the pictures of him standing on this tank and all this stuff. So he had an image of, a hero's image when he came into office. He knew how to take advantage of that.

Q: When you were there, how about the KGB? How did they, I mean, the KGB was the bête noire of the American embassy, provocations, enticements, you know the whole thing? I mean were you seeing a change?

STRAUSS: Yes and no. After came in, we saw the more dramatic change when he replaced a bunch of the older KGB types. There was a young reformer that came in with him whose name I forget, but he reminded me of a Midwestern governor in our country. He looked like it. He could have been governor of Indiana or Michigan, that sort of thing. He was a tremendous strength in reforming. I remember him saying to me after he and I came to know each other, talk some. I had fellow named Bill Reardon who was a CIA head for that whole part of the world. He was in an office in Germany. Bill Reardon, he is still around. He is not active in the CIA, but he was one of

the colorful figures. When he came to visit, I introduced him to the head of the KGB. Bill said to me, "They really are trying to reform this agency to some extent, but you know, God only knows what is in those files, and I don't know when we will ever get to see them." Interestingly, that fellow who was head of the KGB, one day, called me to come over. He said that he decided he had permission of his government to turn over all the information on the wiretaps that they had planted while the building was being built - a six story building was being built on our land there for our embassy to occupy. He brought out what looked like two ordinary suitcases, old time suitcases. In them there must have been 30 different listening devices. In the other package were maps going everywhere. Every single one of those listening devices was placed in the concrete of the building we were building there by the Russian workers. They were KGB and were planting those things all over. I was stunned. I didn't know whether to take it or not. I came back and called Larry Eagleburger the Deputy Secretary of State. I said, "Larry," and I relayed this story to him. I said, "It seems to me I ought to take them," but I didn't want to take them until I got permission. He said, "Hell I don't know what to do. It seems to me we are better off taking them than not taking them." I told him that is the way it seems to me but I didn't want to get out of line here. So I called this fellow back. I can't think of his name, and told him I would be over the next day and pick it up. We picked up the two big boxes, big suitcases full of material. He invited me out to his dacha with my wife, and he had Shevardnadze and their wives. He said to me, "What did you think of the material we gave you yesterday." I said, "I was stunned by it, but I wasn't surprised that you had it, but I was stunned at what you did." He said, "We are going to turn this around, and that is a real demonstration of our efforts." I came back and went public with that.

Q: I remember it was in the paper. To me it was a great indicator things were changing. It is always hard to turn, as I mentioned earlier on, a bureaucracy does not respond well to sudden change.

STRAUSS: Exactly, and I was trying when I went public with that, it was because I wanted the American people to see. That was something they could really see instead of a theory that things are changing. This was something very constructive they could see and hold in your hand. I gave a speech at the press club when I was back on a trip. I told that story. That is when it got the publicity.

Q: What about, speaking of the embassy, where were you, I mean for years there had been this conflict over we knew we built a new embassy and we were sure the thing was bugged. We were talking about destroying it and all this. Did you have to wrestle with this problem?

STRAUSS: Constantly. We had trouble, you know, we were convinced that all those bugs were dead. They only last so long. We wanted to use the building. People in the Congress didn't want us to; there was a lot of objection to our using it. It was just sitting there wasting, going to rot and ruin, and all that money. As a matter of fact the head of the KGB, the new reformer said to me, "This will save your country many millions of dollars. You don't have to rebuild a building; you can use it. Here is a map of where all the bugs are placed. It will save you 50 million dollars. You are generous with our country, we can at least do this." So that was sort of the theme of that from the head of the KGB. I might add, they fired him about three months later. Somebody over there changed their mind I guess about him being so open. He had done it with Gorbachev's

absolute approval.

Q: Well now, speaking of the embassy and running it, as an old hand who served five years in Yugoslavia, a communist country, what was the situation with what we would call foreign service nationals? In other words citizens of the country that worked in the embassy. These are usually a great strength even in a communist country. At one point we were replacing them with Americans. You know, to a professional foreign service officer it sounded like nonsense. It sounded like political correctness or something.

STRAUSS: It was Congressional demands. We couldn't employ locals. It cost us a tremendous amount of money to bring an American worker who worked for Bechtel Corporation, for Bechtel to bring a hundred workers over to work on our projects. The expense of that was 20-1 over the expense of using the Russians. One of the things we accomplished while I was there was I testified before the senate and house committees that we ought to reverse that policy. The government was willing, the executive branch was willing to do it finally, but the congressional committees were opposed to it. So we finally turned them around and we got permission to use in various non sensitive posts so to speak, non sensitive jobs, Russian nationals instead of imported Americans. It was a big savings of money, but I must tell you that within a month of the time that those Russians started taking the place of our Americans, the KGB people were pushing them to provide information. They were concerned what should they do. They were frightened. So it was an unpleasant situation.

Q: I mean those who have served in communist countries understand this, and you learn to live with this. I mean these are good solid contacts within the country who can give you ideas. They are not all that much tool. I mean these are ordinary citizens who understand the situation and have a certain loyalty obviously to their country, but also to their job. It is a strength rather than a weakness as long as you understand that you have got to be careful.

STRAUSS: Extremely careful. I can understand why there was hesitancy to let us use Russian nationals, but I must tell you the minute we started using them, and we were using them to mow lawns and keep the outside of buildings painted and things like that, but as I said earlier, within 30 or 60 days of them coming to work, the parties were squeezing these people over there for information. Happily they didn't have any. Several of them reported those efforts. They liked their jobs as you just mentioned. They didn't want to be involved in that kind of business. But we got it done; it was worthwhile, and keep in mind, we had tremendous budgetary problems. I think we had better quit.

Q: All right. We are going to stop at this point. A couple of questions I would like to ask, we are talking on the security side. I would like to ask you about during the time you were in the Soviet Union/Russia, did the KGB start picking up these provocations, tracking, following, you know generally harassing? I am talking about the Americans particularly, and our ability to get around and all that. We will talk about that. Also, could you talk about the decision that was made because of financial things that really fell at Secretary Baker's level, not to increase our State Department budget to take care of all these new embassies that we were establishing. To somebody like myself, this seemed like a horrible situation. Could we talk about that? And then we will talk about the post December when the...

STRAUSS: '91-'92 Christmas.

Q: Okay, then we will talk about what happened, issues you were dealing with and all that.

Today is March 5, 2003. Let's start with the KGB. You have already mentioned the bugging of the embassy and being given that portfolio full of stuff. What about, you know, you had KGB operatives, they had been doing this for 50 years, in a relatively weak government. I find it very difficult to think that they would all of a sudden turn into nice guys as far as we are concerned. In your experience, how were they treating American diplomats and others? Were you running across provocations? I mean was it still sort of the old game going on by reflex or by intent.

STRAUSS: It was dying off, but very slowly. For example, I came back here and met with some Congressmen and Senators to get them to get over this idea that we could not employ foreign nationals in our embassy for security reasons. Our people in our embassy worked out a plan where we would use Russians for certain tasks, repairing windows, mowing lawns, painting houses, all within the compound, various types of work that didn't put them in touch with anything related to security. The last person I needed to get was Senator Snowe.

Q: This was Olympia Snowe of Maine.

STRAUSS: Yes. And she was helpful once I came back and talked with her. Her committee had been blocking anything on this, but she was exceedingly constructive. She promptly got on it and helped us work it out. So we then started, let me back up and say bringing these Americans over there to work on these tasks cost a fortune. First you had to pay them six times as much or ten times as much as you would pay a Russian. You had their transportation; you had their housing, all that. So it was a major budgetary item if we could save it. So we replaced maybe 50 people which is big money when you do it.

Q: Oh, yes. You consider I can remember way back, you consider \$30,000 just to pay somebody to be overseas.

STRAUSS: Heck, I think it cost \$100,000 for a person over there.

Q: Yes, well I was going way back.

STRAUSS: So we had, I guess, maybe 30 or 40, maybe less, Russians working within the embassy compound. We cleared them security wise the best we could. We had good people. They did good work. It hadn't been going on for about three or four months until we began to get information that the Russian security people were contacting them and trying to get this information, that information, the other information. Interestingly, two of those people, I don't know how many were contacted, but two of them came and brought us identical stories. They didn't want to lose those jobs. They committed to something and they wanted to fulfill their commitment. We had a heck of a time with that, but stayed on top of it, and I think we finally

worked it out pretty well. Now there are a great many of the Russians working within the compound, and very successfully so.

Q: Well what about, it used to be on field trips or something we were concerned about officers, you had to have two going out so the blond provocateur and lady did not approach them at night and that sort of thing. Was that still going on?

STRAUSS: I don't think we had that going on. I don't know that the CIA, I don't know what their rules were or that they were in line. They were housed with the ambassador in the same building and I was responsible for them, but I didn't set their rules. They set that within their organization.

Q: Was the chief of station in Moscow announced?

STRAUSS: No he wasn't. His identity was theoretically undisclosed.

Q: Because often it just makes it simpler.

STRAUSS: They just called him. They didn't know he was an embassy employee.

Q: Were you finding say relations with the state security service beginning to change?

STRAUSS: Oh it changed a great deal. As a matter of fact, I have a picture in the next room of Bob Gates when he was head of the CIA meeting with Boris and the head of the KGB and others around a conference table. That was '92. Boris was in that picture. We had it when I, I think I mentioned earlier when the KGB turned over to me this, the new reformer that had turned over to me this all these two bags copies of where all the things were planted in our building. was trying his best to be helpful there. I remember he said to me, "I know it is going to cost you \$75 million. You do your best to give us financial support and other things which we desperately need. Maybe we saved you a little money if we give you this and you can use that building rather than tearing it down." I think they did tear down must of it eventually, but they still saved several floors of it they were able to use. He thought he was making it easier for us to use that building instead of having to build a new one.

Q: Well, of course, you are running across the difference... There is the political side, and then there is the professional spy thing. Professional spies spy. The political types come in and go in both our countries, but the professional spies stay on and they keep doing their thing.

STRAUSS: Also in both of our countries. When Shevardnadze and I were in a plane together coming. I don't know why we were traveling together, but he was a good friend. I was complaining about the intrusion into my privacy by the residence I lived in as well as our offices all being bugged. He said, "Bob, I will tell you, if you want me to I will bring you a whole basketful of U.S. made bugs that we have taken out of our own buildings, so it works both ways." I said, "Well yes, I am aware of that." He kind of shamed me a little bit.

Q: Were we seeing, when did we realize the Soviet Union was going to dissolve?

STRAUSS: I think we knew that in the fall of '91. What we didn't expect was that Gorbachev would step down as early as Christmas, '91. I know our CIA people didn't expect it that soon. We certainly didn't at the embassy. But everyone knew Gorbachev's days were numbered. People thought they were numbered in terms of years, not in terms of days or hours which proved to be the case.

Q: When all this was going on, I mean at the time things were going through this massive change, what were you getting from your Russian experts at the embassy, Soviet experts, about what brought about this? Was it economics; was it American star wars pressure; was it ineptness of the government? I mean what was bringing about this change? I mean what was the conventional wisdom?

STRAUSS: Well all those things you mentioned had something to do with it, but it was a combination of all those things. If the truth be known, the internal pressure on the communist party, brought by Boris Yeltsin was what caused that more than anything else. Now obviously Reagan's, everything he spent on dealing with the Russians in a military way had to make them discouraged and make them ready to give up to get a way out of that thing. But the differences you recall between Yeltsin and Gorbachev was that Gorbachev thought, incorrectly, that he could reform this government within the framework of the communist party. Yeltsin thought he had to get rid of the communist reform. That is the reason he had to get rid of Gorbachev. He was driven by that, and he was driven also by his own ambition which was to be head of that government. He accomplished both of them. I think there was a place for each within their own time. My judgment is that history will make him one of the prime movers of change in the world in the century.

Q: What happened when the embassy was faced with the dissolution of the evil empire using Ronald Reagan's terms, in '91/'92. What was this doing to you?

STRAUSS: Gorbachev and I always had a very comfortable relationship. I saw him in an average week several times. I don't know of another ambassador that saw him once a month, but the U.S. ambassador has a different role, particularly one that he was comfortable with and he knew the President of the United States was comfortable with who sent him over there. So he and I would talk about his problems with considerable frankness. His problems with the government, his problems with accomplishing anything. We talked also about his political problems to some lesser extent. He wasn't totally candid with me there, nor I with him. We talked with some frankness about it. You have to remember that 60 days, 90 days after I got there, he was in deep political trouble. Yeltsin pushed him. Every time he tried to have a meeting - Yeltsin standing up and denouncing him before his own people and that sort of thing. That crowded him pretty darn hard. Their relationship became terrible. Before I left Russia, when I went around to say my good-byes to the various people I worked with and the various agencies, I saved him for the last. I even saw President Yeltsin to say good-bye before I saw Gorbachev. I saved him for last. I had tried to tell him the importance the world would place on the two of them establishing some kind of relationship. That he had a responsibility as being the senior statesman of the two to reach out and repair that relationship even more than Yeltsin did because of how well he was known throughout the world, respected throughout the world. But I had no

luck, and the last visit I had with him I went in and I told his interpreter, who was a nice man I forget his name, has a mustache.

Q: A bald head, a mustache, he appeared all the time.

STRAUSS: Yes, real nice man. He had interpreted for me for so many hours, both in this country as well as in Russia and the Soviet Union generally, that he and I had a good relationship. I went in to see Gorbachev for that last meeting. He was working for Gorbachev then, not for the Russian government. I said, "Now, I have got an hour that I can spend with the President, maybe a little more. But what I want you to do is see that I get ten minutes without him interrupting me, if you can do that in your role as interpreter. Let me make my speech to him, because I have never been blunt with him as I am going to be today. There is a great deal riding on it." He said he understood. I said, "Just don't let him interrupt me." He said he wouldn't and he didn't. After I had been there for about an hour I said to the President, former president, "Mr. President, I have taken a lot of your time in this good-bye and I have listened with great interest to everything you had to say." He was going through a litany of problems he had, problems he had dealing with Yeltsin, how bad Yeltsin has treated him. With some justification I might add. I said, "Now let me, I want to talk to you and I have arranged with your interpreter that he is going to let me speak for five uninterrupted minutes with you," because Gorbachev was great for interrupting in the middle of everything. I wound up and started telling him that he and Yeltsin having this kind of fight was a luxury neither one of them could afford and the world couldn't afford, and the Russian people couldn't afford. If he had any sense of responsibility and fully understood how the world looked up to him and his place in the world which gave him that responsibility, that he would go the last mile to cure his problems with Yeltsin. He was so nervous that he had a big leather chair he sat in. I could hear his finger nails. His hands were on each side of that big leather chair, the arms there. He was scratching that leather with his fingernails so loud that I could hear it clearly, and it was driving me crazy while I was talking. He was that intense over it. But when I finished that long speech, about five or six or seven uninterrupted minutes, I ended up by saying, "Now Mr. President, I have had my say, and I couldn't be more sincere. I feel strongly that I am speaking as my government would wish me to speak. I hope you forgive me having said all that, I am ready to have you throw my ass out of your office if that would make you feel better." I laughed and he laughed and got up and smiled and put his arms around me and kissed me on the cheek and said, "I would never throw your ass out of my office, and I appreciate what you said. But just so you will understand this, I can't tell you everything, but you just don't understand what the situation is. You can't because you have to be in my position to understand that." I said, "I am sorry, but I hope you will think about it." He said, "I will." That ended it, and then I left.

Q: While this power struggle was going on, were you getting from your colleagues and from your own observation at your embassy and from others, watching the bureaucracy which was so important a nomenklatura, beginning to move towards? Was this an apparent, I assume this was a struggle within the apparatus?

STRAUSS: Yes. Well, at the bureaucratic level you didn't see that, at the lower bureaucratic level at all. At the top of course, you did see that. There were a few people that were strong cronies of Gorbachev who you just didn't see anymore. In their place you saw Yeltsin's people.

On the other hand, the young man who was sort of a chief of protocol for Gorbachev stayed right on with Yeltsin. I was surprised when I went over there the first time after Yeltsin took over to find him doing the same thing that he had done for Gorbachev. Interestingly he became a friend of mine. I helped him get a job when the previous head of the UN, the Egyptian, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Boutros-Ghali came to Russia just before I left. I said, "There is a young man over here who works at the Russian headquarters. I know you have got a few Russian spots at the UN. If you can get him a job. He has got a young wife and a young daughter. He deserves better than the kind of a job he has here. He will serve you well at the UN." Butros put his name down and said, "I'll take care of it." I thought he never would. I swear I got back here, 30 days after he left from being there I heard from my young friend that he had been offered a job at the UN. He is still there. I heard from him this past week that now he is going to get transferred to Geneva. He is still with the UN, so things have a way of working out now and then.

Q: You know over the years, fifty or more years, we developed this corps of Kremlinologists who would look at who was standing on top of the Lenin Mausoleum etc., and figure out who was on top. Did this serve you? In a way I was wondering with all this concern when a real change was coming, did you find that this group, this expertise served you, or were you pretty well relying on things on the ground?

STRAUSS: I relied on things on the ground more than I guess most ambassadors would. In the first place I had confidence in my own instincts on what was going on and the people I was dealing with - the ones that told me the truth and the ones that didn't. The French and the German and the U.S. and the British ambassadors met every Wednesday for an hour to try to put together all the intelligence we had to see if we could make sense of what was going on. We frequently had that discussion of what you were just talking about, who is up and who is down. I may have told this story earlier, but it is a great story because the rumor was always out that Yeltsin was going to change his foreign minister, whose name I don't remember at the moment, but I will get for you. Each of those three were convinced that the foreign minister was going to be gone by the next time we met. That went on for months and months. I would always say you are as wrong as you can be. They would always say why? My answer would always consistently be, "You fellows have to learn to read body language. When you see Yeltsin with his foreign minister, the body language is perfect, even when they disagree. I would rather bet on that than all this great information we are getting." Sure enough, at the time I left he was still there, and he stayed on as long as Yeltsin was there I might add. The last meeting I had with that group, they poured a little glass of wine to toast my departure. For the toast they said, "To the man who taught us about body language, something we never heard of before," and they laughed.

Q: That is a great story. How did you find as somebody who has been nursed at the mother's milk of politics for your entire life practically, did you find yourself comfortable in the rapidly changing political situation in Soviet Russia?

STRAUSS: Oh I was intrigued with it, perfectly comfortable with it. As a matter of fact it is strange, but as uncomfortable as I was with myself when I arrived in no time I settled in because of the competence of the foreign service officers we had over there, and the judgment and expertise of my deputy, Jim Collins. I just felt like I was getting the best advice around a guy could get. In no time I became comfortable. When making a decision of any consequence I

discussed it with the appropriate foreign service officer and also with Jim Collins. Collins was the very best, so I really had the security blanket around me. I liked my job, and I was comfortable with it. I was glad when it was over. I promised the President I would stay through the election. I did that, and I left without any discomfort. As a matter of fact, Helen wanted to stay a few more months.

Q: Well, one of the things sort of professionally that disturbed me was that when the Soviet Union broke apart into its component parts, you know, the “Stans” and all that came into being. Secretary of State Baker did not go to Congress and ask for more money. It meant that we were trying to do this on the cheap which really impacted rather heavily on our people who served in some of these small posts. Did you get involved in this at all?

STRAUSS: I was involved in it quite often. Included in the situations I was comfortable with, I was perfectly comfortable being a Democrat in a Republican administration, and had very few differences with Baker and Bush, really no difference of any consequence. I was working for them. But one thing I couldn't get them to do was go to the Congress and try for more money when they should have. But they were both timid about it. I am not sure Baker was, but I am sure George Bush senior was. I know he was very cautious about going to the Congress and getting money for food relief, for the embassy staffs and office staffing and operations. We were really on an exceedingly thin budget over there. As I recall, even the car I was driving broke down often. It was eight or ten years old and with those Russian roads, that is old. We had trouble getting money to repair the embassy residence when it needed it. We particularly, as I have said earlier, had difficulty with our food relief programs. I mentioned earlier in this, we used canned foodstuffs that came out of the Gulf War to feed people with, that sort of thing. With respect to the embassies, we had to move very fast. They made the decision in Washington that they wanted to staff every one of those new republics with an embassy officer, an ambassador. That took a lot of people. They didn't have any real estate. There were no places you could rent over there if we had the money. So most of those men and women who went over there would go into these communities they were transferred to and live in a third rate hotel room with no kitchen or anything. So they were pretty miserable basically. I thought we could do better, but we didn't have time and we didn't have money.

Q: Were there any voices, I mean, was your voice among those saying gee we better do more?

STRAUSS: Oh, no question about it. But when the administration decided they weren't going to spend the money on that right now, they weren't going to Congress for it, that pretty well made the decision. My job was to do what the President wanted and the Secretary of State. Jim Baker, who by the way was a simply splendid Secretary of State in my judgment, he probably knew, it didn't do him any good in fact with the president. They probably had other places to spend that money. They just handled their Congressional business that way.

Q: Well, did your role change at all when the Soviet Union became Russia?

STRAUSS: No, really not a bit. My beat was really Moscow and environs. I would get out to these other places, but not very often, not as much as I wanted to or should have. There just was too much going on where I was.

Q: How about St. Petersburg? Was this another power center? Did you get any feel for it?

STRAUSS: Yes, I went to St. Petersburg any number of times. We had a very strong embassy officer over there who was very able and very well regarded by the St. Petersburg power structure. He had a nice residence he lived in. He entertained a lot. He was a first rate fellow over there.

Q: Do you recall his name?

STRAUSS: No, I don't recall. We can get that. He was not a political appointee like I was.

Q: No, but was there a political power structure in St. Petersburg that was different than the one in Moscow? You know, we talk about the New York group and Washington.

STRAUSS: Yes there was a great deal of difference between them. Keep in mind that the mayor of St. Petersburg had been one of the few people to stand up during that three or four days that Gorbachev was in captivity during the coup. He is the one who stood up for Gorbachev and against the coup. He was a former professor and a very able distinguished man. The mayor of Moscow when I arrived there was a semi academic who was very popular, but with the changes, even before the change came, he had been replaced by a fellow Bushov who is now the Mayor of Moscow. He turned it into a very strong political power center in the Republic of Russia.

Q: What about the disarmament process, getting rid of the nuclear weapons?

STRAUSS: I'd say the State Department with the assistance of the Defense Department in my judgment did a simply splendid job. Secretary of State Baker did a simply splendid job because he dealt with the various leaders of the republics in getting their hands on nuclear weapons and getting them moved out of Kazakhstan and other places they were put in under Russian control. I think it was very effective. I give those people who, it seemed to be once a month we had a State Department officer who had responsibility in that area come in and spend a week traveling around the various places that were repositories of nuclear arms, work going on. They were good, and they worked hard, and they worked around the clock. They accomplished a great deal, and that is the reason we have done as well as we have done in my judgment. They set the pattern.

Q: Prior to the breakup and after the breakup of the Soviet union, what about the Ukraine and the leadership there, because Ukraine has always had this potential of being a very productive, wealthy, progressive area, and has had lousy leadership and all. Was this apparent during your time?

STRAUSS: It was as apparent as a big wart on your nose could be. No one could deal with it effectively. As a matter of fact I think it is all those things you describe. Interestingly, about two or three years after I came back, a fellow I knew in New York told me that he was investing with a couple of Ukrainians who were raising a fund to acquire interest in Ukrainian businesses. They thought it would be very successful. I said, "Well, I have my doubts, but you are a very

sophisticated investor. I will put some money, not as much as you want me to, but I will make a modest investment.” I did, because I thought it would work out well. I think that has been ten years, nine years, and I bet the investment is not worth what it was nine years ago. I always thought, I did think they were right. The reason I just put a small amount in was because the leadership at the top of that government, I thought it was corrupt; it would stay that way. It would hold back, and it has held them back.

Q: It has been one of the great disappointments.

STRAUSS: Great disappointments. Gosh, when you see the riches of that country.

Q: I have heard it compared the equivalent to France if it really got going. I mean, it has everything.

STRAUSS: I have heard the same comparison. It has everything. It could be a great place. It could attract tourists.

Q: Great agriculture.

STRAUSS: Oh, yes, marvelous agriculture.

Q: Did you find as ambassador to Russia now that the fact that you had these other countries that had broken off, the other republics and former republics around you, did that weaken or distract our relationship with Russia, or was Russia still the 300 pound gorilla at that table.

STRAUSS: That is an understatement. It was more than that, Russia was. The Kazakhs came in. Kazakhstan became more important because they had a head of government at that time by the fact he was going to be the prominent reformer of his era. It turned out not so. We have problems with him right now.

Q: Well let me ask a question on the cultural side. Culture plays quite a strong role in Russia as it does say in France, more than in many other countries. How did you find sort of on the cultural side?

STRAUSS: I would say that on most of these sides, or some of these sides, because of the people I had around me, I would give myself a grade in many areas of B+ to A. On the cultural side, I would give myself a failing grade. They were accustomed to the U.S. ambassador who had more interest in cultural affairs than I did. The cultural side has not been a driving interest of mine in this country, and it was not over there. I think I neglected that now. We tried to support the various things, theater, the Bolshoi, things like that, but I didn't do a very good job. I would go sit in my box and be seen where I needed to be seen.

Q: Try to stay awake.

STRAUSS: That is exactly right. I must confess I think when my grandchildren were there, I took them to the circus instead of to the opera. I probably should be ashamed of myself, but I

really give myself failing grades.

Q: What about the intellectual class, the writers and all that? Again as in France, they play a major role.

STRAUSS: Yes, and we worked hard on that. I worked hard on that, and I made some marvelous friends over there in that area and enjoyed it. I didn't have the luxury of leisurely developing relationships and getting into other interests. Keep in mind when you get to work rather early at the office, around 8:00 and you are there until 7:00, and you go home and have a drink and supper. You do that six out of seven days a week, you don't have much time. So I tend to do the things I have to do and am really interested in doing and let the others go. It served me well at times of my life, and other times it served me poorly. I wish I could remember the names of some of the people that I developed very nice relationships over there in the intellectual community. I did a great deal of work getting the American school over there. I spent a lot of time locating land and forcing the Russians to let us buy it and get the school open and getting people there. So I had that sort of thing and I did well in that. School is very important to the American colony as you can imagine.

Q: Was it open to other embassies?

STRAUSS: Yes.

Q: How about to Russians, could they go too?

STRAUSS: I don't recall. I think a few of them could get in each class. We had a pretty good mixture, but it was primarily the American school for Americans.

Q: I might point out that some of our other ambassadors who have been there, such as Arthur Hartman, express a great interest in the arts and all, but in a way they had time. You were dealing in a fast moving political situation as opposed to the rest of the time where we have a relatively static relationship.

STRAUSS: The reason a number of people, for example Ambassador Watson, left and Hartman was frustrated was there wasn't enough for them to do constructively because of the relationship. I was blessed in terms of having challenges that I could do more about. They couldn't do disarmament. I had the heavy responsibility in that area, just an obvious difference. I was there when the new republics were born, and I could deal openly with leaders and people like that. They couldn't. They didn't have that freedom. So I had the best of that world, and I was sensible enough to know it.

Q: Was there any problem, did you see the Soviet army, I mean the Soviet/Russian army, as a problem being a different power center? I mean they were dissolving the Warsaw Pact, getting troops out of Poland and East Germany and all this. I mean was this a matter of concern to us that they might not be responsive to the political masters as we would like?

STRAUSS: Yes. That was a concern. One of the real concerns I had, on several occasions I went

out to visit military installations, particularly where I remember vividly going out to spend three or four hours at their air force academy where they train their crack pilots. When you saw the living conditions those pilots were living in, you wonder when it is they are going to break away and say, you know, turn on the government. The same thing was true of all branches of the military. Maybe in the early communist days, the military got the best of everything, but while I was there, they were on starvation wages, not getting paid, and living conditions you wouldn't live, you wouldn't let your puppy live in those conditions. Horrible.

Q: I guess this is probably a good time to stop. We have in a way covered at least for the time, your time in Russia. Now if there is anything else, we will come back and revisit this at that point. Next time maybe we can pick it up what you did when you came back, how you saw Russia and our future with Russia, what you were telling President Bush and Secretary Baker, and again Congress and your contacts, because this is a continuing relationship. I am sure that when you came back you were active in telling what you saw and observed and using your prestige to do this. We will talk about this, and then we will talk about what you are doing thereafter, because we will continue sort of the political side of things.

STRAUSS: That's good.

NADIA TONGOUR
Soviet Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1991-1993)

Nadia Tongour was born in Turkey and raised in South Carolina. She was educated at William and Mary and Stanford Universities and taught at several colleges before joining the Foreign Service in 1980. Primarily a Political Officer, her Washington assignments were in the fields of Soviet and Soviet bloc Affairs as well as Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Her foreign assignments include Brazil, Barbados and St. George's Grenada, where she was Principal Officer. Ms. Tongour was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Well then, after this time in the sun, whither?

TONGOUR: Well, I also became a single mother as a result during this period in connection with a long term relationship in Barbados. Just before returning to a fairly high-powered position on the Soviet Desk, I found myself pregnant and decided to have the baby. Obviously, that's a much longer story but this is not the place for it. .

Q: Let me just ask the question about this because we are doing the social thing, being a single mother, you know, in a certain period this would just have been a no no.

TONGOUR: Absolutely.

Q: Sort of what were the calculations and how did this- did this cause any problems or not?

TONGOUR: Are you talking about in my life as a whole or-

Q: I am talking the Foreign Service issue.

TONGOUR: Okay. Actually I can make this a broader discussion inasmuch as timing may have made all the difference in the world -- my own timing and the times we were in for the Foreign Service. Had I been 22, perhaps the sky would have fallen. Who knows how the parents or my immediate world might have reacted. At this point in my life-

Q: How old were you?

TONGOUR: I was already in my forties, and parental disapproval was no longer an issue. In fact, my parents were quite happy to have a grandchild. Moreover, I was personally and financially self-sufficient. From the Foreign Service standpoint, I was very fortunate to wind up back in the proverbial "womb" of the Soviet Desk. When you earlier asked about being part of a particular community at State, I had already had one tour on the Soviet Desk, worked in Eastern European affairs, and these were, you might say, my people, and I felt as though I were going home again when I worked on the Soviet Desk the second time. I hadn't announced my pregnancy before starting the job, but that was not a problem. I took three months off after my son was born and then returned to work. I was fortunate in being able to afford a nanny, and, therefore, could return to work fulltime and carry my weight. Plus, my office was very welcoming to this new addition; except for an occasional bout of baby sickness, my child did not impinge on my work. You are absolutely right, though; a decade earlier and it might have been a real problem. I'm sure it would have been. Now, single motherhood seems to be quite common among women Foreign Service Officers, with some adopting and others having their own babies. That said, there is no question that in a broader sense, raising a child on one's own does impact on a career, and I know it did in my case.

For me, the main career problem or obstacle associated with single motherhood centered on assignment choices. I know that from that point on, each time I had to bid or make choices about where to go, I made decisions that I might not have made had I been childless. The system did not make it difficult for me; I basically made my own choices. Here is a perfect example: working on the Soviet desk, I sometimes worked long hours, but I was in Washington. Having worked on issues related to Moldova and Georgia, it would have been very logical and a real option to follow my Desk job in SOV with a tour in either Moldova or Georgia as Political Counselor. It was certainly a viable option. But when you have a one or two year old child, do you want to take him to new posts such as Tbilisi or Chisinau? The latter, in particular,, would have been a rough posting at that point, with out staff still living in hotels. Ultimately, I decided against these options and picking more "family-friendly postings, where the workload would be more or less normal, rather than perhaps seeking the "prize", if you will or more demanding, "serious" assignments in Moscow or other areas of the former Soviet Union. And as you know, there is a price to be paid for "lifestyle" tours.

Q: Well actually, of course, married people with children often made-

TONGOUR: That is right.

Q: I mean, you know, it just becomes part of the calculation.

We are talking about '91 to how long were you on the Soviet desk?

TONGOUR: That assignment was a regular Washington two-year tour, which started on a very significant date: August 19, 1991. I had returned to D.C. a few days before and was staying temporarily in a hotel. I recall watching the news before going to the office and seeing "breaking news" from Moscow to the effect Gorbachev was out. Meanwhile, as I'm sure I mentioned before, I had been thinking how different our bilateral relations were then as compared to a few years earlier and how much better the environment in this post-Cold War era. I was very much looking forward to a tranquil period in our relationship. Instead, we were immediately swamped -- churning out contingency papers and analyses on how to deal with the "day after".

Q: This raises a question. You know, again and again I talk to other people and ask them, what was sort of the contribution of the CIA and all, and you know, the answer, at least maybe at the highest level, certainly of the NSC or something but basically there does not seem to be much substantive input and I think the problem seems to rest in the Agency one, is too big, so as it moves up through the layers of reports and all it gets honed down and all, it loses all its bite. And two, it is not as responsive to policy problems. In other words, what do we do today? I mean, it is a little too almost academic.

TONGOUR: That was certainly the case then. They clearly had some papers but they did not have "the" paper addressing what might happen immediately thereafter or likely scenarios in the aftermath of the fall of Gorbachev.

Q: So, you know, huge amounts of money are spent for what?

TONGOUR: We did not know, but we were somewhat cocky at that moment. Perhaps that's the wrong word, but after getting over the shock that we weren't going to be provided with instant scenarios from without, we concluded we would just come up with our own. And we did -- drafting papers and sending them up our chain of command discussing the issue of "what is to be done".

Q: What was your responsibility?

TONGOUR: When I first came onboard I was expected to work on, among other things, a bilateral review commission intended to eliminate or minimize various, points of friction, such as the "25-mile" rule and other contentious issues. I actually no longer even recall what my initial portfolio was supposed to be since when you are assigned to a multi-person desk, you do enter with an assigned function. Given the fluctuating situation in the Soviet Union, our own individual assignments were also somewhat in flux. Still, we did prepare for a bilateral review commission which was eventually held, and we managed to get rid of the 25-mile rule and other outstanding headaches. But almost immediately we were all effectively drafted into small working groups based on the section to which we had been initially assigned. I was in the so-

called bilateral section at first. Yet, within a few months the office configuration changed, with our office leadership deciding to divide SOV along geographical lines> My section dealt with Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Belarus. Another group was responsible for Central Asia, and a third focused on the Baltic states. We spent considerable figuring out what we should be called. There was no more Soviet Union or Soviet Desk. At first, we called ourselves ISCA, standing for Independent States and Commonwealth Affairs. Later the office became known as NIS (Newly Independent States) or CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) -- there were several iterations. Our Office Director Larry Napper concluded that since the Soviet Union was breaking apart into independent states, we would transform ourselves accordingly, and essentially divide the existing office into groupings of separate country desks.

Q: Did you sort of bid among yourselves?

TONGOUR: Kind of. But it worked out well. I wound up with Georgia, which was viewed as a potential hot spot. However, it was decided that I could handle a somewhat larger portfolio. At the time Moldova was viewed as a "sleeper" and deemed a good complement to the already busy "Georgia account. Well little Moldova wound up having as many conflicts as Georgia; consequently, I wound up covering two wine producing states that were both embroiled in major internal struggles. My role, like that of my peers was initially to do whatever was needed: preparing option papers, figuring out next steps, etc. whether on the prospective commission or other projects on the docket and gradually shifting focus to serving as the first ever desk officer for the newly emerging countries of Georgia and Moldova. Initially, it was not clear whether Moldova would survive as an independent entity or be swallowed up by one of its neighbors -- Romania or Russia -- because of the ongoing conflict in region.

Q: Still got an army, a Soviet army sitting there.

TONGOUR: That is right, and a major portion of my work was to ensure that higher ups in the Department understood the situation and recognized that it did matter.

Q: Well, in the first place, looking at the whole, I do not know what you want to call it, the former Soviet desk or bureau, how would you describe sort of the spirit of things? Was this a hell of a lot of fun with the adrenaline pulsing through you and all that?

TONGOUR: Absolutely. It was a heady time, an exciting period in many ways. After all, this is the end of '91 and early '92. Not only was the Soviet Union coming apart, but major change is occurring in America as well -- a new president and a different configuration of people at the top. At State, our Under Secretary was Strobe Talbott, who essentially oversaw, or basically was in charge of our policy toward the former Soviet Union. For us, there was real electricity in the air. I would not go so far as to say there was unvarnished optimism because we really had no idea what was going to happen but certainly there was never a dull moment. In our office, we were exhilarated by being a small part of the process associated with such monumental changes.

Q: Well let us take your two places; let us take Georgia first. What was the situation in Georgia?

TONGOUR: Georgia was in a state of real upheaval for several reasons. First, two active, full-

blown conflicts were underway. One was the conflict in the region known as Ossetia, split between North and South Ossetia, with the former attached to Russia, and the latter remaining a part of Georgia. In adjacent areas with the same ethnic mixes, the basic question was whether they should remain divided or be united under one umbrella or another. Secondly, there was, and still remains, another active -- though perhaps a bit more subdued -- conflict in , Abkhazia, essentially a breakaway region in the western part of Georgia, where there was strong Russian influence, particularly along the coast. Then, too, a third region known as Ajaria had a strongman leader, who, while not attempting to secede, was ruling his territory as though he were an autonomous potentate. In addition to these tensions, was the issue of the "new kid in town", the new leader of Georgia being the former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who was not universally beloved by the Georgians for several reasons. First, in their view, his longstanding, active service on behalf of the Soviets raised doubts questions about his bona fides as a real Georgian and his commitment to Georgia. I think he eventually persuaded them that he was but that cost him vis-à-vis the relationship with Russia. Secondly, he had come to power on the heels of the ouster of the heretofore quite popular nationalist leader Gamsakhurdia, which also made Shevardnadze a bit suspect. In addition to the previously mentioned struggles, his position was made more precarious by the fact that Russia and Russians had always regarded Georgia in a special way, as a civilized Christian nation amidst many Moslem groupings, one of their "own kind" in other words. For Russian, having their former (Soviet) Foreign Minister as the Georgian head of state was distasteful; adding insult to injury, he was also someone the U.S. very much liked.

Q: Yes, because he and Baker, our secretary of state, were practically the Bobbsey twins during the break up and the last gasp of the Soviet Union.

TONGOUR: Exactly. So that created a very exciting panorama. I recall sitting in on the meetings we held with Shevardnadze on the periphery of the UN General Assembly session, when he came to New York in his new capacity, which was fascinating. For our part, there was a great deal of sympathy for, investment and assistance to Georgia during that period, with considerably less activism, as I indicated in Moldova. But I have to admit that in some ways working on Moldova was actually more satisfying. There were certain parallels to my stint as the desk officer for Hungary and the Baltics. When the chain of command was not paying a great deal of attention to a particular area, the officer in charge could "push the envelope, put forward positions and even influence policy related to a particular country or situation. Basically, it was up to the desk officer to convince superiors that a particular country mattered and was strategically important. In the case of Moldova, my efforts seemed to work. I take personal satisfaction from having gradually gotten my bosses to focus more and more on Moldova. Although Georgia clearly started out as the regional darling, after a while Moldova increasingly was perceived as the "little engine that could". There was growing sympathy for the Moldovans standing up for themselves opting to make Romanian the national language while insisting on their independence, rather than being incorporated into Romania. Moldova wound up with a number of fans, if you will, in our office and the Department as a whole. Moldova was the little engine that could, you know. There was a certain gradual sympathy for the Moldovans standing up and the fact that they chose to have the Romanian language but that they did not want to be swallowed up by Romania gave them a lot of fans, if you will, in the European Bureau and the State Department as a whole

Q: Well, I want to stick to Georgia for a little while. How did we view, I mean, you had this dukedom off to one side, a warlord or something, and then you had the Russians in - was it Sochi, which I am told has beautiful- it is a great place for retired Soviet army officers.

TONGOUR: Right, right.

Q: And then the other one. I mean, what were we doing about this?

TONGOUR: We were trying to keep it together but there was a limit to what we could do. We were certainly providing various forms of assistance to the central government and to Shevardnadze, but there were also issues of national sovereignty and the extent we could or should intervene on his behalf. There were several different ethnic different groups, some of whom opposed him as a usurper as a result of the ouster of the popularly-elected Gamsakhurdia, whom Shevardnadze replaced. There was definitely a three- ring circus feeling to the situation, but certainly we provided substantial assistance, guidance, and advisor on a host of topics -- how to write a constitution or hold parliamentary elections and so on. It was a booming enterprise. Our embassy there was a very lively place.

Q: And was there, in the first place was there a Georgian community, I mean, the head of the joint chiefs of staff was Shalikashvili who was from there but was there much of a Georgian American?

TONGOUR: Not really in the sense of a formal grouping, when compared to any of the other countries I have worked on -- and, of course, this may have subsequently changed. I do not mean to imply there were no Georgian groups; there were some, but they were relatively small. I remember in the Adams Morgan area there was one restaurant run by a Georgian, who even called it a Georgian restaurant, but that was rare. By now, there are probably more, but then it was all too new. Likewise there was no formal Moldovan community to speak of, or at least not one that pressed to make itself known..

Q: Well, did you ourselves trying to initiate anything that would sort of ease the civil war or not or was it really something we just kept pretty well- we just had to sit there and watch developments?

TONGOUR: No, we did do more and concern was also expressed in the UN and other fora aimed at helping out and encouraging others to do the same. Similarly, there were bilateral overtures toward the Russians, pressing them to back off, to stand down and indicating that we would view Russian military involvement as a matter of grave concern. So, we engaged in diplomatic efforts and provided all sorts of assistance. Not only in Georgia, but in general we were quite supportive of these newly independent states. In the case of Georgia, and especially in the early phase of its independence, we sought to bolster Shevardnadze to the extent we could and to convey to the Russians that we would not look kindly upon attempts to undermine him. On several occasions when we really thought the Russians were about to intervene, we did issue strong demarches to this effect.

Q: Okay, Moldova. You had this, what, Transdnister, almost republic which was- I mean, what I gather, I mean, this is a great market for us to buy up Soviet equipment and _____.
Were you involved in that?

TONGOUR: Other offices more specifically focused on military affairs were the ones directly involved in this, but obviously I stayed informed. Looking back on it now, if you consider the geography of the region, this was one conflict zone that made sense from the Russian perspective -- much as Ukraine does as well. Given the large contingent of Russian speakers or ethnic Russians living there, both they and the Russian government saw them as but an extension of Russia. And from their standpoint, the "upstart" Romanians were effectively encroaching onto their turf. While willing to cede one side of the river, they were not willing to part with the Transnistrian region to the east, which they not only saw as theirs but where they had stockpiled military equipment and personnel. So, yes, Russian armaments and supplies were in abundance in this Russian-speaking enclave. One of the more interesting features of this region as a whole was that the populace had been educated in Russian for so long that while there were certainly plenty of individuals who spoke Romanian, especially at home, others who, regardless of their ethnicity, were more comfortable speaking in Russian. A similar situation prevails in eastern Ukraine, especially in the Odessa region, where many see themselves as both from Ukraine and ethnically or linguistically Russian; some of these do not speak Ukrainian well. And then, of course, in Transnistria there was General Lebedev, the general in charge of the military encampment in Transnistria, who had also been a major figure in the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. He proved to be a key player in the Transnistrian conflict; later on, he actually ran for President of Russia as well. : *He was quite a major figure at one time.*

Q: Well, I would think that having Moldova you have the Romanians, you had the Ukrainians and you had the Russians.

TONGOUR: Moldova was quite ethnically diverse for so small a country. There was also a Turkic ethnic group, known as the Gagauz. This was a small contingent, originally from Turkey who maintain that they have been in Moldova for centuries. They and pockets of other nationalities made for an interesting mix. .

Q: Well, it used to be called Bessarabia, did it not?

TONGOUR: Part of it was Bessarabia, yes.

Q: Which was an oil producing-

TONGOUR: That is right.

Q: Are they still producing- Was there much oil there or not?

TONGOUR: There was some; I do not remember how much.

Q: Alright, we will stop here and we have been talking- you are going to review a little about Georgia but also Moldova and talk about the relationship of the Ukraine and with really- We

have not talked really about the internal setup of Moldova and our relationship with them.

TONGOUR: I'll quickly mention that for the first year that I handled this portfolio, many months passed before a truly functioning government, in terms of inspiring confidence in its viability, really got off the ground. And there was considerable doubt as to whether Moldova would make it or rather that it would not be reintegrated into one of its neighboring states.

Okay, well we will pick it up then.

Okay, today is the 21st of February, 2008, with Nadia Tongour.

Q: Anyway, so, what were we talking about? What is the period- we are talking about when you were on the desk or were you going there?

TONGOUR: No. We had gotten up to basically 1991, and I think we had left off where I had returned from overseas in August of 1991 and begun working on the Soviet Desk.

Q: Broken your arm- had a baby and broke your arm.

TONGOUR: That came the next year but before I had that happened I had returned thinking I would be a desk officer on the traditional Soviet desk, working on U.S.-Soviet relations but my first day back coincided with the end of Gorbachev's rule. The period that followed was one of the most exciting and exhilarating of times, when we really tried to address a myriad "what ifs" an "what type of" situations.

Q: Bureaucracies interest me, particularly our State Department. Was there a fighting, did you sense a fighting and muscling, who was going to get the Ukraine and who was going to get Georgia, you know, this sort of thing?

TONGOUR: You mean when we were eventually breaking it up into desks?

Q: Yes.

TONGOUR: I don't know. Frankly, I think if it occurred, it happened at a much higher level. I think there was a sense that the people who were originally focusing on certain types of issues would naturally be assigned to certain portfolios, but initially we were simply divided into small groups. So for example, I was originally supposed to work in the Bilateral Section. As I previously mentioned, the office had previously been divided along functional lines. Now the Bilateral Section was basically reconfigured to be a regional office, with a few of us winding up working on Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and another group worked on the Caucasus, etc. What was noteworthy at that time was the notion that certain countries -- not necessarily in terms of importance to us -- would be "busier" than others and take up more of an officer's time. And so what we knew from the outset was that one officer would focus on Azerbaijan and Armenia and another -- me in this case -- would handle Georgia and "something else". That something else turned out to be Moldova. In retrospect, our internal situation on the Desk in late 1991 and early 1992 frankly mirrored the fluidity of the former Soviet Union. We were very much focused on

the so-called bigger questions associated with what it meant for the Soviet Union to no longer exist and how to tailor our relationship to Russia, first and foremost, in this new scenario. Overall, there was a sense of quasi-optimism, if you will, on that score. We certainly did not want to overlook Russian misdeeds, whether in Georgia or elsewhere, but we (I'm speaking of our office in particular) wanted to be forward leaning and we sought to find ways to resolve some of the longstanding bilateral issues. And in fact, in thinking back on this period, I recall that we still were working on the Bilateral Review Commission, something that had been set in motion before the demise of the Soviet Union, intended to be an annual event in which we met with the Soviets work on or at least iron out our differences. So for much of the first months of the new regime the central question was how does the dissolution of the Soviet Union impact on our dealings with "new Russia" and then down the proverbial food chain with the other countries of the former Soviet Union.

Q: I can remember the feeling, I think the feeling of optimism was everywhere and you know, you had Baker and Shevardnadze walking hand in hand in Wyoming, you know.

TONGOUR: That is right. And to add one small comment to that, looking back at Moldova in light of the fact that Georgia certainly received more attention then, it would be fair to say that initially the reasons for the limited attention paid to Moldova had little or nothing to do with Russia. Given the ethnic breakdown of the region, our starting assumption regarding Moldova was that it would either choose to unite with Romania or Romania would make that choice for the Moldovans in some fashion or another. It was not that we didn't care at that point but it was not exactly a top priority. It became a bit more of a priority as well as a somewhat of a shock when two things happened. First, "little Moldova", alone among former Soviet Republics paid off some of its debts, or rather its portion of the former Soviet debt owed to us, which endeared Moldova to us and fostered the image of Moldova as the little engine that could.

Q: You know, this goes back to after World War I when Finland paid off its debts and Finland won a place in our hearts that, you know, even I, as a small kid, were ever- say well, the Finns paid their debts.

TONGOUR: That is right. I do not know that Moldova completed the process, but the country made some good faith efforts on that score. Secondly, there was an election in Moldova and while I no longer remember the detail, the election basically was a referendum on unification with Romania. The general expectation going into the election was that the party favoring such unity would win; yet it did not. The actual winner was the more nationalistic "Moldova for Moldovans" or "Moldovans for Independence" type party. That took us back a bit. I would not say we were totally shocked but the outcome was somewhat unexpected.

Q: Did you figure out what were the factors; was it because Romania had been such a disaster under Ceausescu?

TONGOUR: Maybe, to a certain extent. However, there was another, perhaps more salient, factor. I think we just assumed that Moldovans generally wanted to be part of a greater Romania and would be happy playing the role of younger brother. Frankly, there was a certain arrogance among the Romanians vis-a-vis Moldovans, regarding them somewhat as the country bumpkin

cousins, while others, including us were treating them as a potentially "real" country. While the vast majority of Moldovans would never deny their ties or linguistic and cultural affinity to Romania, I think many wanted to see if they could survive on their own. The real shock was that Moldova was starting down this path at the very time when they experienced a major blow, namely the onset of the Transnistrian conflict, when the Russian-backed forces in that region staged a rebellion and refused to recognize Moldovan government authority. That was the official beginning of the conflict, in the summer of 1992, between Moldova and the "Transnistrian Authority", which in some form or another has persisted -- more recently in a "cold war" manner -- for 10 these many years.

Q: What were you getting- were you in close consultation with the Romanian desk and what was sort of their attitude?

TONGOUR: We were. And initially, again, it was the Romanian desk that assumed the Moldovans would naturally gravitate to the orb of Bucharest. They were as surprised as we when the Moldovans opted for an independent path instead. Probably, my main contribution as the Moldovan Desk Officer was to convince my chain of command that it mattered that the Russian-backed Transnistrian forces were undercutting the viability of this very fragile state and since it was a western leaning state, friendly to us and responsive in terms of its debt obligations, etc., we should either on our own or more likely in conjunction with regional groupings (e.g. the precursor of the OSCE) send observers and to some extent become engaged.

Q: What sort of role was Ukraine doing? I mean, Ukraine sort of sits a fork the lines of communication from the Transdnister region. How could sort of the Russian forces survive in that geographic position?

TONGOUR: Several years later I would be focusing more on Ukraine. At the time, I recall there was a somewhat fluid border situation, including the movement of some munitions and supplies. Overall, I'm sure the Ukrainians were more preoccupied with their own situation vis-a-vis Russia and focusing more on questions of immediate interest to them such as the future of Crimea and the Odessa region to involve themselves overly in what was happening in "Bessarabia". They clearly paid attention and may have offered some support but were not then seized with that conflict. .

Q: Well what about, what were we getting, what were you getting about what was going on in this Transdnister area?

TONGOUR: Officially our people were not even supposed to go to Transnistria and when they did, it was a major production, requiring permission from authorities on both sides of the river as well as from Washington. What was really remarkable was that we were the primary source of information, in the best sense of the word, for other, European countries, which were interested in the region but had fewer resources to commit to the area. Consequently, I wound up spending some time briefing European Embassies in Washington about what we were finding out about the Transnistrian situation, based on our albeit limited information. Gradually we got our own act together to inform the Russians that we were not indifferent to the fate of this small country, and encouraged them to stand down from real incursions or adverse actions.

Q: What was happening on the ground? Was the Soviet army, a division or what?

TONGOUR: Yes. I think it was called the 14th battalion or division (I can't remember) under General, Lebedev, who...

Q: Who later ran for president of the country.

TONGOUR: That is right, and he had been in Afghanistan and elsewhere. They had basically seized a major power plant that was in the Transnistrian region and were hindering Moldovan access to power. This was obviously a major problem for Moldova. The situation was dicey. It was not a "hot conflict" with major battles, but a conflict that was literally "close to home", with the establishment of the "Transnistrian Republic" just across a small river. In reality, it was somewhat of a standoff because the Moldovan military lacked the resources to really take on the sizeable Russian-Transnistrian forces, which called themselves the Transnistrian Army..

Q: Did you get a feel that, I mean, was this sort of a criminal conspiracy, I mean, was criminality sort of a major cause of the being for this Transdnister thing, smuggling, human trafficking, that sort of thing?

TONGOUR: You know, anymore it is hard to know which was the chicken or the egg or rather what was cause and what effect. The problem, which one finds throughout the former Soviet Union, certainly existed in Georgia as well. Over the course of hundreds of years Russians fanned out and lived in enclaves in these regions. There was a legitimate minority group, ethnically either Russian or Russian-speaking, living in these former republics and they were certainly not comfortable with the sudden turnaround. For some of them it was a matter of national prestige. Imagine how we would if suddenly Hawaii went off on its own. For those people of the previously dominant group nationalism was definitely a factor. I think for Lebedev and others of his ilk the issue then had little to do with drugs or criminality. Drugs and crime would become more salient factors later on.

Q: Were we trying, at your level, I mean, passing on to your colleagues in other places, overtures to the Russian desks, tell them to try to help or something like that?

TONGOUR: Oh yes. Well, I mean, it was nothing so formal. The Russian desk was 50 feet from my office. It was not as though we had to cross town to communicate. We certainly did talk constantly amongst ourselves and all the way up our food chain again about whatever was happening.

Something else that warrants mentioning is that in some respects our staff in the field were operating almost as though they were in the "wild west". Keep in mind there had not been anything resembling an embassy in Chisinau, so initially our mission was "housed" in a small, rather interesting structure, in which the entire post ate lunch together with the char force doubling as cooks, who made soup and bread each day for the staff. It was a cozy arrangement which seemed perfectly normal at the times. The Ambassador was the only person then at post who actually lived in an apartment, and it was far from palatial; the rest of the staff were all still

living in hotels then. And the U.S. Embassy was the lucky one, the first to get up and running -- opening up our shop as it were within the year. But there was a very positive feeling about the experience, and a great deal of camaraderie on the part of the staff. When I visited the post, I was very impressed with the high morale..

Q: Yes. I noticed it had gotten better when I went to Bishkek in, I think '94, and it was pretty primitive. You know, one place which would be considered a modest house here in Arlington and that is where the whole embassy was located.

Well, how about the role, and I do not want to get into details, but from the desk perspective were you getting much out of the CIA, from their analysis?

TONGOUR: Eventually we received some help from their analytical branch, and we received some useful support after the break up of the Soviet Union, but not much before then.

On another topic, I don't think we have fully exhausted our discussion of developments on the "Georgia front". Georgia, after all, was one of our top priorities. You asked if we nudged the Russia Desk. We certainly did on Moldovan issues and even more forcefully on Georgia where we put whatever pressure we could on both the Russian and Georgian sides to stand down and not exacerbate problems in Abkhazia and South Ossetia --- continuing issues even to this day. In that period, our President actually sent forward letters to both of their leaderships that our office drafted. .

Q: Well, Georgia of course, just because of sort of the people; I mean, you had Stalin coming out of there, you had Shevardnadze, who was a great friend of Baker and I do not know where he was at this time but Shalikashvili was at one point the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. So I mean, you had this Georgian connection with America, you know, it was recognizable and all.

TONGOUR: Well, even before Secretary Baker, his predecessor George Shultz had been very concerned about Georgian developments and close to its leadership. He was interested in Shevardnadze not simply as the leader of Georgia but as the former Soviet Foreign Minister and his primary interlocutor in the region when he had been Secretary. I remember, jumping ahead, the year after I left the Desk, I spent a year in San Francisco at the Asia Foundation and went down to Stanford, to the Hoover Institution at his request to brief him on what was going on in Georgia. By that point, he was already out of the government, but still interested in what was happening in that region.

Q: Well, were you involved in the shopping spree of the military and I guess intelligence agencies, trying to pick up Russian equipment which was up for sale, you know, surreptitiously or not, I mean, we were tried to pick up- and of course the former Soviet troops wanted to get rid of this stuff because they would get money for it.

TONGOUR: I was somewhat aware of these kinds of activities rather than directly involved. Several years later I had a job that involved assistance to the former Soviet Union, where we had a big program to "help" scientists who had previously worked biological warfare projects or nuclear research transition to civilian employment -- somewhat similar to programs for scientists

following World War II -- and meaningful work. We weren't necessarily interested in having them emigrate but rather in ensuring that they were gainfully employed and not exporting their expertise or products to rogue states.

Q: Yes. Of course, this is a very big deal. Let's stick to Moldova for a bit, the government? Was it a relatively responsible government?

TONGOUR: At that time, very definitely. In a way, attaining power sort of hit them by surprise, too. Their leadership ranks included a group of young energetic types who seemed genuinely committed to Moldova. When I went there to visit, I recall meeting all kinds. I do not want to imply that everyone at the helm was a saint but in general there seemed to be a fairly decent group -- especially when compared to some of the other former republics -- then. But again, that was the early period. I have not followed Moldova closely in the intervening years, so I do not know what the current leadership represents.

Q: But at the time, I mean, these were-

TONGOUR: By the time we began to focus seriously on Moldova, the Moldovans were just having their first election and picking some fairly forward-leaning representatives who sought to assure us they wanted to maintain their independence and neither return to the Russian fold or unite with Romania.

Q: Did they have an embassy here?

TONGOUR: Not at the beginning, but, yes, by the end of my tour. All of the former republics did.

Q: Did we get involved in the training? I know we at one point here at the Foreign Service Institute where we are talking we were training, among others, Albanian diplomats. I, at about this time a retired Foreign Service officer, was sent to Kyrgyzstan to talk about setting up a consular service. I mean, we were trying to get these people into the community as fast as they could absorb the knowledge.

TONGOUR: Let's put it this way: I know they asked for guidance and support and acknowledged in many ways how unprepared they were to work in the diplomatic arena. Actually a few Moldovans had served as diplomats in the Soviet system but being on one's own was a different matter. But they had not reached the point of asking us to provide training for them at our Foreign Service Institute. I think we had gotten around to instituting International Visitor Programs for them, including programs for journalists traveling to the States. But in terms of formal training programs, I think we were further along with Georgia.

Q: Well, you were saying that you found yourself paying more attention to Moldova much to your surprise than you were to Georgia.

TONGOUR: No. I would not say more than Georgia but rather roughly the same; yet this defied expectations because where there were many people focusing on Georgia, relatively few paid

attention to Moldova at the outset. Essentially, if there were papers to be written on Moldova -- and our business consisted largely in writing briefing memos and sending them up the ranks -- or if someone would be pushing the envelope regarding Moldova, it would basically happen at the midlevel officer level -- in this period basically me. As for Georgia, on the other hand, there were many other people equally willing to push for Georgia. Certainly, I was the desk officer, but there were others waving the flag. My main point here is that while my bosses expected that I would spend 75 to 80 percent of my time on Georgia, with the remainder on Moldova, in fact, Moldova took up its fair share. Gradually, with the blessings of my supervisors, there was an increasingly widespread recognition that more attention to this small country was warranted.

Another interesting factor worth mentioning is just how difficult the Russians were making it to get to travel to Georgia. If you wanted to go to Tbilisi, it was no mean feat. I remember taking an orientation trip to my two posts. It was relatively easy to get to Moldova via Frankfurt or Moscow or even Kiev, in short from various places. But for Georgia, at that time there was a commercial flight once a week from Vienna or the iffy alternative of flying from Moscow when gas was available. In that period, Aeroflot officially no longer flew to Georgia. An Aeroflot subsidiary supposedly had a contract for flights to Tbilisi, but the arrangement was fluid at best. As I was leaving Washington for this trip, my colleagues bet that I could not make it from Moldova to Georgia via Moscow in one day. The first part -- Chisinau to Moscow -- was easy, but once in Moscow, there was no sign that Aeroflot or any other carrier would be flying to Tbilisi that day. At least no flights were listed. Eventually I learned that I had to find a certain kiosk, a booth with a window, where one could pay for a ticket and be told that when sufficient money was raised to purchase gasoline for the plane, the flight would depart. I remember being told not to wander too far away because an announcement could be made at any time. This conversation was in Russian, which fortunately I spoke. I can't imagine what would have happened otherwise. As it was, I had to ask countless persons for information and guidance. The loudspeaker announcements were far from clear. In fact, the message concerning the departing Tbilisi flight was scarcely intelligible or audible. In short, I spent five or six hours waiting to see whether or not there would be a plane. After a time, people in that section of the waiting area began talking to each other, and we became sort of comrades in arms, all waiting for the same plane. Finally, the plane was called. Presumably, they succeeded in getting enough money for gas. And we walked across the tarmac looking a bit like refugees clutching our bags. I will never forget this experience. I have flown in a lot of bad planes but this may have been the worst. Standing at the top of the stairway was a guy who looked to be a character in a mafia film smoking a cigarette -- smoking very near the plane's gas tank. Once inside, I saw actual chickens in the open, overstuffed overhead compartments. Eventually, we took off and eventually landed, and the pilot, to give him his due, landed on an icy runway as though on a dime. The point of all this is that by the end of the week I was at the Tbilisi airport waiting for the flight from Vienna, and it was equally iffy whether the return flight would be able to take off because the availability of gas in Tbilisi, likewise provided by the Russian gas company, was also uncertain. So the Russians were not making it easy for the Georgians then.

Q: What did you observe when you got to Georgia, to Tbilisi and all? What was your impression?

TONGOUR: What I observed was that the country basically had an edgy feel to it. Everywhere

you went, there was a sense that someone was probably armed and that there was probably a good reason for the metal detectors at the entrance of the main hotel for Westerners. It was common knowledge that there had been shootings at the hotel, involving supporters of the previously elected government and its opponents. As I mentioned Shevardnadze was not initially the darling of all Georgians, even if he may have been ours and that of other nations. After all, Gamsakhurdia had been duly elected president and then been ousted by forces deemed more sympathetic, with Shevardnadze emerging from the latter group. The story was more convoluted than this but basically he was invited to return by the elements opposing Gamsakhurdia, who still had a strong following in the western part of the country. And even further west was the region of Abkhazia where tension was and remains rife. Even in the streets of Tbilisi you could see where fighting had occurred, with old bullet holes and shattered windows still visible. If Chisinau seemed somewhat dull, or gray despite some nice buildings (some of a backwater like a setting for a Chekhovian play), Tbilisi seemed a bit dicey by comparison. This was in the beginning, when our support was only beginning to pour in. Our Embassy there, however, was a former palatial residence, if not an actual palace, though not a fully furnished one. There, too, the staff ate lunch together on the premises but in a room resembling a fancy hall. Moreover, our staff were already living in apartments -- another contrast to Chisinau -- and they were quite nice. Tbilisi had many interesting places to visit, but the slight feeling of danger in the air was definitely present.

Q: How well were we able to work with them, I mean, our embassy and all, to work with them in Georgia?

TONGOUR: Within Tbilisi?

Q: Tbilisi.

TONGOUR: In Tbilisi they were able to work quite well but there were some restrictions on their mobility; staff were not encouraged to roam around. On one level, the situation was quite positive in that the Shevardnadze government was very responsive and receptive to us, but Embassy personnel were told not to go out at night unless accompanied by "escorts". That was the way the people lived then; crime and violence were very real concerns.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

TONGOUR: Ambassador Kent Brown, a very good guy and very enthusiastic about Georgia. I have known several of the others: Bill Courtney who served there after Ambassador Brown and later still John Tefft, our current ambassador. And it seemed that everyone who served there somehow got hooked on Georgia and its people. The Georgians in general are very charming and the country is colorful, with a rich history, and a Christian countries which also adds to its appeal for Americans.

Q: Were you feeling any Georgian émigré influence when you were on the desk and all?

TONGOUR: Very little. We began talking about this last time. There may have been more later on, when I had another tour that dealt with the former Soviet Union. Certainly in the 1999-2001

period there was a much greater degree of coordinated activity. Frankly, the only desk in which I was exposed to substantial émigré activity was during my tour as the Hungary and Baltic Republics Desk Officer. Both had very active émigré elements here who were keen on staying in close contact with the State Department. I do not know how many Moldovans there are in the U.S. Certainly there were groups that called on us, especially when Moldovan officials were here visiting, but it was nothing comparable to the Ukrainian lobbies, which I got to know later. And there were definitely some Georgians too.

Q: Well, I would think that- maybe I got- I know from Armenia supposedly but with Georgia, I am told, that you know, there used to be almost daily flights of people coming from these Caucasian areas of the Soviet Union go to Moscow and they would have big baskets full of stuff which they would sell.

TONGOUR: Absolutely.

Q: And I was wondering, was that trade completely stopped pretty much?

TONGOUR: I do not think so. I think that the black market trade continued and that was where one found much of the so-called Russian mafia. This may have toned down a bit in recent years, but I don't really know. A recent movie called "Eastern Promises" dealt with just this theme with many people becoming very wealthy, and a number of these originating in the Caucasus and then making it big in Moscow. As for your question about the differences between the Georgians and Armenians here, I'd have to say that while the Georgians got to know our leadership and developed close relationships at the top, they had no enclaves comparable to places in California and elsewhere of strong Armenian communities having enormous influence.

Q: Was there any spillover of Armenians into Georgia?

TONGOUR: Yes. There is actually a southern province of Georgia with a large Armenian population, but it was a fairly quiet group and did not put undue pressure on the Georgian government. But, I don't know what the situation is today. Quite possibly as other groups began agitating for more rights within Georgia, the Armenians may have grown more vocal as well. We don't here much about that area. Earlier, we spoke a bit about the conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia but there was also a strongman in another region known as Ajaria. He had not tried to break away but at the time was operating as though he was in control of his own fiefdom . So Georgia was plagued with a smattering of groups seeking to assert their own autonomy as well as other entities engaged in nefarious or criminal activities such as kidnappings and robberies.

Q: I assume that if one traveled by car, if you were a diplomat, that the police would stop you and basically ask, you know, you would have to slip them some money. I certainly found that in Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan and I am told this happens all over. That is how the police get their salary.

TONGOUR: That is right. That happens in other parts of the world as well. I know that was the way it worked in Mexico as well.

Q: How about, while you were there did you find yourself dealing with the non-governmental organizations? Because the former Soviet Union was awash with all these groups that were coming out to do good or do well or something.

TONGOUR: Some. I have to tell you that in recent years I have worked with NGOs so much more that by comparison that particular period did not seem to be as rife with them. In the beginning stages of state formation, much of the outcry, to the extent that outcries regarding who did what to whom existed, centered on what the Russians collectively were doing in a particular area. For example, there was considerable pressure from human rights groups regarding individuals arrested by Transnistrian authorities, persons languishing in jails, or complaints about mistreatment of civilians (both Georgians and Abkhaz) in Abkhazia, primarily by Russian-backed elements. At that juncture, the bulk of such criticism was not leveled at the "host" Georgian or Moldovan governments. .

Q: Well, were you involved in supporting our efforts in nation building?

TONGOUR: Yes, but we did not call it that then. That terminology seemed to emerge a few years down the pike. That was in fact what we were doing. We were seeking ways to aid civil society, promote elections, combat corruption -- all the things that we think of today when we speak of governance and nation building, and that we continue to do. However, at that point we were still at stage one, namely how to build a government or some sort of political entity that was not simply a throwback to the old Soviet system. Even more basic: how to stage elections in these regions, how to secure the elections and ensure non-interference by the Russians. Another focal point was how to foster a modus vivendi with a former giant in a now newly diminished status and help it move forward in a positive way and forestall its devoting too much of its energy on the "Near Abroad". A few years later, the orientation would shift, and we would focus more on providing "concrete assistance" -- giving grants, building schools (including business schools) and other practical support as well as opportunities for their people to come here for training. In some ways we felt as though we were helping to give birth -- delivering countries rather than individuals.

Q: Well, you were doing this in what, '91 to?

TONGOUR: To '93.

E. WAYNE MERRY
Political Officer
Moscow (1991-1994)

Mr. Merry was born and raised in Oklahoma. He was educated at the Universities of Kansas and Wisconsin and Princeton University. After serving briefly at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium and in Washington, DC at the Department of the Treasury, in 1972 he joined the State Department Foreign Service. In addition to assignments on Capitol Hill, at the United Nations in New

York City, and at the Departments of State and Defense in Washington, DC, Mr. Merry served abroad in Berlin, Tunis, and Moscow. A Russian language speaker, he was a specialist in Soviet Union affairs. Mr. Merry was interviewed in 2010 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: So you go to Moscow. In the first place, you were there from when to when?

MERRY: I was there from the beginning of August 1991 to the middle of the summer of 1994.

Q: When you went—I suppose every month has a change—but when you went, what was the situation there?

MERRY: August in Moscow tends to be a fairly quiet time. This one proved not to be, to an extreme.

I think it is worth starting this section by saying that anyone reading my recollections of the end of the Soviet Union and the Moscow experience of 1991-94 should also look at the oral histories of several of my colleagues. I suspect the reader will encounter something of a “Rashomon effect” as each of us recalls the same events in different ways. Each will have our own priorities in how we remember and interpret those events, and each of us is subject to the frailties of personal memory. Obviously any history of August 1991 in Moscow, let alone of what followed, should be a history of the Russians and their experiences, but I cannot help but believe the perspective of official Americans who were there, and often directly engaged, will provide a useful counterpoint to the various Russian perspectives. I also would urge any researcher not to trust entirely the recollections of any individual, myself included, but to review a range of oral histories, compare them with other sources, and be constantly aware of the sharp divergence in the official perceptions in Washington and at the Moscow embassy. Those of us at the embassy enjoyed the huge advantage of proximity to the events in question, and we were frequently frustrated that Washington was often so behind those events in comprehension. At the same time, large governments are slow-moving organisms, while we in Moscow were but minor players in the formulation of American policy. These contrasts, Russian vs. American and embassy vs. Washington, can help clarify not only what the United States knew but what our government did with its knowledge.

Coming back to my initial weeks in Moscow that August, it was a time of transition at the embassy. Ambassador Jack Matlock was just completing his four-year assignment. He and I overlapped for only three days. I had a chance to chat with Jack only in passing as he was departing. The new ambassador, Robert Strauss, had not yet arrived. Our chargé was the deputy chief of mission, Jim Collins, who would later become ambassador in his own right. The embassy was in a temporary working environment because of a major fire at the old embassy building in the spring. It would be a couple of years before repairs to that structure would allow it to be reoccupied. The chancery was located in temporary quarters in what had been intended to be the Consular Section of the new embassy compound plus in a series of large metal containers in the underground parking garage of the new embassy compound. The high-rise future chancery building itself was sitting empty and uncompleted because of the problem of Soviet electronic listening devices that had been discovered in it and figuring out what to do about them. So, even

though there was a new office building sitting in the middle of the compound, it was not to be occupied for quite a few years to come.

The housing on the new embassy compound was all fully occupied. There were about 155 units, as I recall, which were already far too few for the greatly enlarged embassy staff. I had asked not to live on-compound. There was a gymnasium and a small swimming pool and a cafeteria and various support facilities, and then the temporary embassy working setup. The Economics Section and the Science Section were working in secure metal containers in the underground parking garage. The Defense Attaché Office was in space intended for a future bowling alley. The ambassador's office and the Political Section were better off as they occupied what had been intended as the future Consular Section. The ambassador and DCM shared a suite intended for the consul general and his deputy. The tripartite Political Section (Political/Military, Political/External, and my own Political/Internal) were all spread out in the consular waiting room. This was a big, open space, and we were working on sawhorse trestle tables. Some months later, we got cubicles which was sort of an improvement, but not much.

The Political Section in Moscow, at that time, was enormous by Foreign Service standards. It had well over three dozen people and I'm not counting cover positions in that figure. Political/Internal was half of the whole. At that time, it was reinforced with several officers called "circuit riders," young officers in new positions whose job was to travel around various parts of the Soviet Union for reporting and other purposes. In addition, two officers who were to open the new consulate in Vladivostok were attached to Political/Internal for reporting purposes for nearly a year. Thus, during this first year of my assignment, I was supervising 17 people; 16 reporting officers and a secretary.

Q: Of course, in Foreign Service terms that is absolutely remarkable.

MERRY: It must have been one of the largest peacetime reporting entities in the history of the Foreign Service. Within a year it shrank by a third, as several officers went to open new embassies in parts of the former Soviet Union. There was also a lot of turnover that summer. Political/Internal in August 1991 was an amalgam of about two-thirds new people and one-third carryover. Thankfully, one of the carryovers was my deputy, Ed Salazar, who, years later, would be head of Political/Internal in his own right.

Q: And whom I'm interviewing now.

MERRY: Good. He played an absolutely essential role during those months and was a real life-saver for me. I had Moscow experience, but not recent experience; so I had a lot to learn, but much less time than I needed. Hence, Ed was to me as Collins was to Strauss in some ways. The holdovers in Political/Internal were a very talented group and would by themselves have constituted a top-flight political section anywhere else. However, the incoming people were also a very talented group. Even though Political/Internal was unusually large, its quality was extraordinarily high. This team had been picked with some care, given the importance of the work we had to do. The Soviet desk in the State Department had a long tradition of emphasizing cadres and getting the very best people to serve in Moscow. I played no role whatever in the selection of my team, but doubt I could have assembled anything as good, let alone better.

Nearly a dozen of these people had just arrived in Moscow but without my experience of prior service there, with one exception. Most of the new arrivals, like myself, were in temporary quarters. I was camping out in a temporary apartment, and would not move into my real apartment until November because there just never was time with the political events taking place. Although my household shipment arrived in Moscow before I did, the crate sat in the embassy garage for almost half a year. Frankly, I got along pretty well just with airfreight. The physical working conditions of the embassy were not just provisional, they were chaotic. We were literally working on sawhorse tables in this huge room with almost 40 people, in what had been intended as a waiting room. Communications equipment and word-processing facilities were hopelessly inadequate, despite our status as the most important American diplomatic post on earth facing what soon would be the most important geopolitical events of our lifetimes.

The embassy was hobbled by a mass of security rules – much more than had been in effect during my previous assignment – despite the fact the Cold War was coming to an end. The embassy had experienced some real problems associated with bugs in the new chancery building, but also some alleged security compromises, especially involving one Marine security guard with a powerful fantasy life. The embassy security office in 1991 seemed determined to prevent anyone getting anything done, especially in the Political Section. That changed, thank God, after Ambassador Strauss took over. When I arrived, I learned that nobody was allowed to have any in-person contact with a Soviet citizen unless another cleared American was present. This was preposterous and completely impractical for Political/Internal. In-person contact was what we did, after all. So, at my first staff meeting as the new chief of Political/Internal, I gave everyone a blanket waiver from this restriction, but with the caution not to mention it to anyone. This worked fine until new, more rational, rules came into effect.

So, in the quiet period of mid-August everyone was trying to settle in and figure out where things and people were. I was meeting colleagues in other sections I would be working with. I knew some of the people, particularly in the Defense Attaché's Office, but there was only a single person in Political whom I had worked with during my previous Moscow assignment. Almost everyone was new to me, but then I was new to them. The city outside was the same; it was all fairly familiar but all very new and different.

I had been in town for 10 days, and had spent the weekend of August 17-18 in the office reviewing reporting files I had not seen for the preceding months—the reporting done by Political/Internal when I had been in the U.S.—so I would be up-to-date. I had not quite completed that task, so I decided to come in a couple of hours early on Monday, August 19, to finish it off, so I would start off that Monday, that week, fully read up and ready to get on with the job. Well, I never did get those damn files read.

I arrived at the embassy that Monday two hours before normal starting time—this was just at seven in the morning—by Metro, of course. I walked toward the north gate of the embassy compound, which is not the main gate; that was really the back gate and only for staff. There was a Soviet police booth in front of the gate with one uniformed Soviet police officer. He saw me and came out of the booth. This was no more than two or three minutes after the hour, after seven. I was reaching in my pocket to get my diplomatic ID so he would let me enter the

embassy. He didn't bother with that at all. He stepped in front of me and immediately asked, in Russian, "Are you an American?" I replied, in Russian, "Yes," figuring this was about identifying myself. He said, "Do you speak Russian?" I said, "Yes." His third question was, "Have you heard about the overthrow of the government?" Stunned, I said, "What?" He had just heard, on the radio, the first announcement of the putsch against Gorbachev, the first statement from the so-called Emergency Committee, that Gorbachev was "resting," meaning under house arrest, in Crimea and the committee was in charge. He quickly described to me what he had heard just seconds before on the seven o'clock special news broadcast. I was the first person he'd laid eyes on after hearing it. Then he said, "I am afraid, very". I replied, "me too." Then I ran past him through the gate, which had a little cipher lock on it. There was no American there. Unusually for me with my bad leg, I actually sprinted down the embassy compound to the Marine desk. There I found Jim Collins, who had also just heard the news – his townhouse was on the compound – and was already on the phone at the Marine desk back to the Operations Center at the State Department in Washington, telling them what was going on. Jim was not a former director of the Ops Center for nothing; we were their main customers for quite awhile thereafter.

I quickly consulted with Jim. He told me to get the defense attaché's people mobilized to check the city for military deployments. DAO was located right inside the entrance to the chancery and, being military guys, they tended to be early starters, so I knew there would be people there. I raced into their office. None of them knew what was going on because we were not allowed to have radios inside the embassy core for security reasons.

Q: Because fear of transmission.

MERRY: We got that foolish rule overturned fairly soon. In any case, I shocked the hell out of them with what was going on and told them Collins wanted them to start deploying around town, to see what was happening in terms of movements of forces. DAO (Defense Attachés Office) is absolutely superb at understanding what they're looking at when they see forces. Most civilians are hopeless at reporting military movements. "Oh, there were tanks moving." DAO would know what kind of tank, what unit, and what structure that unit works for, is it ministry of interior or KGB or Army. They know what they're looking at, whereas most civilians in the embassy gave reports so vague as to be more confusing. Thankfully, our military colleagues were concrete in their reporting.

Then I raced down into the Political Section and, God love him, there was Ed Salazar, already there, all alone. He had also listened to the news and knew things were going to be hopping. He was already busily checking the Russian wire service and figuring out what we actually could tell Washington. We were the only ones there. He had been the first member of the Political Section to arrive and I was the second. The next thing I did was start calling all our staff at home. I don't know how many people in the Political Section—I called my own people in Internal, first, obviously—were either woken up or had their breakfast scrambled that Monday morning by me informing them that Gorbachev had been overthrown, and giving them their initial assignments. I could hear gasps at the other end of the line. They answered the phone, with "Oh, good morning, Wayne. What's happening?" I said, "Gorbachev's just been overthrown." "What?" Then, "OK, here's what I want you to do. On your way in, I want you to stop at the following places to see

what is going on. Don't spend a lot of time because we're going to have a busy day. But on your way in, I want you to check the following." This was what Kent Brown had done with me the morning Brezhnev died, so I kind of felt at home. Then, of course, people started showing up in a hurry and we got ourselves organized.

At the time, not only did we not have an ambassador but the outgoing Political Minister Counselor, the person who supervised all three components of the Political Section, was literally packing out that day and the next. He had fairly limited time for the office. The newly arrived head of Political/External, Thomas Lynch, was on board, but the new Political Minister Counselor, Louis Sell, would not arrive for several weeks. Collins decided that we had to deal with this crisis on the assumption it would continue for some time. That was absolutely right. It was terribly important not to burn ourselves out in the first days, because embassies sometimes get so focused on dealing with a crisis, they don't pace themselves correctly. For reporting, he established a day team and a night team. This was not just for people in the Political Section but included reporting officers from the other State sections. Everybody focused on this crisis. The DAO and the CIA people had their own tasks to do. The administrative people had many tasks to do.

The State reporting people, which were from the Political, Economics and Science sections, were brought into this all-hands reporting operation. The night team was headed by Tom Lynch and the day team was headed by me. They overlapped. The day shift, as I recall, was about 15 hours long, and the night shift was about 12 hours because we needed a certain amount of time to pass the baton and get people briefed on current events. The idea was that when people completed their shift, they would go home and get some sleep. I found this was a problem, particularly with some of the more junior officers. They wanted to be involved all the time. I got short with some of them, exercising my nascent authority, saying, "We're going to be doing this for days, maybe for weeks, maybe for months." I had been on some 24-hour crisis teams before, and could appreciate that human frailty becomes a real problem if you don't pace yourself through these things.

Q: Let's say the first 12 hours, as you are all getting out, getting information and all, what were you coming up with? A couple scenarios, maybe two scenarios, three? What were our concerns?

MERRY: Our first concern was just trying to find out what the hell was going on. Another concern—not mine, but it was an embassy concern—was, of course, the safety of embassy personnel and other Americans in Moscow. Few people had ever imagined a coup in Moscow, so there was something of a tendency among tourists and contractors to panic. This is a primary consular function, and it was an important one, though there really was no danger if people stayed away from the key political points of the city. However, the situation for the embassy was very different, because the main focus of opposition to the putsch was at the so-called Russian White House, which is right across the street from the new U.S. Embassy compound. It is a wide street, but the locus of Yeltsin's opposition was within 200 yards of our compound wall. We were not just eyewitnesses. The embassy, in which 155 families lived, was potentially in the line of fire of anything that would happen. Two years later, it was very much in the line of actual fire: a lot of bullet holes and one near fatality. That was not the case in 1991, but there was no way of knowing how things were going to develop and how much violence might come with it.

Security was not my concern. My concern was reporting, making sure our people were getting out to the right places, including those who already had local contacts, that we were in touch with people: officials, semi-officials, dissidents and, in particular, as Yeltsin rallied the opposition across the way at the Russian White House, in establishing regular communications with his people, with him. We also had to regularize our reporting, for which there are standard Foreign Service procedures for situation reporting in a crisis. Fortunately, we had a few hands who had been through coups in other posts, so they knew the drill. This is not something an embassy should try to do ad hoc; following the established procedures for crisis reporting really does result in a better job. Obviously, we were doing classified telegraphic reporting – sit reps (situation reports) plus analytic reports – but also real-time telephonic reporting to the task force in the State Operations Center which, like it or not, had to take place over an unsecured telephone line. The secure telephone equipment we had then was just more damn trouble than it was worth. In any case, by the time the Soviets monitoring our conversations with Washington could get them transcribed and processed, the crisis would be over.

Q: When you arrived, just before this, how did we view Yeltsin? In the first place, talk about straight-line projections, Yeltsin was considered a little bit of a fly in ointment wasn't he? Gorbachev was our man and Yeltsin was ... How did you all feel about that?

MERRY: Washington, I think, regarded Yeltsin as a dubious character, but I had enough impressions from the previous year to know that Yeltsin was immensely popular, particularly in the city of Moscow where he had been a progressive head of the Moscow party apparatus until his resignation from the Soviet leadership. Yeltsin was a man who—in retrospect this might not be so obvious, but you can take my word for it—had real charisma, particularly face-to-face, in front of a crowd, in the flesh. Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin had charisma by the bucket. I have never been in the presence of anyone else who exuded such an aura of dynamism and sheer force of will. He was a true leader, a commander. It was, I think, pretty obvious to all of us in Moscow that with Gorbachev under lock and key down in Crimea, and with the institutions of the Soviet government in the hands of the Emergency Committee, there was only one locus of opposition and that was Yeltsin. A lot of people who rallied to Yeltsin that week were not particularly enthusiastic about him personally or about his policies. But they understood that he was a true leader, in much the same way that in 1940 many people in Britain, such as the Labour Party, who had serious peacetime reservations about Winston Churchill said, “This is not peacetime. Whatever else Winston may be, he’s a fighter.” In 1991, in August, whatever people may have thought about Yeltsin in other terms, everybody knew that Boris Nikolayevich was a fighter.

Q: Did we feel that if we had our druthers, that this committee that was formed to oust Gorbachev was a bad thing?

MERRY: Yes, we certainly did. I do not recall so much as a moment in which that issue was in doubt. During that first day a number of things happened in Moscow and back in the States that were quite important in establishing Washington’s view. Now, keep in mind that most of this was communicated at the policy level by Jim Collins, our chargé.

Q: Whom I’m interviewing now.

MERRY: Quite correctly. He was the only one in direct touch with Washington at a senior level. My job, as head of the day shift, which was about 15 hours long for me, was to direct a very large reporting effort, which meant I was the guy to whom everybody fed information. I was not out on the streets. I was not out gathering information. I was not having conversations with Russians. That would have been my personal preference, but that was not my role. I was the person to whom several dozen people were providing input and I was making sure it went back to Washington in different formats. I was familiar with the requirements of crisis reporting and since, speaking candidly, I can get prose down clearly and accurately in a hurry, my job was like that of the editor of a news room at a major newspaper in a crisis. I was not the reporter, I was the editor.

We had—and this demonstrates how primitive things were—we had, between the embassy and Washington, one working telephone line. One. Keep in mind that there were pitifully few telephone lines between Moscow and the West at that time. That one telephone line was at a desk in the Political Section. At one point, someone foolishly hung up the phone and it took us I don't know how long to get another line back to Washington. Then we wrapped the cradle of the telephone in masking tape, so it could not be hung up. It looked like a mummy telephone, that stayed open 24 hours a day for the duration. That was the primary mechanism for quick reporting. This was an open international phone line, so it was certainly tapped, and not just on the Soviet end, it was probably being tapped by several governments before it ever got to Washington. The phone line was how we kept the Operations Center task force informed of quick-breaking news. Then the sit reps, the situation reports, were the classified telegraphic means to inform a broader official Washington readership on an hourly, and multi-hourly basis, of what was going on. Then there were the daily wrap-ups and evaluations, which I will come to. We were interrupted a lot with queries from Washington. I remember, I was supervising the preparation of a situation report . . .

Q: This is the first day?

MERRY: This is on the first day. Whoever was monitoring the telephone to the State Department Operations Center, turned around and said, "Where's Jim?" I was already getting annoyed with Washington always wanting to speak with Collins, because they needed to learn to talk to other people and not always bother him. So in a testy way I asked, "Who wants him?" The answer was, "The president." The room went dead. Total silence. I turned to somebody and said, "Get Jim." All of us then watched Collins, as the chargé, on his end of the conversation with the president at Kennebunkport in Maine. I think I will let Jim relate that conversation in his oral history. However, this led to what I think was one of the most important aspects of American policy that first day. We had violated the security rules and got a television into the political section...

Q: You had to.

MERRY: So we could watch CNN (Cable News Network). We had to watch CNN to know what people in Washington were seeing on CNN – often to correct something they reported wrong. However, I remember distinctly watching President Bush giving an impromptu press conference

at Kennebunkport, and his statement, when somebody asked him if the United States would accept Gorbachev's removal, Bush said, "Coups can fail." I think those were three of the most important words that George Herbert Walker Bush ever said in public, because it was a message heard in Russia. In addition to the messages we were sending to Yeltsin personally—when Jim went over to see him, when other people we had working in the Russian White House gave messages to Yeltsin and to people around Yeltsin—this was a public message. This was a statement from the President of the United States that the United States was not taking this coup as a *fait accompli* (an accomplished fact), that we were keeping an open position.

Some other Western governments, unfortunately, were less far-sighted. Some European governments were already communicating that they were willing to accept Gorbachev's overthrow and proceed with the new order.

Q: Which governments are these?

MERRY: I remember the French government was a little precipitant in its willingness to take things as they appeared. However, the only Western government statement that anybody on the streets in Moscow, anybody in the Russian White House, gave a damn about was ours. President Bush's statement was not a condemnation of the putsch as such but was a clear statement we were not involved with the putsch, which some people might have suspected, and that we were keeping our options very much open. It was terribly important. It meant that people on Yeltsin's side understood that the Americans hadn't committed themselves to accept what had been done illegally in their country.

For many, many people in Moscow and in other parts of Russia, this whole crisis was about something which had scarcely existed in Soviet politics, which was legality. A large part of why people rallied at the Russian White House was not so much support for Gorbachev or what Gorbachev was doing—because by that time Gorbachev had lost much of his credibility and popular support—but because his removal was the result of a palace coup and was clearly illegal. That was extremely important and represented a watershed in Russian political history. A lot of Russians thought, "We going to put Gorbachev back in his legal position and then we'll change him, then we'll remove him legally." The focus on legality is what made the events of August 1991 unique in Russian history and why the American official position was so important to the people defending legality there.

At the end of the first day, we had to figure out what we thought it all meant. Jim Collins, and the outgoing Political Minister Counselor and I sat down in a tiny classified conference room to discuss this. Since I was the head of the day reporting team, it was my job to write the message. We discussed what it should say. This was Collins's interpretation, because it was his embassy, but an interpretation with which I entirely agreed, that as the sun went down the first day, the outcome of the coup attempt against Gorbachev was an open question, it was by no means clear how this was going to work out. There were a number of very strange things about this putsch. First, there was nothing up in the sky. There were no helicopters. They didn't have control of army aviation.

Q: In other words, the coupers did not have full control over the world?

MERRY: That's right. We also knew from our colleagues up at the consulate general in Leningrad that the navy was not on board. We had considerable indications that the air force was not on board. The very fact they were conducting a coup in the middle of the massive metropolitan area that is Moscow and there were no helicopters in the sky was a fairly strong indication that not everything was under control. Second, the telephones were still working in the White House. Yeltsin had telephones. What the hell kind of a coup is it when you can't control who's got a telephone land line? (This was before cell phones.) There were just a lot of things that were not clear.

In contrast, it was clear from our talking to people around the Russian White House that not only was there genuine large-scale popular support for Yeltsin—particularly among young people—but that the various military units deployed around the Russian White House were under different and perhaps contradictory chains of command. The junior officers, the company-grade officers, who were there in armored personnel carriers hadn't the faintest idea what they were supposed to do. They were receiving very conflicting indications from their respective chains of command as to what they might be ordered to do. Here were young guys in military equipment, with loaded weapons, looking around and unsure what the other units under other chains of command might do. If ordered to move forward, they did not know if the units to their right and left might do the same or perhaps open fire on them. It was clearly a very uncertain situation.

Then there was the famous press conference by the Emergency Committee, which was something of a shambles, during which the chairman, Vice President Yanayev, as he was reading their statement, was trembling. You could see on television his hand shaking like a leaf. For most Russians, that was the dominant visual image of the putsch. Most people outside of Russia think of the image of Yeltsin standing on the armored vehicle reading his statement. That was a CNN image, a global image. It was carried, at least once, on Russian television, but the dominant image for Russians, because it was live and unedited, was Yanayev's hand shaking as he read the statement. So it was pretty obvious to people this was a less than impressive bunch of coup plotters.

So, our assessment, in a fairly short telegram for high-level distribution in Washington at the end of the first day, was that the putsch was by no means a done deal. This coup was by no means a success. We would just have to play this situation as it developed, which as it happened took only three days. Then, to show myself as an example to the other day staff, I went home to bed.

The second day is one I don't remember very well except that there was a lot of work. It is striking that many parts of the first and third days of the putsch are crystal clear in my memory, but the day in between is pretty much a blur. The weather deteriorated, with overcast and rain, to match the political mood. We settled into a pattern of reporting activity, with everyone knowing what their duties were. The opposition forces also settled in at the White House, making it clear they were there for the duration. This presented the Emergency Committee with a problem. They may have expected public demonstrations to be short lived, but that was not the case. In their preparations for their seizure of power, the plotters had devoted inadequate attention to the White House, the seat of the Russian Federation government. It is not true, as many people think, that the plotters failed to secure the center of Moscow; they very much secured the Kremlin, the

Central Committee complex, the KGB complex and defense ministry, the Moscow city government building, and most of the other important institutions of Soviet power. What they failed to move against promptly was an institution of the Russian Federation. The Russian White House was not an important Soviet institution. It was the headquarters of the government of the Russian Federation, which in the Soviet system had been a facade of an institution and even something of a joke, until Yeltsin made it otherwise. In my previous Moscow assignment, I don't think it had ever crossed my mind to seek an appointment in the Russian Federation government, because it was not a government in substance. I suspect the coup plotters failed to deploy forces early against the White House because it did not occur to them that this white marble building on the edge of central Moscow could represent power, let alone legitimacy, in Soviet affairs. They secured what for them were the bastions of Soviet power, like the Kremlin, but neglected the physical seat of Yeltsin's position, the Russian Federation government. By the time they recognized their error, the crowds defending the White House were too large to disperse without major bloodshed, something they wanted to avoid.

The second night the Emergency Committee sent in a small armored unit to probe the defenses around the White House. There was considerable confusion among the various units involved, plus a lack of clear direction at the top. They encountered serious resistance in one of the traffic underpasses just a block from the embassy, in which three young Russian men were killed. I was asleep at the time because that was not my gig; I was not doing night duty. It was not a very resolute use of force and demonstrated, if anything, the fissures within the plotters and their lack of will and of a thought-out plan.

The third day, the Wednesday, was the day the putsch collapsed—and parts of that day are utterly vivid in my memory. It's hard to convey, but in my chief-editor position, reports started coming in to me from our people and from other sources that made it clear things were falling apart, made it clear the coup plotters were moving towards a plan B. I remember a period in the early afternoon when I could almost physically feel the putsch disintegrating. Some of this was instinct, but the momentum of events seemed very clear to me. This may sound like a weak basis for telling Washington the coup was failing, but in Moscow there was really no ambiguity in my mind. After only two weeks back in Moscow, I was already drawing important conclusions from incomplete evidence, but that is part of what I was paid for. The conclusive piece of evidence was when we learned the coup leaders were headed for Vnukovo airport south of the city to fly down to Crimea to talk to Gorbachev. At that point, whatever residual authority they may have possessed disappeared, as everyone on the Russian side recognized the putsch had failed.

As it happened, this took place simultaneous with the arrival in Moscow of Robert Strauss, the new U.S. ambassador, who had been sworn in hastily in the Oval Office when the coup started. Jim Collins, the chargé, had gone out to Sheremetyevo airport north of Moscow to greet him and bring him to the embassy. As they were coming into the city along the Leningradsky Prospekt, they passed lines of armored vehicles going away from the center. The orders had been given to return to barracks. So, they could see what was happening even if they had no other information. I calculated—because we didn't have cell phones in those days, so you had to do these things by guesswork—when I thought it likely the car with Ambassador Strauss and Collins and some of Strauss's associates would arrive, and I raced out to what's called Townhouse One, the DCM's residence, where they were going to arrive. I got to the sidewalk just a couple of minutes before

the vehicle pulled up. The doors open, and out steps Robert Strauss. I knew what he looked like, but I had never met him. He sees a disheveled guy in a dirty white cotton sweater—I hadn't slept much and I probably looked like hell—a rather improbable excuse for an American diplomat on the sidewalk, who was introduced to him by Collins. Jim didn't fully know what was going on during the time he had gone to the airport to pick up the ambassador. I quickly briefed them on what we knew and what I thought was happening. Strauss – always to the point – asked me, very clearly, “Are you telling me you think this coup has failed?” I said, “Mr. Ambassador, that's exactly what I am telling you.” Happily, my analysis was right. It was ironic that Strauss had been sent out to Moscow in a hurry to deal with one set of circumstances, one situation, and within minutes of his arrival was facing a very different one, and a much better one.

Things were somewhat confused for awhile. A group of western ambassadors was preparing to fly to Crimea to engage Gorbachev, and they wanted at least Collins to go with them. Fortunately, he did not, because Gorbachev was already on the way back to Moscow. Then came the important question how we would deal with the return of Gorbachev, which took place that evening, and our relations with Yeltsin. Keep in mind that Gorbachev was again the legal head of the Soviet power structure and Yeltsin technically was a second-tier figure as head of the Russian Federation government, at that time still a federal component of the Soviet Union. Obviously, their roles were reversed in terms of the legitimacy of their positions and their popular credibility. The Soviet structures under Gorbachev were either collapsing or transferring their allegiance to Yeltsin. This was a tricky time for the United States because, of course, governments deal with other governments. Strauss would present his credentials in a few days to Gorbachev. Washington very much wanted Gorbachev's return to constitute a restoration of his authority, regardless of the failing integrity of Soviet institutions. To anyone actually in Moscow during those few days, however, the contrary reality was manifest. You could see it and you could feel it. Power had shifted and the integrity of the Soviet state was irrevocably gone. I knew in my own mind that the only questions were of time and process, but not of outcome. I am fairly certain my view was shared by many of my colleagues. As we soon learned, it was not shared by Washington.

For me, personally, those three totally exhausting days were the beginning of what would be an exhausting seven months, and even three years. However, that evening I finally was able to get out to walk around, walk around the Russian White House, around the barricades where the young people had rallied to Yeltsin. There was still the detritus of the three days all over the streets. It was one of those beautiful, late-summer Moscow evenings, after a couple of cold and rainy days. Almost everyone had gone, probably in need of food and sleep, as actually I was. It was nine or later, which was as early as I could get out of the embassy. God, it was a beautiful evening and, for the most part, I had this great historic scene to myself. It was very odd to be on that historic ground while still daylight, but almost nobody else there. I remember walking, looking at all this, and thinking, “Hundreds of years from now, a thousand years from now, people will be writing and debating about what happened right here this day. And I'm here. I'm seeing it and I was part of it.” I had a profound sense of being on one of the cusps of history, of being an observer and, in a small way, a participant, in what I already clearly understood was the greatest geopolitical transformation of my lifetime. I understood this was the end of the Soviet Union; that the Soviet Union could not recover from this. Although it was warm, I felt chilly just from the realization of standing on the edge of an historic tectonic plate that had just moved. I

would not trade that evening for any other of my life.

Q: The planes are going down, Gorbachev is released and coming back, was there the feeling, with the armed forces, the KGB and all that lined up against them, that they were going to go down quietly? Or were you thinking of Red and White armies?

MERRY: We didn't know too much of what was going on behind the scenes, though there were plenty of rumors, of course. The one really important thing was the largely peaceful collapse of the putsch. Other than the three young men who had been killed in the night fighting the second day, there was no lethal violence. Jim and I represented the United States at their funeral a few days later. There were three suicides among those involved in the coup attempt. A real loss was Marshal Akhromeyev, a very honorable man and not one of the original organizers of the putsch, who joined it from a sense of duty, and then committed suicide. His entire life had been defined by the military slogan "I serve the Soviet Union." I suspect that is why he aligned himself with the putsch, despite reservations, to try to preserve the state to which he had devoted his life. I know his death was very much regretted by his counterparts in Washington. I understand Colin Powell thought the world of him. Here was a man who felt his honor required him to atone with his life. For the most part, the organizers of the putsch passively accepted the outcome and they were sent to—I think they were in Lefortovo Prison. I'm not absolutely sure. I believe it was Lefortovo where they were imprisoned.

Once Soviet willpower failed at the top, the intimidating aura of the police state more or less evaporated. Moscow in the ensuing days had a party atmosphere. The first two-and-a-half days of the week had been gray and rainy. The end of the putsch brought with it the sun. Then there were several days in Moscow of those lovely, late-summer Russian days that were just made for the festive atmosphere which came pouring out. On the Thursday evening, the day after the putsch collapsed, a colleague and I were on Dzerzhinsky Square, in front of the KGB building, as they were taking down the huge statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the creator of the Soviet secret police. There were fireworks in the sky. We went down to the Communist Party headquarters building on Old Square, where a number of Yeltsin's associates had taken possession of the building, so the files couldn't be taken away or destroyed. There is a street that looks past the Communist Party headquarters and into Red Square, along which you can see the flagpole on top of what's called the Senate building inside the Kremlin. Instead of the red flag with the hammer and sickle on it, there flew the white, blue and red Russian tricolor. I practically put my neck out as I did a violent double-take as my peripheral vision spotted what, to me, seemed the wrong flag on the flagpole. I physically catapulted around when I saw the Russian tricolor above the Kremlin rather than the Soviet flag. I had not expected that change to come so quickly, but whoever it was within the Kremlin who flies the flag understood which way the wind was blowing in every sense.

The next morning while taking the metro to work I decided to stop by Dzerzhinsky Square to see if anything was still going on after the festivities of the previous evening when the statue was removed from the massive pedestal in the center of the square. It was, for many people, a normal working day. As I came up the steps to ground level, I walked beside a Moscow matron with her shopping bags, shuffling up the steps. As we came into the open, she gave a casual glance to her left onto the square, stopped dead in astonishment, and asked of nobody in particular, "Where's

Felix?”

As busy as we continued to be professionally in the embassy during the days after the putsch, we could enjoy the festive atmosphere, the sense of celebration, of triumph, of a kind equal to Berlin with the fall of the Wall. This was a genuine expression of what is sometimes called “people power”. Now, that statement simplifies what happened. I’m not for a moment saying these events involved more than a tiny fraction of the population of the city of Moscow, or the city of Leningrad, let alone the population of the country. This was not a mass movement as had been true in Poland and in East Germany and then Czechoslovakia, but these events certainly had mass resonance. This was a failed palace coup. But unlike the palace coup that removed Ceaușescu in Romania, the palace coup in Moscow failed in large measure because of mass popular opposition on the streets, particularly in Moscow and in Leningrad, and because there was a political force in opposition, centered around Yeltsin. The coup plotters bungled things. They took physical possession of the wrong center of power in Moscow. They deployed in force around the Kremlin and Red Square, but were slow to move against the Russian White House. They didn’t understand there was an alternative source of political legitimacy, or that Yeltsin could rally mass support a couple of miles away from Red Square. Perhaps with more resolution and better coordination, they could have pulled it off, but they could not turn back the clock to the era of Brezhnev or Chernenko.

This was really a question of willpower. I don’t think anybody can deny that Boris Yeltsin had guts and he had determination. For all his later failings, which I have written about elsewhere, he was the unquestioned man of the hour in Russia in August 1991. Not Gorbachev. If Yeltsin had failed, he would have paid for it with his life, and he knew it. He showed leadership, and he displayed backbone and determination, which inspired a lot of other people to do the same. The people on the other side were internally divided, bickering, sometimes drunk, and unable to get their own institutions, particularly the military, to back what they were doing. It was the unwillingness of the military to rally around the coup that was its ultimate undoing.

I think some of the real heroes of this episode—the unsung heroes, at any rate—were the senior military people who themselves regarded the putsch as illegal, who hewed to their own sense of duty, and maintained their professionalism rather than participating, because they certainly had ample forces with which to crush the opposition. I don’t think there’s any question they could have done so. But it was not clear who was going to give the orders and who was going to obey those orders. It was a remarkable moment in the history of any country, let alone the history of a place like Russia, to have an event of such political importance take place more outdoors than in; more on the streets than behind closed doors. That fact was reflected in the thousands of people who participated, even in a small way, and who could feel real pride. There have not been many events like that in modern Russian history.

Q: Did we have any contact or encouragement role, during this first day, with Yeltsin?

MERRY: The first day or first days?

Q: Well, first day.

MERRY: The first day, yes. Collins went over to see him with a message from the president.

Q: What was the message, essentially?

MERRY: Well, I'm not sure I should be the one to discuss that. Since you're interviewing Collins, maybe he should deal with that.

Q: OK. Were we talking, at your level, with people down below?

MERRY: Oh, yes. And we weren't simply maintaining sources of information, we were communicating sympathy and support. Fortunately, that turned out all right, but it might not have. As a diplomat you've got to be careful about the perception that you're promising more than you're actually going to be able to deliver. Obviously there was the risk that people would interpret any indication of support from the United States as more tangible than just political. That was a problem.

Later in the week our involvement lost any ambiguity. We very publicly welcomed the failure of the putsch and the return of Gorbachev. We cheered Yeltsin. Strauss spoke for the United States at a mass rally on the weekend – entirely without authorization from Washington and without a prepared text – to associate our country with what had happened. I don't think most people in Washington understood that Gorbachev was returning for his last hurrah—he returned to Moscow, but not to power in any real way—and that Yeltsin had emerged from this event the unequivocal leader of Russia. That was soon manifest in a combined session of the Soviet and Russian Supreme Soviets when Yeltsin overtly dominated Gorbachev, almost forcing him to read aloud the names of those who had conspired against him, a list of men he had himself put into positions of power. Anyone watching that event could see both that power had shifted to Yeltsin and that he would not accept anything like a subordinate position to Gorbachev again.

Keep in mind that there was a lot of bad blood between the two men, and that Gorbachev had several times publicly humiliated Yeltsin. Boris was getting some revenge on Gorbachev, a man who was much more haughty and arrogant at home than his Western image. Yeltsin had endured a lot from Gorbachev in a very personal way and would now return the favor. However, the basic issue was not personal but political. Gorbachev had, to the very end, staked his banner to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as the vehicle of his power. When his own team within the Party and Soviet power ministries lost faith in Gorbachev and betrayed him, he was left with no real basis of power and authority. In contrast, Yeltsin had built a new vehicle in the Russian Federation after leaving the Party and, with his triumph of August, enjoyed massive legitimacy. What made this process so post-Soviet was that legitimacy was the core component of power; legitimacy actually mattered. That was Gorbachev's legacy, though it pulled the rug out from under him.

This began a difficult process between the embassy and Washington. In the weeks and months to come, Washington was continuously behind events in Russia and frequently, I would have to say, in denial as to what was happening. There were debates, legitimate debates, about exactly what was happening. Within the embassy there were conflicting views whether Gorbachev was finished or was now going to get his second wind. A few thought that, restored to office and with

the putschists out of the way, he would be able to fulfill his program. There were other people who said it was only a matter of time before his lack of political authority would be entirely exposed, as well as his own responsibility for the crisis of August. Remember, the people who tried to overthrow Gorbachev were people he had trusted despite warnings from Shevardnadze and others that they were going to move against him. Gorbachev was the man at the top, so the ultimate accountability rested with him, which he was not willing to accept.

These were legitimate debates, toward the end of August, as to what was happening and what was going to happen. To me, as someone who was on the scene, who had daily engagement with these events, not from a distance but with immediacy, it was quite clear that Gorbachev was politically finished, expended, exhausted, whatever term you want to use, and that Yeltsin had emerged from these events the unambiguous winner. There was not going to be a duality of leadership, there wasn't going to be both a Soviet and a Russian Federation leadership for more than an interim period. No repetition of the "war of the laws" of the previous spring. There was going to be just one power in Moscow, and it was going to be Yeltsin.

I must acknowledge that in one of my early messages after the putsch I fudged the question of Gorbachev's future. This was an analysis summarizing the events of August and what they meant for the United States. I recall I used the phrase, "we should not abandon Gorbachev." I regret that now. I would not have recommended actual abandonment of the man, but I should have stated clearly that he was finished politically. My hesitancy reflected the split views within the embassy and, I suspect, my position as a relative newcomer. I recall a spirited conversation with Robert Clarke, the head of the Science Section and a good friend from my first Moscow assignment, in which he argued forcefully there would be only one man standing and it would be Yeltsin. I agreed with him, but was not yet willing to be so forthright in what I wrote to Washington. That would change quite soon, but I was still a bit uneasy in my new role as political analyst at the most important embassy of the United States during this immensely important global transformation. I was still somewhat intimidated by the role and the responsibilities it entailed, and unwilling to stake my views to the mast for all to see. Events would change that soon enough.

It was also pretty obvious that the Soviet Union as a multinational empire was coming apart; the three Baltic states were not only going but, for practical purposes, were already gone. Yeltsin made it clear publicly he was happy to cheer them on. I remember in late August getting a phone call—how he got the phone call through I still can't comprehend—from one of our officers from the Leningrad consulate who was in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, calling me from the KGB headquarters building in the center of Vilnius. He had accompanied a number of Lithuanians who went to the KGB headquarters to see that files didn't get destroyed. When they arrived, at about six o'clock or so on a summer evening, the building doors were open; they went in and everything was intact. The staff had simply removed their personal belongings and had left everything entirely in place. After a while he picked up the telephone and was able to get a call through to me at the embassy in Moscow. I can still remember the awe in his voice that he was calling me from inside the KGB headquarters in the capital of a Soviet republic. His Lithuanian friends were in possession. Clearly Soviet power in the Baltic states was a thing of the past. Things were also beginning to move fairly quickly in Moldova, in western Ukraine, central Ukraine, in Georgia, in Armenia. Less so in the central Asian countries, but I think the fragility

of the Soviet system was becoming pretty clear.

Q: What about Leningrad/St. Petersburg, what was happening there?

MERRY: That was second only to Moscow as a place where interesting things were happening. The mayor, Anatoly Sobchak, was one of the leading reformers in the Soviet system. He actually was the first political sponsor of Vladimir Putin, who was one of his students in law school and became a deputy mayor sometime later. One of the first things Sobchak did after the putsch was change the name from Leningrad back to St. Petersburg. The consulate-general had done superb work covering the Baltic states for several years, but Washington imposed an abrupt halt to that work when we recognized their independence, which cut off a large number of valuable contacts in those countries for months.

At the start of September, the new minister-counselor for the Political Section, Louis Sell, arrived. He was in overall charge of the three components of the section and was the management layer between it and the front office, meaning Strauss and Collins. His arrival changed what had been a pretty informal and very collegial working environment into something more structured and layered, as was probably inevitable. I had been in the habit of working directly with Collins morning, noon and evening. As the events of August were overwhelmingly the responsibility of Political/Internal, it was natural that the embassy front office should engage us without an intervening layer. Probably I was spoiled during the putsch and its aftermath. However, it was time for the embassy, with something like 1200 total staff, to function in a more structured way. Political would always have pride of place with the front office, and we were physically the closest to the ambassador and DCM, but they had a lot more to worry about than us.

I had never worked before with Louis Sell and had met him only briefly while in Washington on consultations. He had a background in Soviet and Yugoslav affairs, but I really knew very little about him. I came to have considerable professional respect for Louis, but unfortunately never a true collegial relationship. Our personalities contrasted quite a bit: I am a compulsive wit – even a smart aleck – while Louis is not real strong on irony. He arrived in Moscow with the declared view that the failed putsch demonstrated the failure of reform in Russia, while I saw it as a huge step forward. I came to see Louis as more comfortable with the unambiguous confrontation of the Cold War than with the messy post-Soviet and inchoate Russia we were dealing with. Louis can be, at least in my perspective, somewhat Manichean in his political outlook, whereas post-Soviet Russia was nothing if not morally ambiguous. Our contrasting views and personalities would cause problems in the years ahead.

Political/Internal emerged from the events of August a genuine team. I do not mean to say there were no personal tensions, but they were few. It was the hard work and strain of August that forged the team, much more than I ever could have done. This was a genuine blessing for me, because for the following two years I had a reporting instrument in my hands that largely functioned on its own; in the third year with new people this was not the case. I never was able to overcome the tendency of FSOs to want their own personal portfolio rather than sharing their work with colleagues. People in our line are quite territorial, and I had hoped to change this in Political/Internal based on my experience with the Marine Corps. I failed, as each officer hewed

to his or her own turf. It is part of our institutional culture and, much as I deplore it, my management skills – such as they are – were insufficient to alter the culture. Otherwise, my management duties were remarkably light. I had to provide direction and definitely had to exercise quality control on written product, but this was a group of self-starting and self-motivated professionals of a very high order. Some were outstandingly good writers, though not all.

As the editor, it was a joy to receive drafts that I knew would receive keen attention in Washington, opening up new perspectives on local realities. My view was that there were thousands of people working on Soviet affairs in various parts of Washington and we should not duplicate work they could do any more than necessary. Our task, as the comparative handful of official Americans on the spot, was to observe, report and interpret in ways people in Washington could not. Our comparative advantage was proximity to the events, so that should be our focus. I encouraged my troops to get out of the office and on to the streets and into contacts with as wide a range of official and non-official people as time and circumstances allowed. Then, of course, they had to produce reports on what they had learned, preferably of a topical character rather than just a recitation of a conversation. Some drafts needed a fair amount of reworking, as I could be very demanding in terms of quality of written product. I considered we were the most important reporting section of the U.S. Foreign Service, so we owed Washington top-quality output. They suffered daily under my illegible blue pen, but I hope they emerged as better reporting officers from the ordeal. It is hard to know how you are regarded by those under your authority; I still do not know what they thought of me.

During these months, and even well into 1992, we at the embassy had access to Russian official and non-official contacts of a kind most diplomats could only dream about. I think it is not an exaggeration to say we had better access in those days in Moscow than we would in Ottawa. Indeed, our level of access was unnatural, and I warned my staff and official visitors that this was an abnormal period which could not last. It simply was not normal for a government, any government, let alone that of a great power with deep traditions of pride and of paranoia, to open itself up so completely to foreigners, and still less to foreigners from its former adversary. This struck me forcefully one evening when escorting a Congressional delegation to some meetings in the former Communist Party Central Committee building. This was a structure no U.S. Embassy official had set foot inside during my first Moscow tour, or ever expected to. Now, I was allowed by the Russians to wander around this inner sanctum of Soviet Communism without an escort of any kind. The corridors were piled with official portraits from the old regime waiting for disposal, even though that regime supposedly still existed. There I was strutting along like a conqueror looking at these relics of the Leninist system. It was a gratifying feeling, but I understood this was no more than a moment in time of Russian weakness, against which they would recoil, and those doors would close on us again.

As September progressed, it was pretty obvious the political competition in Moscow was coming to a crisis. By this point, Yeltsin had very little use for Gorbachev. The two men had once been allies, but with their political separation had developed a very deep personal antipathy. Really, neither of them could stand the other. Gorbachev's great historic achievement was in ending the Cold War, but he did so in order to preserve and perpetuate the Soviet Union and the Leninist system. Yeltsin, by contrast, came to regard the entire Soviet experiment as a mistake which

could not be reformed and should be abandoned. This was an extraordinary transformation for a man who was not just the product of the Leninist system but had risen almost to the top of it. This was, I think, as much a personal journey as a political one. After his first trip to the United States some months earlier, Yeltsin had told one of his closest associates, "Our system is shit!" In my view, Gorbachev was a great historic reformer, but Yeltsin was a great historical revolutionary. August and its aftermath gave him his opportunity. Yeltsin certainly had a very strong instinct for power, and understood he was the winner. Gorbachev was little more than a figurehead who was very popular among Western heads of government and Western journalists, but not within the Soviet Union, or within Russia. Gorbachev was a shadow of his former self, because by this point the Communist Party had been declared illegal. Since Gorbachev had been general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, that pretty much rendered his main source of power null and void. He still had his role as executive president of the Soviet Union, but what was the Soviet Union at this point? Who was there to command and who was there to obey? Increasingly little.

Strauss initially asked official Washington to stay away until things sorted out a bit. Senator Larry Pressler insisted on coming anyway just after the putsch, and I spent a Saturday handholding him when I had plenty else to do. Then came the flood of visitors and delegations. James Baker, the secretary of state, came for the first of his innumerable visits. I can't even remember how many times he came. With all of this activity, we were trying to explain what was happening within the limits of what we could understand. It was a changing tableau, and a rapidly changing tableau. The Russian cast of characters involved many people whose names now are no more than historical footnotes, but who were very important people then. For a few months there were parallel structures of governments and ministries, Russian Federation and Soviet Union, that obviously were not going to last very long. As the economy started to crumble and inflation started to soar and the integrity of basic livelihoods began to erode, Russians focused more and more on immediate issues: the coming of winter, among other things, which is a big deal every year, let alone that one.

There developed, during September, October, and November, an increasing gap within American official perceptions, a contrast between what seemed obvious in the embassy but either was not accepted or even rejected in Washington. Let me give you a vivid example. This is something I can talk about because there was a study done a couple of years ago for which the various documents were declassified. I was consulted for the study, so I know about it. I think I can legitimately discuss it now. In late October 1991, George Kolt, who was the National Intelligence Officer for the Soviet Union—he was the leading Soviet specialist at CIA—sent a memo to the White House, to the NSC, saying that Ukraine might become an independent country within five years. The leading Soviet specialist at the National Security Council, Edward Hewitt, rejected this entirely. The two of them—they're both now deceased—Kolt and Hewitt, got into what reportedly was quite a confrontation over this issue. They were two of the most senior Soviet watchers in the United States, and, in fact, probably the two most senior specialists on Soviet affairs in the government, and they were arguing into early November of 1991 whether Ukraine might become an independent state within five years. It happened within less than five weeks. They had been told that Ukraine was heading toward independence through a national referendum at the end of November in detailed reporting both from the consulate in Kiev and from the embassy in Moscow. The Russians knew Ukraine would be independent before the end

of the year, whether Russia liked it or not. Washington still perceived the Soviet Union as an intact and viable entity when its demise within weeks was no more than a formality. By mid-autumn we could see this, quite vividly, because we were at the very heart of the process. Washington was in denial. For example, having refused for decades to recognize the forcible incorporation of the Baltic republics into the Soviet Union by Stalin, the United States was one of the last Western governments actually to welcome them back as independence states in 1991 for fear this might somehow undermine Gorbachev.

This inability in Washington to see what seemed so obvious in the field was a major disconnect. It was reflected in October, when President Bush had his last summit meeting with Gorbachev, in Madrid. I did the scene-setter telegram for that, which I entitled Gorbachev's Last Hurrah – a reference to the Edwin O'Connor novel about Boston politics. I said very bluntly this would be Gorbachev's final performance as a statesman on the global stage. Ambassador Strauss went to Madrid for the summit and later debriefed a number of us on his return. He said he had given the same message to the president and the president's entourage before the meeting and told them, "Mr. President, you're looking at the last U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union and I'm going to be the first U.S. ambassador to a place called Russia." And evidently, Sununu, who was one of the president's top White House advisors...

Q: He was chief of staff, I think.

MERRY: Chief of staff, but not a foreign policy advisor, interrupted rather rudely and rejected what Strauss, the ambassador on the spot, had said. Sununu declared he had read all of the intelligence reports, that Yeltsin was just a flash in the pan and Gorbachev was the guy we needed to stay with. Strauss evidently told him off in fairly blunt terms. Here was a meeting with the President of the United States, the secretary of state, the director of Central Intelligence, Robert Gates, Scowcroft, the national security advisor, Sununu and a few others, and the only person in that room who understood what the hell was going on in Russia was Bob Strauss, a Texas politician with no background in Soviet affairs, but who had been ambassador in Moscow for a couple of months and who absolutely did know what the hell was going on.

Q: And he's also a politician. Being a politician, he knew power.

MERRY: He knew power very well. This actually might be a good moment to say a few words about Strauss...

Q: I interviewed him, by the way.

MERRY: For whom I had and have the greatest admiration and personal affection. I've often said that a couple years earlier or a couple years later, he might not have been the right man to be ambassador in Moscow. But in 1991, Strauss was exactly the right man at the right place at the right time because he brought to Moscow no intellectual baggage. Not being a Soviet specialist or a Russia hand, he didn't have any particular unlearning to do. He had extraordinary instincts and understanding of power relationships. This was a man who could walk into a room full of people he didn't know, with whom he didn't have any language in common, and when he walked out of the room he'd know exactly who was hot and who was not. I don't know how he did it,

but he did.

This was also a man who was absolutely no bullshit in his conduct of his ambassadorship. He never pretended to know anything he didn't know. He strongly took the view that other people in the embassy should candidly tell him what he ought to know. He frequently said that if you put himself and Collins together you had a pretty good ambassador. He never hesitated to give credit to Jim and others. He never considered himself to be anything he was not, but he was a superb leader of the team and terrific in making people in the embassy feel that what they did was important, that it mattered, that their judgments, their work, were feeding right in to the top of American foreign policy, that he was taking what they were telling him and giving that directly to the president in phone calls, in meetings and such. He was also remarkable at accepting the speed with which things were changing. He had a great metaphor, which was that we – including Russia's leaders – were all like a pissant riding on a log in a river going downstream imaging it determines the direction the log is going and its destination. So, anybody who thought they were in charge of Russia's future was like this pissant on a log. Strauss knew neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin was determining where things were going. They were going with the flow like everybody else. Strauss understood that the United States could not affect that, either; that we shouldn't even try.

I got to know Strauss during these months pretty well because he liked to interact directly with members of his staff who could help him understand the place. He had brought along a staffer from the State Department who, among other things, was supposed to be his speechwriter, but the first speech draft the guy produced, Strauss hated. Strauss went to Collins to identify someone else to write his speech. Collins fingered me and I wrote a draft that Strauss, frankly, loved. So, from then on, for the remainder of his time in Moscow, in addition to my other duties, I was the ambassador's speechwriter. Not that I needed any more work, but it did give me access to and contact with Bob Strauss that allowed me to appreciate that, behind the good-old-boy bonhomie of the Texas politician, was a man who was smart as hell. I also enjoyed getting his genuine voice into the speech drafts, based on our respective origins in Texas and Oklahoma.

Strauss was extremely well connected in Washington, and he understood how to use his ability to pick up the phone and get anybody in Washington to take his call. Two congressmen later told me that what became the "Freedom Support Act" of assistance for Russia and the other new countries should have been named for Strauss, as it was his personal lobbying for the legislation which got it passed. He also knew how to lead an embassy and make the embassy serve not just his own purposes but serve the broader purposes of the United States through him. He had not wanted the job in the first place, but knew he was a key man at a key time for the country, so he was going to do his best, but he had no false ego issues. Yeltsin warmed to him immediately; they were very sympatico. The Russians were impressed as hell at the things he could do, like picking up the phone and getting the president, senators, any Cabinet members on the line. A few months later, in early '92, the Russians were putting together their first presentation for the International Monetary Fund and didn't have a clue what do. I happened to be in Strauss's office when he put a phone call through to Paul Volcker, and the conversation was, "Paul? Bob. I want you to get your butt over here. I've got a job for you." Two days later, I was sitting across the table from Paul Volcker, briefing him on the domestic political situation.

Q: Paul Volcker was, at that time...

MERRY: I'm not sure what he was at that time. He was the former Chairman of the Federal Reserve System, but Paul Volcker was then, as now, one of the biggest names in American financial policy. To have somebody tell him to just drop everything and get on an airplane and fly to Moscow demonstrates the kind of thing that Strauss could do. No Foreign Service ambassador who ever lived could get away with something like that.

Strauss was also extremely good, as an ambassador, at lightening the mood. People were working very, very hard and there was an immense amount of stress, and some people were grinding the enamel off their teeth at night. People had a lot of trouble sleeping, and the embassy medical unit had to get extra supplies of various medications just for the Political Section. I was still on strong medications for my back injury from 1983 in New York, and the stress certainly did not make it any better. Strauss was great at getting people to lighten up, getting people to relax. He had an unlimited stock of jokes and funny stories which he used to lighten the mood and the load, which is also, I think, a characteristic of leadership. I will never forget watching Bob tell off-color Strom Thurmond jokes to a Senate delegation which included Strom Thurmond. Strauss was also very approachable, not at all at a distance from embassy staff. For example, most days he had lunch in the embassy cafeteria, standing in line like anyone else, often wearing a cardigan sweater. Anyone could sit with him and chat with the ambassador, which made people feel that the boss was one of them. This was a nice touch, from which Strauss also got access to a variety of views about post operations and such.

Above all, Strauss was known to be very close to the president and secretary of state—who were, of course, old friends and political rivals—and with practically every member of importance in the Senate and House of Representatives, and various other Cabinet members, everybody in Washington who was anybody. He was the man who could convince these people that, whatever Washington might want, the Soviet Union was coming to an end, Gorbachev was exhausted as a political force, and Yeltsin not only was the person we were going to deal with but Yeltsin was a person that we could and should deal with. Getting this message to Washington was, of course, my job, but in terms of effectiveness in communicating the message, nobody could compete with Strauss. I probably achieved more communicating through him than through reporting.

Strauss and Collins were very supportive of my role and my work, which was twofold. First, I was the editor for a huge reporting section, of 16 talented and productive reporting officers who pushed out a lot of reports. We were covering not just events in Moscow and in Russia, but in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Moldova. Our consulates in St Petersburg and Kiev covered lots of territory, but we still had most of the Soviet Union to report on. Members of my team were on the road constantly, and often in very difficult and dangerous situations. I vividly recall receiving a phone call at home in the middle of the night from one of my teams in Tbilisi when the civil war there was in full swing. They were calling from their hotel room in the center of the city, and I could hear the heavy shooting outside and even the impact of rounds on the wall of the hotel; not surprisingly, they were on the floor, but they managed to get a report through to me. This is the kind of work Political/Internal FSOs were engaged in. They routinely met directly with the top figures in the republics, who were eager for contact with the United States, even if that meant a first or even second secretary from our Moscow embassy.

There were many days when the volume of the reporting we sent to Washington was simply exhausting for me. I rarely got home before ten. I tried to be a light editor in some ways, in that I almost never rewrote anyone's text, but I could be a demanding editor in requiring them to rework their own texts to what I considered Moscow standard. Some of my staff produced drafts which required nothing more from me than my initials, with perhaps an occasional suggestion. Others, I regret to say, would turn in a basic draft which they had never bothered even to proofread themselves, depending on me to perform the quality control. This did not amuse me much, especially when I had to deal with this kind of thing several times a day. I found it was, in part, a generational thing. FSOs in their 40s produced drafts of a much higher quality than did the younger colleagues. One talented but erratic younger FSO explained to me that in school she had been taught to get in touch with her feelings rather than how to spell. That may be true, but I still believed that a member of the U.S. Foreign Service should not require a supervisor for things like subject-verb agreement.

The second part of my job, and the part I found most rewarding, was writing longer analytic reports to explain the broader picture of what was happening and what it meant. These are sometimes called “think pieces” in the Service, to distinguish them from normal day-to-day reporting. Now, even our routine political reports usually had a concluding comment paragraph or two explaining what the event meant for the United States. A busy person in Washington could read the summary of an embassy report and then flip to the back for the comment section and skip the main body of the message. Our reports contained the standard “who, what, when, where and why” of good reporting, but also tried to answer the question “so what?” I several times encouraged the entire Political/Internal staff to apply themselves to longer “think piece” analyses, telling them Washington needed multiple points of view about events of this magnitude, but none ever took me up on the offer. In part, I think they all felt they had more than enough to do, but in part I think there was some reticence to put themselves in the shoes of George Kennan, so to speak, and interpret for Washington the broad directions of Russia's future.

For myself, the “big picture” writing was what I found most enjoyable, although time consuming. I could not imagine a context better suited for broad-scale speculative analysis than the collapse of the Soviet Union and, as nobody else seemed interested in the task, I took it on with enthusiasm. It was part of my job, to be sure, but to be in charge of Political/Internal in Moscow was for me not just a challenge but a welcome opportunity. Unfortunately, the only time available for such writing was at night or on weekends (and I worked every Saturday and Sunday through the end of 1991 with the exception of one Sunday I was in Petersburg for consultations). I pulled many all-night drafting sessions in order to produce “think pieces” during this assignment, in part because there were always new and important things to interpret for Washington. The demands of combining my editor day job with my writing job were exhausting, but I always emerged from a solitary nighttime session working on a longer message with a deep sense of personal satisfaction. In part, it is the pure craftsmanship of writing that I love.

I was rather surprised at what I was able to get away with in terms of approvals for my messages. Any policy-relevant message required front-office approval as a matter of course. Often Louis Sell, the Political Minister Counselor, had reservations about some of my views, but he rarely challenged my drafts, as he recognized this kind of writing was inherent to my job. Collins and

Strauss were remarkably accommodating in sending in very expansive analyses which had one of their own names at the bottom. I already mentioned my scene setter for the Madrid summit, and there were others during the autumn. Later, when Yeltsin went to Camp David in early 1992 to meet with President Bush, I wrote a message trying to explain the Russian leader. Strauss appended a short paragraph at the end of the message saying he was not sure he agreed with all of the analysis, but wanted Washington to have the benefit of it. How could one not admire an ambassador with that kind of tolerance and self-confidence?

In early November of 1991, I became very frustrated by what I was hearing from Washington about lack of understanding of events in Russia, and especially the dispute between Kolt and Hewitt I mentioned earlier. It seemed incredible to me that Washington could not see that the Soviet Union was within weeks of its end, that they were still debating how to support Gorbachev. I worked out my frustration by writing a real zinger of a message, a report intended to be a bucket of ice water in Washington's face. I deliberately over-wrote the draft in anticipation the front office would tone it down quite a lot; I expected to sacrifice some florid language to get clearance on the basic arguments. Wouldn't you know, Collins and Strauss signed out the whole damn thing with only minor changes. I have a redacted copy of the message here with me, obtained by the Public Television program "Frontline" under Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) several years ago, so I can quote from it openly. The subject line pretty much conveys the tone of the message: The Bolshevik Goetterdaemmerung: End of Empire and Russian Rebirth. It is over 20 paragraphs intended to shock the State Department, or at least whoever might actually read the thing, out of their complacency about Soviet events. The lead paragraph opens with, "Leninism is dead." You get the idea: attract their attention through overstatement.

In the message I made the following arguments, each getting a paragraph or so: Soviet Communism failed due to its own deficiencies and deserved to; "the Soviet government is disappearing before our eyes like a sandcastle at high tide;" Gorbachev's days are numbered, and in days rather than months; "the Russian leadership is slap-happy from the ceaseless torrent of events;" Russian members of parliament "are struggling to determine what their role should be and how to stand up to their dominating (and sometimes domineering) president;" the Russian loss of imperial stature is unprecedented; for most Russians a greater shock than the failure of Soviet power is the independence of Ukraine; however, the separation of Russia and Ukraine will be peaceful, and not like Yugoslavia; while the response of Yeltsin and his team has been "remarkably moderate," "it is simply not in human nature for great empires to proceed graciously into extinction;" Russians "are not humbled by the mess they are in: frustrated, angry, confused, even humiliated – yes; humbled, no. Russians feel deeply their own greatness as a people;" August was not just the end of the Soviet era but "the onset of a dramatically new era in Russian history;" the newly independent states will be "something far less workable and dynamic" than the EU; the new Russian state will be the core of American interests; Russians "want a genuine partnership with America (not tutelage);" "Russia today is looking outward; it may not do so for long if it does not find answers to its problems;" the Marshall Plan is the wrong model for our engagement with the new Russia.

Unfortunately, at this point, the redacted version I have from FOIA blanks out the entire last two pages, which were the recommendations for U.S. policy. I do not cite this message just to

demonstrate my own prescience, because Sell, Collins and Strauss all agreed to it. This was not a message of dissent by an individual, of a kind I did later, but of dissent by the Moscow embassy. Sending this message certainly made me feel better, and I heard it received a very wide readership. Who knows? It may actually have done some good in persuading Washington that its preference, a restored Gorbachev with authority over a reformed Soviet Union, was simply not going to happen.

Q: One of the things, I think, for somebody looking at this in later times, is that Gorbachev, back in the establishment in the United States, was a darling.

MERRY: Very much so.

Q: Because he really had started things going. He was a steady force. And for that reason, you can't have two darlings, so Yeltsin was being denigrated. Yeltsin had drinking problems and personality problems, but the point being that he was really being knocked down by the munchkins, the little people in the White House and State Department and all, because their boy was Gorbachev. So this was not just cold analysis. No one would bet on this horse.

MERRY: Of course, it had taken Washington a fairly long time to warm to Gorbachev. Washington had been very skeptical about him for several years. So was I, for that matter. He was not a product of the Brezhnev era for nothing. He gets too much retrospective praise, in my view, because he remained a Leninist in thought and motivations. His biases and ignorance about America were much worse than Reagan's about Russia. Much worse. When American elites finally did adopt Gorbachev and decided he was our boy they, as is often the case with Washington, just went whole hog. Washington so often tends to personalize foreign countries and governments and attaches U.S. policy to foreign leaders as they are on the way out. In late 1991, Washington could not see that, in the historical transformation underway, Gorbachev's time had past. Gorbachev was an immensely important figure; I don't want to denigrate his role in the slightest, but revolutionary changes tend to chew up political leaders at a rapid rate.

Q: Revolutions eat their young, as the phrase goes.

MERRY: Yes, Gorbachev had his time, and then his time was gone. Washington was extremely slow and reluctant to accept that fact. This led to one of the more interesting roles I played before the end of this momentous second half of 1991. During the latter part of November and through December, I was in regular contact with a member of Gorbachev's personal staff, whose identity I will protect. This was a backchannel that was, so far as I recall, not authorized by anybody on either side. Gorbachev's inner team needed somebody they could talk to directly on the American side because they were terribly frustrated that he was constantly receiving phone calls from people in the West, including Washington, telling him to hang in, "we're with you, stick with it, don't resign." This was in December, when Gorbachev's inner circle was telling him to face facts, that it was time to exit the stage. Gorbachev received contrary advice from leading people in Europe and the United States – including people in high government positions. Gorbachev's staff wanted to communicate to somebody who they believed was not part of the problem, and that happened to be me.

I learned, among other things, that a number of senior people in Washington were talking to Gorbachev directly and encouraging him to hold on. These were semi-official communications and constituted policy freelancing directly with Gorbachev. Certainly they were not going through the Department of State or through the embassy. The delicacy of this particular backchannel was that I learned about things emanating from my own government that I wasn't supposed to know about. For me, the key point in this backchannel was to learn when Gorbachev would finally face the inevitable, finally exit the stage. He wanted to wait for a better or more dignified moment, but his own staff told him there was never going to be a graceful moment, and the longer he dragged it out the worse it was going to get. When he finally resigned, Gorbachev had little more than a handful of staff and electricity for a few offices in the Kremlin. If he had waited much longer, I think Yeltsin would have pulled the plug literally.

One of the interesting historical questions I like to raise is exactly when the Soviet Union came to an end. Most people would identify it with Gorbachev's resignation on December 25, 1991. I reject that view as conflating the man with the state. Even at the end, the Soviet Union was more than just one political figure. Within the Soviet constitutional system, Gorbachev was an unelected executive president, but he wasn't an emperor or a king. He wasn't the state and he did not incorporate its sovereignty. My own preference is to look at the juridical origin in the Treaty of Union which created the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in December of 1922. Within the Union Treaty, I see the USSR as an asymmetric federal system, whose cornerstone was the Russian Federation. Other Union republics could come and go without affecting the juridical integrity of the whole – as, indeed, they did over the decades – but the loss of the Russian Republic would remove the heart of the Soviet state. So, in my view, the Soviet Union came to an end when the Russian Federation, at Yeltsin's behest, abrogated the Treaty of Union on December 10, 1991, and the Russian Supreme Soviet confirmed that act. To me, the Soviet Union was a legal nullity two weeks before the world perceived it to be, and Gorbachev's abdication was from a state structure devoid of sovereign authority. This is just my view, and perhaps somewhat pedantic. I know people who agree that Gorbachev's resignation could not terminate the Union, but point to the final session of the USSR Supreme Soviet to vote itself out of existence a couple of days later as the final moment. However, I consider the corpse was dead before it was pronounced dead.

This was not an entirely scholarly issue, as it affected the date of transfer of applicability of all the treaties to which the USSR was party. As it happens, Russia and the other successor states took on those obligations without the West ever much quibbling about what date in December was the date of transfer. It says something about the pace of events that the December 10 Russian abrogation of the Union Treaty passed with almost no international notice. I wrote a short message, in which my comment seemed stirring to me, even if nobody else cared. I said, "The core of the Leninist project, Soviet Russia, is Soviet no longer." I remember that line because I thought it was a very big deal.

In any case, Ukraine held its national referendum on December 1, which overwhelmingly voted to leave the Soviet Union. The other republics, other than some of the Central Asian states, were already gone or going quickly. When Mikhail Gorbachev finally bit the bullet and agreed to his resignation, it was a somewhat tawdry and shabby end to his official political life. Yeltsin was willing to tolerate his rival till then only to maintain his own good reputation with the West.

Yeltsin could have turned the lights out on Gorbachev much earlier. Yeltsin and his counterparts from Belarus and Ukraine had met together in early December and agreed on a new entity they called the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). They did this in part in response to a last-gasp Gorbachev proposal for a new "Union of Sovereign Republics." The CIS in its origins was just a slap in the face to Gorbachev by the new Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian leaders. Russia then abrogated the Union Treaty. For all practical purposes, there was no Soviet Union in either substance or form. There was just a man named Gorbachev sitting in an office in the Kremlin.

I must tell you about one absolutely absurd episode during this great historic drama. The agreement to establish the Commonwealth of Independent States specified that its secretariat would be in Minsk. We thought nothing much of this, but somebody in Washington evidently did. The embassy received a telegram from the Foreign Buildings Office in State stopping any further work on the new embassy complex on the logic that the United States would not need such a large diplomatic establishment in Moscow as we would be moving the focus of our diplomacy to Minsk. Really! I am not making this up! People in Washington actually imagined that Minsk was going to be the new metropole of the post-Soviet region. Obviously, this nonsense did not last very long, but it tells you something of what we were dealing with during this period.

Q: I'm looking at time. Why don't we pick this up the next time. 1992.

MERRY: Well, let me just complete the vignette of Gorbachev's denouement. Gorbachev arranged his resignation in conjunction with CNN, and was interviewed by Steve Hearst, the Moscow bureau chief of CNN and a top-notch broadcast journalist. The head of CNN had come over from Atlanta to make this all happen.

Q: Ted Turner.

MERRY: No, this wasn't Turner. This was Tom Johnson. They did the interview, which was live worldwide, and Gorbachev goes to the desk to sign his letter of resignation and, with supreme irony and appropriateness, there's no ink in the desk pen. Johnson whips out his Meisterstück and that's how Gorbachev signed the letter. Johnson got his pen back, which I understand he still has, that signed Gorbachev's resignation. What could be more appropriate to bring the curtain down on the Soviet Union than an abdication ceremony a couple of weeks after the Soviet Union was already gone and with no ink in the desk pen? It's confirmation of Marx's dictum that history repeats itself. First it's tragedy and then it's farce. This was farce.

Q: We'll pick this up at 1992.

MERRY: At the beginning of 1992, because there were a lot of interesting things that happened for New Year's Eve.

Q: Today is the 25th of May 2010 with Wayne Merry. Wayne, where did we leave off?

MERRY: We are at the end of 1991 in Moscow and the end of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev has

just resigned in his famous gesture, finally recognizing reality and stepping aside. I remember those last few days of that year because of a different episode, when the United States Government decided to recognize all of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. This didn't involve, obviously, Russia or the Baltic states and, initially, Washington made a distinction between recognizing all of them and establishing diplomatic relations with only some, though that distinction was swept away within a very short period. We received instructions from Washington to deliver letters from President Bush recognizing these countries, and to do it before midnight on New Year's Eve. We delivered the letters to the Moscow representations of each of these former Soviet republics.

Q: Was anybody home?

MERRY: We called them to make sure that somebody would be home, and they knew what we were bringing. This shouldn't have been too difficult except that, in Washington, they made a hash of the five Central Asian countries, the 'Stans. In the letters, they mixed up the five countries with the respective capital cities and the names of the leaders. Your tax dollars at work. The United States was recognizing five countries and, literally, didn't know which was which. It fell to me to sort this out. At least, I knew which city went with which country and which leader. So, I revised five presidential letters without reference to Washington, although I sent a back channel a few days later to let them know I had done it – never heard a word back, not surprisingly.

Then we divvied the letters up for delivery among a number of embassy staff. For some reason which I cannot recall, I got Moldova and Turkmenistan. I went first to the Moldovan mission, at a place called Kuznetsky Most, where the Soviet foreign ministry had been until after the Second World War. The place was lit up and crowded, because they knew I was bringing their first diplomatic recognition as an independent country. I was greeted like Moses coming down off Mount Sinai. All the staff was there, and they had television cameras, and a huge spread of food and booze, which doubtless had been laid on for New Years. They were obviously going to party all night, and they graciously invited me to stay and participate. But I had to get over to the Turkmen, to deliver their letter. At the Turkmen mission, the place was dark. It was totally dark. I knew they knew I'm coming, so I kept ringing the bell until, finally, from the back of the place, emerged a young man who, it turned out, was the junior-most diplomatic member of the staff. They hadn't had time to check with Niyazov, the big boss in Turkmenistan, whether he wanted to be diplomatically recognized as independent by the United States. For fear of making a mistake, they assigned this role to the most junior member of the staff, and everybody else decamped. As I presented the letter from the President of the United States recognizing his country as independent, this young man looked like I was giving him his death warrant because he assumed he would be the fall guy if it turned out not to be what their leader wanted.

This episode illustrates that not all of the emerging countries from the Soviet collapse were entirely enthusiastic about independence. A number certainly were—the Baltic states, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, Ukraine—but the farther east you got, the more of a mixed picture it was. Among the Central Asian republics, independence was thrust on them by the circumstance of the Soviet collapse, rather than reflecting a genuine desire for an independent role on the world stage.

Q: It wasn't just the form of it. Actually, I was Kyrgyzstan a little bit later and they were getting more money than was being taken out. They were coming out ahead, as I suspect most of the 'Stans were. They were coming out ahead in this union deal.

MERRY: In addition to the resources from the "Center," for many there were significant security issues. The Central Asian countries were all near Afghanistan, which was still engaged in civil war. Several of them were near Iran. Several had borders with China. They cared deeply about who would provide them security and what would be their future—not so much their future as countries, but their future as ruling elites. This was, I think, uppermost in their minds in those capitals. I mention the contrast between the way I was received by the Moldovan and by the Turkmen missions to demonstrate this was a somewhat contradictory experience across the length and breadth of the Soviet empire.

Q: What was happening to some of your colleagues that were recognizing? I take it the big ones were happy. It was the 'Stans which were problematic.

MERRY: In most cases, it was fairly straightforward. I think my experience with Turkmenistan was the only one where the attitude was, "Please leave the letter and we'll get back to you."

Q: They had good reason. They had a guy who outdid Stalin.

MERRY: Yes, that was the problem with the Turkmen. They had no way of reading Niyazov's mind. Since they couldn't get instructions in time, they didn't want to refuse to receive a letter from the President of the United States, but, on the other hand, they weren't sure what the consequences would be.

Q: They could always say, "Well, the young man acted on his own and here's his head."

MERRY: Yes, that's what he thought. That's exactly what he thought.

Speaking of fear, there is another vignette from that December which has remained in my memory which illustrates why people who are nostalgic for the Soviet Union – including some in the West – are wrong. In mid-December, Isaac Stern came to Moscow in his first visit to his native country in a quarter century. He played two events. The first was a concert in the Great Hall of the Conservatory, which was packed to the rafters – even I had trouble getting a seat on the benches in the balcony. Then he did a recital in a small hall in the Pushkin Museum, which could seat only a couple of hundred. For that event, I had two tickets. As it happened, Secretary Baker was arriving that day, and I was the only person at the embassy willing to blow off the Secretary of State for Isaac Stern. I went to the back entrance of the museum before the event, where there was a crowd of music lovers hoping to catch a glimpse of the great violinist, and picked out an older gentleman to go inside with me. He was stunned, but initially delighted. We were third row on the center aisle. It turned out he was a Jewish amateur violinist, for whom Stern was almost the Messiah. So, this should have been a wonderful evening for him. However, when he learned I was from the American Embassy, the classic fear of association with foreign officials overcame him. He was genuinely scared someone might report him and he would get

into political trouble. Mind you, this was within days of the end of the Soviet Union, but habits endure. During the intermission he stayed as far away from me as he could and left in haste as soon as the recital was over. The poor man should have enjoyed one of the finest evenings of his life, but it was spoiled for him by the fear he could not overcome of sitting next to a diplomat. I imagine everyone who ever lived in the Soviet Union has similar stories to demonstrate the sickness of the political system, but this one is particularly strong for me as it occurred when Soviet power was already finished. For this old man, the fear lived on.

Q: Leading up to this, was there a point when all of a sudden you said, "You know, the Soviet Union is going to fall apart?" Or did that gradually evolve? I'm saying before it actually happened. At our embassy.

MERRY: We discussed that at some length last time. Certainly, in my own mind and that of some of my colleagues, it was clear in August the Soviet Union was falling apart. This was an imperial power system which collapsed, rather than succumbing to conquest by foreigners or overthrown from within. I thought, in August and early September of 1991, the Soviet Union would probably survive, in some truncated shape, through the winter. I thought it would last until the spring of '92. That was optimistic; in fact, of course, it was gone sooner than that. But the question in most of our minds was not whether, but how quickly and with what ramifications? With how much broken crockery? What would be the consequences in terms of disruption, destabilization, and problems, not just for the countries involved, but for the outside world?

The uncertainties affected daily life at the most basic levels. I will give you an example from my own experience. As the economy deteriorated during the autumn of 1991—which it did very quickly—a lot of people in Moscow who had dogs couldn't afford to keep them and feed them, and so just let them go. The dogs reverted to genetic type and formed packs, and went out hunting to survive. In a big city like Moscow, that could be perilous. One evening in early November, I came home quite late, just before the Metro closed, so about one in the morning, and was walking from the Metro station to my apartment building. There wasn't a soul in sight, and it was snowy and cold, early winter. About a hundred yards from the gate to my building a group of seven or eight dogs spotted me and decided I was dinner. They started coming after me. I'm not much of a sprinter, but I want you to know that I ran like hell. As I got close to the gate, I yelled ahead to the Russian guard on duty. He stuck his head out of his little booth, saw what was happening, came out quickly, and got the gate open just enough for me to leap through – and I mean leap through – and he then slammed the gate closed and dropped the latch, as those dogs ran up against the chain-link fence. Not my favorite Moscow experience, by a long shot. I mention it because there were other people in Moscow that winter, particularly the elderly and the inebriated, who didn't get away from those dog packs.

Q: I might point out something that surprised me in my short time in Kyrgyzstan, how many very large dogs. We're not talking about little Yorkshire terriers and all. I take it it was a sign of accomplishment. The bigger the dog, the fancier you were or something.

MERRY: Oh, indeed. Exactly. It was in these last months of 1991 that I first started seeing, for example, serious breadlines. Long lines of people at the bread store, including the store where I bought bread, because of shortages and rumors. People started seriously working the land on

their dachas or even new land they were pioneering outside the city, to grow some of their own foodstuffs because they were genuinely concerned about what would happen.

Something that tends to be overlooked when people make an historical or retrospective examination of an event like the collapse of the Soviet Union is the things which did not happen, but might have and which occupied a great deal of the time and concern of governments. During the final months of 1991 and into the following year, the embassy and Washington were concerned about potential developments which, in the event, did not develop, but would have been damn important if they had. At the top of our list was what was called “loose nukes,” meaning the danger that nuclear weapons might fall into the wrong hands, be sold to terrorist groups abroad or simply be compromised in their security in the chaotic conditions associated with the Soviet breakup. In fact, the Soviet and post-Soviet militaries which had possession of these weapons exercised stringent controls over them. That was not the case with many of the huge stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and with nuclear materials other than actual weapons. They could not control all the fissile materials, related technologies, and the personnel with nuclear expertise, but they held onto the nuclear weapons with great responsibility.

We also worried about “warlordism,” that some generals out in the provinces might try to seize local power and set themselves up as feudal lords or provoke the further breakup of the Russian Federation. There was particular concern this might happen in the Russian Far East. However, except for the start of the secessionist movement in Chechnya, in November of 1991, this phenomenon was entirely absent during the Soviet collapse.

There was also concern in Washington, although less in the embassy, about a massive social breakdown leading to large-scale hunger or even mass migration by millions of people westward into Europe seeking food. None of that happened, although the worry in Washington led to a little-remembered effort called “Operation Provide Hope” in which large quantities of surplus U.S. military rations were airlifted into Russia and neighboring countries to supplement local food stocks. This was, in the event, a program looking for a problem rather than being a genuine solution, as reserves in Russia were adequate. The Soviet Union maintained huge stockpiles of commodities of all kinds. In many localities, our representatives were assured the donated products would be put to good use, but were not really needed. The gesture was a genuine one and conveyed the right impression, even if it reflected a tendency in Washington to see the problems of post-Soviet countries in terms of historical analogies which were often irrelevant. Within the embassy I dubbed the program “Operation Provide Photo Op” because it was used by Washington to portray a much more active American engagement with Russia than actually existed. I personally advocated a program to provide a daily vitamin supplement to every school child, hospital patient and elderly person in the country, to counteract the real problem of vitamin deficiency, but this was not something the U.S. government had in surplus.

Looking back, I think the most important dog that did not bark during the night of the Soviet collapse was active politicization of the military. There was nothing like what happened in Weimar German, no “Stahlhelm” (steel helmet) movement, although there were a few field-grade officers who tried to inspire something like it and failed utterly. There was nothing like the role of the French military in politics after Algeria, no OAS (Secret Army Organization). Thank God, there was nothing like the role played by the military in the breakup of Yugoslavia. Within

Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, the post-Soviet militaries retained their non-political professionalism. That was not the case in Georgia, where there was a vicious civil war, or in the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, or in the developing Tajik civil war. However, in the Slavic core of the disintegrating empire, civilian control of the military prevailed. This was one of the positive legacies of Leninism, the subordination of the military to political authority. This useful principle survived largely intact through the Soviet imperial collapse, which was really an extraordinary thing given the many historical precedents to the contrary in other countries. I have long thought that Western commentators are remiss in not acknowledging this positive aspect of the Soviet military. It was, in large measure, the unwillingness of the military to be dragged into politics which made the August 1991 putsch fail. Had the Soviet army leadership really wanted to perpetuate the Soviet Union, it could have done so for some years, until the final collapse would have been a more destructive process, and bloodier, than what we experienced. So, just a tip of the hat to the Soviet men in uniform who through their political passivity made our world a better place.

Then, in the early weeks of 1992, when the new Russian government abolished price controls, the country experienced massive inflation. This was not what I consider hyper-inflation but rather mega-inflation. To me, hyper-inflation is when the rate of increase of inflation goes up continuously, in logarithmic progression. In Russia there was inflation of a couple of thousand percent in the first few months, and then a sharp leveling off to more moderate levels of inflation. To me that's mega-inflation, it's not hyper-inflation, but certainly it destroyed the savings of almost everybody in the country. I knew a case of a little old lady who didn't have any family, who'd been saving out of her pension for years for a church funeral when she died. I think it was about 600 rubles she had saved up, which of course was turned to nothing by the inflation. So, this poor woman, who had suffered loss and indignities almost beyond number, starting in the '30s, through the War and the post-war period, now at the end of her life had one last injustice and indignity levied on her. That sort of thing happened to enormous numbers of people.

The winter of 1991-92 was a very difficult one for many people. The basic life support systems of the society did not fail. Food was still delivered and, for the most part, power and heat and water continued. But things got pretty dicey. Most industrial enterprises and many other places of employment failed because they had been living off of state subsidies and that money ended. Very large numbers of people either were out of work or were still employed but were not paid or paid in some kind of product. There was the onset of massive asset stripping by new entrepreneurs, including the later "oligarchs," who discovered they could make more money in many factories by stripping the copper wiring out of the machines and selling it abroad than operating the production lines.

This was a difficult period, not just for the economy but, of course, for ordinary people. Moscow, being the capital, was less adversely affected than many of the several hundred cities in Russia that have only a single employer, a town built around one factory. In Moscow, with a much more diversified economy and with the government, things were not as difficult. During this period large numbers of elderly people went onto the streets to sell their possessions—antiques or something they had kept in the family for generations—and even beg. These were not socially marginal people but often from fairly successful middle-class backgrounds, whose income was

now reduced to the government pension, which was woefully inadequate due to the inflation, and who didn't have any other means of survival. I kept money in my outer coat pocket for old ladies who were reduced to begging on the streets in the dead of winter.

During this period I wrote a longish cable – I cannot recall what the subject line was – trying to explain to Washington how different this new Russia was from the old Soviet Russia. I had personal knowledge of both, with a lot of on-the-street experience which convinced me that there was absolutely no going back. This was a point of serious concern in Washington, a return of Soviet power and institutions, but I had seen the Soviet collapse and knew the credibility of the Leninist project could not be restored. If nothing else, there were no resources for a restoration. What was very unclear was what kind of Russia was going to develop. I pointed to things that had never existed in the Soviet period which now shaped life in the new Russia, things like free media and real exchange and interest rates, plus the younger people – by which I mean under 30 or even under 40 – were simply not willing to let the clock turn back. The future looked pretty grim, however, during this difficult winter and average people wanted to see some tangible progress. About this time, Yeltsin stated publicly that if Russians worked very hard they might be able in five years to live like Poles did then. I thought that was a pretty realistic assessment: no quick fix and no easy transition. In fact, it was optimistic.

Q: Did you note a change in the effectiveness of the government? Did corruption increase? Did you get something from the government or was it a more benevolent attitude on the part of people?

MERRY: With the end of the Soviet Union most Soviet state institutions were incorporated within the government of the Russian Federation. It was a whale swallowed by a minnow. In other parts of the Soviet Union, All-Union institutions broke apart and remained with various successor republics. Many individuals had to make a choice as to their new nationality. This was often a very difficult choice. I knew people whose ethnicity may have been Ukrainian or Azeri or Moldovan or Kyrgyz, but whose professions militated that they should stay in Russia, either in Moscow or Petersburg or somewhere else, because that's where their lives were, that's where their families were, that's where their careers were. But they had to make a choice, and this was not always an obvious or an easy choice. If you're a Ukrainian living in Moscow, should you pick up and go back to Kiev and seek to create a new identity for yourself in an independent Ukraine? Or should you maintain your sense of commitment to whatever it was you had been doing previously in Moscow? You had ceased to be Soviet, but now what were you?

This was a particularly serious issue for the military and the security services. Where is your loyalty? The great slogan of all of these institutions, for generations, had been "Sluzu Sovietskomu Soiuzu" (I serve the Soviet Union). Now, if you were in the army, or air force, or Ministry of the Interior, or KGB, you no longer serve the Soviet Union. Where is your loyalty? For some, that might be defined by nationality. I knew a man who was a Soviet Navy submarine commander but was Moldovan. Obviously he wasn't going to be able to operate submarines for the new Moldova, but he chose to go back to Chisinau and develop a new military identity for Moldova, despite his own background as a naval officer. For a lot of people Russia became the substitute for the Soviet Union; Russia, as the core of the Soviet Union, and Russia, as the historic imperial great power, attracted the loyalties of a lot of people whose ethnicity was

something else. For several years, Russia's deputy minister of foreign affairs in charge of dealing with the United States was an ethnic Azeri. The later Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergei Kislyak, is Ukrainian on both sides of his family. These issues were not just the product of the collapse of the Soviet Union. They often were the detritus of the Russian imperial project itself, in which the questions “What am I?” and “What do I want to be?” and “Where do my ultimate loyalties pull me?” were common dilemmas. In 1992 these questions were imposed on millions of people almost overnight. Many had to make very difficult and often very disruptive choices, not just for themselves but for their families. They had to bet on where they thought they would have a better future. For many ethnic Russians in other republics, this meant abandoning what had been “home” for many years, even generations, to return to a Russian “home” which was entirely new to them, and without employment or housing. Often the experience was a form of involuntary emigration, with all the attendant disruptions and stress.

Most of the institutions where people worked, including the military, were broke. There wasn't any money to pay salaries. There certainly wasn't any money in the military for things like fuel for training or operations or almost anything. There was at least one instance of actual starvation in a military unit in the Far East. The crisis ranged from august institutions like the Academy of Sciences down to primary and secondary schools, to the people who provided basic hygiene services in hospitals, and the people who manned the fire stations. These were people who didn't know where their next paychecks were coming from or what those paychecks would buy. It was an extraordinarily disruptive period for all of the peoples involved.

In some areas, it was also a violent period. In Moldova, in the Transnistria region; in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh; in the gathering disputes in Georgia both among Georgians and with ethnic minorities; and worst of all in the developing civil war in Tajikistan. The break-up of the Soviet Union is often portrayed as bloodless. That was essentially true within the three Slavic core states. It was certainly not true around the edges of the Soviet Union, where there was more than ample bloodshed, creating situations which either took years to resolve or, indeed, never have been resolved. It was a bloodless end of empire for the imperial Metropole, but not for the periphery of the empire.

Q: What was our embassy doing? In the first place, we had a consulate in Kiev but that was about it, wasn't it?

MERRY: One of the first challenges the U.S. Government faced was how it was going to establish tangible diplomatic relations with all the successor countries, which meant to establish embassies. This is a fascinating story, to which I was more of an on-looker than a participant. Other than losing a third of my staff in Political/Internal, I played no direct role. As I understood, the State Department did not have the money to establish new posts, did not want to go to Congress for the resources, and got the money by making deals with the intelligence agencies and the Pentagon. The State Department decided it would take on this formidable task within existing budget resources, which meant it never would have been done without financing from other parts of the government. This shows what a nickel-and-dime institution the American foreign ministry can be.

Q: Apparently, Secretary of State Baker did this. Many people felt it to be a really terrible

mistake. It's the sort of thing you can make in Washington. He had no feel for the operations of the State Department.

MERRY: None at all. They put out word for adventuresome people to open embassies in 10 new places. The consulate in Kiev became an embassy, so that was fairly straightforward. There were already people establishing embassies in the Baltic States, but then there were all of the others. This was done faster and better, with the posts open and effective, than I would have expected. I thought it was going to take half a year, if not a year, and for the first six months or so, that most of the actual reporting would go through Moscow. I was wrong. In point of fact, these little vest-pocket embassies established their individual identities and their direct reporting vis-à-vis Washington very quickly. They did so in part because they saw the importance of avoiding the appearance of going through the embassy in Moscow which, in retrospect, was quite valid. They also understood that, if they were going to be effective, they had to function on their own. Most initially worked out of hotel rooms. They did, I must say, an extraordinary job.

This process had a big impact on me, as some of my reporting staff was taken to help staff these new embassies plus the opening of our consulate in Vladivostok. Some of my most talented people went to other posts, where their talents were needed. Pol/Int still had a dozen people, of course, so we were hardly impoverished. While my resources declined, at the same time my reporting responsibilities declined, since we were no longer responsible for reporting on internal affairs in Tajikistan or Moldova or Georgia. There was a transition period when we still covered remnants of the Soviet Union while the U.S. Government was getting squared away to deal with each of them separately. I hope the colleagues who opened these embassies didn't feel they were condescended to by the big mother embassy in Moscow. However, the fact remained that, for most of the U.S. Government, the relationship with Russia was not first among equals, it was just first. The others were not equal.

The principal priority for Secretary Baker and the Bush Administration was to get the nuclear arsenal and nuclear resources of the former Soviet Union under single-party custodianship, meaning Russia's. Baker's great diplomatic achievement was to strong-arm and cajole and persuade the new governments of Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan to surrender all of their nuclear weapons and delivery systems to Russia in return for various commitments and support from the United States. This was a stupendous diplomatic accomplishment, one of the most important ever carried out by a Secretary of State. Although I do not like the man, I think Baker merited a Nobel Peace Prize for the denuclearization of the three post-Soviet states. Without him, it might not have happened. He then persuaded all of the successor states to sign on to a variety of international agreements, some which the countries did not understand, such as the human rights and civil liberties commitments under the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe). Some of the new governments signed those documents without reading them and without any notion they would have obligations to fulfill. The Russian Government, as the successor to the Soviet Union, took those commitments much more seriously. We had an internal debate whether the Central Asian states, and perhaps those in the Caucasus, should even be invited into the OSCE, as they manifestly were not part of Europe. I thought it a bad idea, but the desire to tug them away from Iran or China was dominant among policymakers.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were very concerned about what

would happen not just to nuclear systems but to the vast inventories of weapons and munitions of the Soviet military scattered across eleven time zones. They wanted to deal on key issues with only one counterpart, their Russian counterparts. The senior Russian military were people the Chiefs respected, with whom there were some good personal relationships. Probably the most pro-Russian group in Washington at the time was the Joint Chiefs. The anti-Russian centers in Washington clustered on Capitol Hill, where ethnic groups not only wanted to support the newly independent states but to take an anti-Russian approach as well. Yeltsin's government in Moscow was as accommodating with the imperial breakup as it could reasonably have been expected to be. Yeltsin's own view was the sooner Russia got the other countries off Russia's back, Russia could stop pouring resources into those places and, hence, the sooner would come some kind of prosperity for Russia. If anything, Yeltsin was happy to cut bait.

Within Yeltsin's team, and within the broader Russian elites, there was an understanding that it wasn't going to be so simple or easy. They knew their own country, especially its weaknesses. The states of the former Soviet Union were tied together by much more than historical experience, but also by infrastructure and by enterprises that depended on other enterprises across new political frontiers. There were immense disruptions when nobody knew who was in charge of an enterprise and who had legal authority in many areas. For example, there were only two pharmaceutical facilities producing sulfa drugs in the whole Soviet Union. One of them was in Azerbaijan. Because of the disruption of the Azeri economy with the breakup of the Soviet Union, that plant stopped producing, which meant people actually died. People in hospitals and clinics died because there was a shortage of sulfa-based pharmaceuticals to deal with infections. Likewise, there was only one factory for computer punch cards in the entire Soviet Union, in Lithuania, where independence separated it from most of its traditional customers.

In December 1991 I traveled with Bob Clarke of the Science Section to Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic, about 1,000 kilometers north of Moscow. The Komi is a region very rich in natural resources, but the problem they faced was how to market what they had. In a series of meetings, including with the republic president, the range of their difficulties seemed almost beyond human capacity, and this was a region with many advantages. We met an informal trader from Latvia in the bar of our hotel, who gave us a vivid description of his business, which was barter trade of sausage from Latvia for rare metals from the Komi. It was pretty basic, but it worked. On another trip, to the Solovetsky Islands in the middle of the White Sea, I stayed with a man seeking to develop tourism in these northern islands. There was much to attract people, including one of the most stunning monastery-fortress complexes I have ever seen plus Stone Age relics and the site of the very first Soviet political prison. His key challenge was getting fuel in this remote locale, which he managed through a chance encounter with a bureaucrat who had connections in the fuels ministry. All this was very primitive in market terms, but it was also taking place without any basis in legality. In Soviet law, almost all private enterprise, even of the most primitive variety, was illegal, and the political culture regarded private initiative with great suspicion. There was no corpus of commercial law, just the traditions of Soviet law which were hostile to business. Nobody could say what could be done, let alone how it should be done. Obviously, the door was opening for enterprising people, but also for unscrupulous and ruthless people.

There were many, many instances of disruption across the new borders. People wanted to

continue their work and to produce and be paid, but nobody knew who was going to pay the bills, who could sign a document. The ruble was the single currency for Russia and many other countries, but the viability of the ruble was in question because of inflation. It was not a convertible currency with the West, only within the so-called "ruble zone." The rapid loss of value of the ruble was a problem well beyond Russia, for other countries which used the ruble, including enterprises and individuals. Finance ministries and state banks in the new states were more a matter of theory than of reality. Most enterprises had been centrally-planned and centrally-funded organizations in the Soviet period where management did not even use double-entry bookkeeping. Here were a dozen countries with no corpus of commercial law. Who owned anything? Who could make trade commitments with anybody abroad? These were enormously complex and difficult problems that were, of course, all emerging simultaneously.

One evening, Jim Collins and I paid a call on General Dmitry Volkogonov, a prominent army historian who had become anti-Soviet during the late Gorbachev years and was a senior advisor to Yeltsin. He later produced a groundbreaking series of books on Lenin and Stalin based on his unique access to archives. A really insightful man. He told us that Russia's basic challenge was that it needed good people in every field – politics, business, law, education, administration, you name it – and there simply were not enough good people to go around. This meant the transition would, of necessity, be carried out by inadequate people and the result would be far short of what people hoped for and expected. I think he got it dead right: there simply were not enough good people for all the demands of such a great historical transition, not in Russia and not in the other countries either.

Q: Was there at all a change in the role of the embassy officers becoming almost consultants or colleagues?

MERRY: Parts of the embassy became intermediaries between Washington agencies and Russian counterparts. Embassy staff were spending a lot of time within Russian bureaucratic institutions. CIA officers were actually conducting meetings with the KGB, something previously almost unthinkable. People in the Political/External Section who dealt with Russian foreign policy had meetings in the Russian Foreign Ministry of a kind that would have been unimaginable in earlier times. One guy was even taken into one of the ministry's classified typing rooms, something that would never happen in Washington. The Economics and Science Sections were loaded down with visiting delegations and with taskings from Washington to establish contacts and programs. For Political/Internal, it was more a matter of reporting and analysis, though we in some ways had even more access to people who made and influenced policy. We met with most of the top people around Yeltsin. We had relatively few programmatic duties at that point, though we did support programs in legal affairs and in rule of law. Heaven knows, Political/Internal had enough Washington visitors, but nothing like the burden on other sections.

The role of the United States in policy formulation in Russia eclipsed that of all other governments and multilateral institutions and, at times, went much too far. I do not mean to say that the ultimate responsibility for policies did not rest with Yeltsin and his team; certainly, it did. But it is difficult to overemphasize the influence and the intrusiveness of American official and semi-official activities in all aspects of Russian public policy. Much of this influence came

through multilateral institutions, like the IMF and World Bank, but it was American influence just the same. To all intents and purposes, the United States was the primary external source of influence on the Russian reform process. I know quite well that other countries were involved and sometimes had better programs and advice than we did, but all other countries combined did not exercise anything like the influence we did. Everyone understood this. Countries like Germany, Britain and Japan were largely guided by what the United States did, and their embassies in Moscow always wanted to know what we thought and how we planned to proceed.

The pervasiveness of the American role was, in my view even at the time, as much a curse as a blessing. A more multi-national approach would have been better, with Europe more in the lead than ourselves. The Europeans had more realistic expectations of reform in Russia than did Washington, with American faith in the miracles of macroeconomic stabilization and the ideology of the “Washington consensus.” Americans also approached post-Soviet Russia with far too heavy a hand, with arrogance and often a missionary mentality. The consequences of that period live on today, as many Russians blame us for the failures of reform in the '90's and believe we deliberately set out to ruin their economy. We forgot that it is basic human nature to resent dependency, which is why teenagers rebel against their parents. A great nation like Russia could not experience this foreign tutelage – and that is what it was for several years – without building up a reservoir of resentment. Russians are perhaps more likely than many other peoples to blame their troubles and shortcomings on someone else, and the United States almost went out of its way to assume that role.

One of my colleagues in Moscow recently reminded me of something I had forgotten from 1992. At a G-7 summit meeting, the United States more or less dictated to the Russians the terms under which they would receive large-scale Western assistance. Keep in mind, we were giving them a lot of money with little assurance of how it would be used, this was an assistance program. In a staff meeting of Political/Internal, I commented, “They will never forgive us for this.” I felt the humiliation would last longer than the money. While covered in good intentions, much of our assistance efforts from that period achieved little while leaving behind a thick residue of resentment.

In the Political/Internal Section, we were not operationally involved with U.S. assistance policy, so our views about how to interact with the Russians on reform were pretty much ignored. The one area where we were directly involved was in judicial cooperation, as the embassy link for programs of the American Bar Association and the Justice Department with Russian counterparts. This was quite useful, as it opened doors for us in the courts, in judicial training centers, and with legal reformers. We learned a lot from that. Personally, I got to know the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Valery Zorkin, who had great hopes and plans for judicial progress in Russia. He told me he wanted to be remembered as the John Marshall of Russia. While things took some odd turns for him later, Zorkin still is a very important figure in legal reform in that country.

In terms of Russian political figures, in the government or in the legislature, we had access that was almost unprecedented, not just in Russia but in most of the other new countries. I several times told my staff this couldn't last. As I mentioned earlier, we had better access in Moscow during those months than the U.S. Embassy would have in Ottawa. I told people, including

Washington visitors, “This is not natural. This is a transitional phase, and we should be careful because this is all about Russia’s weakness. The Russians will remember their weakness and they won’t remember kindly those who they perceive as taking advantage of the weakness.” A large part of the problem was that Moscow was now flooded by visitors from Washington and from other Western countries, with their advice, counsel, opinions. Russians soon called it “assistance tourism,” and they were right. Russia particularly attracted advocates of the “Washington consensus,” a neoliberal economic doctrine blending macroeconomic stabilization and reforms—so-called shock therapy—which was pushed on the Russians with religious zeal combined with almost total oblivious ignorance and disregard for Russian realities.

It’s fair to say that many of the Russian architects of economic policy during this period were already sold on the neoliberal program. They didn’t need it to be forced down their throats. However, the fact remains that the U.S. Treasury and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and others, particularly associated with Harvard University, regarded post-Soviet Russia as a gigantic laboratory for macroeconomic experimentation, while their knowledge of the conditions of the laboratory and its occupants was extremely shallow. This was not just a matter of comprehension, but of lack of human empathy. After seven decades of Soviet-style political and economic mismanagement, the problems were deeply entrenched and intractable, meaning the transition to something else would be enormously complicated and time-consuming. The human costs were a topic the ideologues swept aside with masterly derision. I heard some pretty vicious jokes about things like little old ladies freezing to death, which was not a joke to me as I actually saw those old women on the streets every day. The advocates of the “Washington consensus” had their ideology, which they believed was applicable everywhere on earth and, with just the right amount of shock therapy, Russia would, in a short period of time, emerge as a practicing, viable market economy.

They ignored little things, like the fact Russian enterprises didn’t even use double-entry bookkeeping. There was no basis for contract law, there was no ability to enforce any kind of an economic agreement in a court system. I recalled that Margaret Thatcher used to say the basis of capitalism is not money but enforceable contract. The means by which agreements were conducted in Russia were personal relationships, handshake deals and occasional violence. The neo-liberals had very little sense that Russia was, as a market economy, extremely primitive, even though it had a highly-literate workforce, massive industrial infrastructure and modern technology in many areas. The truism is that Russia was neither developed nor underdeveloped. It was mis-developed. Policy mechanisms that might work in a developed country would not in a mis-developed country. We had no relevant policies, so we used ones we thought applied to everyone, everywhere.

The embassy was very much at the center of this issue. This initiated a conflict which would develop in the following years—for me especially in 1993-94 and for those who came later—a fundamental division within the embassy between people who knew something about Russia and those sent out to enforce the “Washington consensus” policy. This is getting ahead of things, because it happened mostly in the third year of my assignment. In the first two years, there were excellent professional relations within the embassy, thanks to Ken Yalowitz, the economics counselor, with whom it is almost impossible to have a bad relationship. Then Washington sent out ideologues to run the Economics Section. The conflict was also within the Economics

Section, because there were very talented younger people there, who did know Russia, who were also skeptical about the policies we were pushing. It became a conflict of those associated with the Treasury, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, with the “old Russia hands,” of whom I was one, who were not just skeptical but increasingly opposed to the policy.

However, looking back on the very early post-Soviet period, I am struck by the intensity of embassy activity from late 1991 through the fall of 1993. Russia's transformation in every area of public policy created work for us, as the embassy was responsible for following, reporting and explaining everything to Washington. Much of that was, of course, in the political area. The dynamic of 1991 and the breakup of the Soviet Union, continued on into the following years. In addition to the real events were the rumors and scares. I don't know how many false alarms there were of new coups, which Washington always treated seriously as many people there expected Yeltsin to fail quickly. There was a bizarre episode in early 1992 when a coalition of die-hard communists announced a rally at which they were going to “restore the Soviet Union.” This was ludicrous, but Washington heard about it and perceived a serious threat to Yeltsin. We were under intense pressure—“What's happening? What's happening?” We eventually produced eight reporting telegrams on this non-event, four or five in advance and three or four in the aftermath. In the normal course of things this rally would have justified one reporting message. The same Washington which had denied the reality of the oncoming Soviet collapse now anticipated Russian collapse on almost a weekly basis. We devoted serious reporting to this silly matter for over a week, trying to get Washington to calm down.

During that winter, there were so many false alarms I became quite blasé about them. On one occasion, I behaved pretty irresponsibly. During these months, Washington had the very bad habit of phoning us in Moscow without regard for the time difference, so we were always getting calls in the middle of the night. I know Jim Collins, as deputy chief of mission, rarely went through a night without a phone call from the NSC or the State Department or somebody. In his own self-defense, he told the State Department Operations Center (which he had once directed) that, when it was about Russian domestic affairs, to call me. I didn't entirely appreciate this move, but I could understand it. On one occasion I got a call about four o'clock in the morning from the Operations Center, because some office in the Department had heard there was a coup d'état going on in Moscow. The Ops Center didn't see anything about it on the wire services or other sources. There was nothing on it, no intel, but they wanted to check with me. I told the guy, “OK, hold the phone.” I went into my kitchen, which looked down on October Square and the intersection of Leninsky Prospekt with the Garden Ring road. This is one of the major traffic intersections in the city, particularly for traffic leading toward the center, toward the Kremlin. A headquarters building of the Interior Ministry was across the square from my building. I stood there for a few minutes, watching absolutely nothing going on, and decided there was no way anyone could conduct a serious coup in Moscow without some activity at that intersection. So I picked up the phone and told the watch officer in Washington, “Nope, no coup in Moscow,” and went back to bed. The next day, I got in touch with the Operations Center and found out the whole thing was the result of an article in a magazine about the potential for a coup in Russia which a senior official (whom I will not name) had read over the weekend. This had evolved through staff layers into a belief a coup was going on that night. For this, I lost valuable sleep.

I probably should have checked more thoroughly before dismissing this rumor to Washington. If

I had been wrong, it would have been really embarrassing. By this point, however, I had become pretty short-tempered with nonsense when there were so many really important things going on. I could also be short-tempered with visitors from Washington, of which we had an unending stream. Embassy working conditions were still very primitive, and many visitors demanded almost constant hand-holding and special services. I recall one visitor who had a fit because there was no towel service at the embassy swimming pool; I pointed him to a paper towel dispenser. It got to the point where, again in his own self-defense, Jim Collins made sure that whenever Baker or somebody like that was in town, I was assigned to maintain our reporting. I was not assigned to control officer duty because I could be less than hospitable. This was just fine by me, because it allowed me to continue doing what I considered to be the serious work of Political/Internal. I was control officer often enough later on. To keep some balance in this self criticism, I certainly did yeoman's service in briefing visiting officials and journalists every day.

On many days I gave multiple backgrounders to American journalists and officials, and it was a rare day I did not have to devote an hour or more to briefing visitors of some kind. I had done many backgrounders in previous assignments, especially in Athens where there were no resident American journalists, but nothing like what I did in Moscow. It was not unusual to give two, three or even four a day. This reflected the masses of American journalists coming to Moscow, almost all of whom wanted an embassy backgrounder on the Russian political scene, while even the resident journalists wanted to keep up with the embassy viewpoint. I spoke with many non-Americans as well. For the most part, I like journalists and see them as friendly competitors to our diplomatic reporting. I also think an embassy profits from trading notes with knowledgeable resident journalists, of which Moscow had a lot in those days. In any case, I considered that we were not just working for the State Department or even the government, but for the American public which had a right to know what we thought was happening in Russia, even if they got it second hand through journalists. Some of my embassy colleagues disliked or at least did not accommodate journalists, so much of this work came to me. It was a burden, but I thought then and still think it was among the more valuable things I did, in influencing how the American media presented these events to our own public.

There were fringe benefits to not being a control officer very often. It gave me at least an iota of a life outside the embassy, for some time with my Russian friends and to enjoy the wonderful classical music life of Moscow. There was no place in that huge city I valued more than the Great Hall of the Conservatory, one of the great concert halls of the world. I had a fistful of concert series subscriptions, which were dirt cheap on a dollar income, but I was unable to use most of the tickets due to press of work. However, any evening I could break away from the embassy would find me in the lap of Russia's magnificent musical traditions. I already mentioned the visit by Isaac Stern in December 1991. For many Russians, this was the musical event of the decade. The Horowitz visit marked the 80's and the Stern visit the 90's. His concert in the Great Hall was defended by three cordons of police to control gate crashers. It was a wonderful evening. I already described how his later recital in a smaller venue was bittersweet. For my money, you can have James Baker any day, but Isaac Stern in Moscow was a once in a lifetime opportunity. There was later a visit by the National Symphony from Washington under Rostropovich with the young Ignat Solzhenitsyn as soloist in the first Shostakovich piano concerto. They also did the Shostakovich Ninth Symphony, which Rostropovich had first heard at the Moscow premier shortly after the War. A magical evening, including a conversation I had

afterwards with Rostropovich. It is experiences of that kind which make a Foreign Service life really special.

I was not able to travel in Russia in my second assignment even remotely as much as in the first; that was a burden of my position. However, the opening up of the country to the outside world did offer some opportunities I was able to take advantage of. We opened a new consulate in Vladivostok, with a huge consular district that was almost entirely new territory for the United States. Our two-man team out there did terrific work in showing the flag and finding investment opportunities for American business. I made one trip in the Russian Far East in the company of Randy LeCocq, our principle officer in Vladivostok and an old colleague. It was in the dead of winter, but we visited a number of cities, including Komsomolsk-na-Amure, where the local authorities told us we were the first Americans ever to set foot in the place. Komsomolsk is a large military-industrial city, which was desperate for foreign investment, so they really let us see a lot. The change of pace from my desk in Moscow was just wonderful. I also led an embassy survey team to Yekaterinburg in the Urals to determine if that city should be the site of our next, and final, Russian consulate. This was the city where Yeltsin had been party boss for many years and the center of the Urals industrial region. It was a fascinating place, with much more in the way of history than most Soviet cities. It had been tightly closed to Westerners when it was still called Sverdlovsk, so the only proper accommodation they had for us was Yeltsin's former dacha. I got his own suite, including what had been Yeltsin's bathtub, which was huge. We recommended that Yekaterinburg be the home of the next consulate, which it duly is.

My life in Moscow was mostly work, with some free time for music and Russian friends. I think I visited the embassy dacha only twice in three years. As a section chief, I had a large and modern apartment, but I was not there very much. To my taste, it was too large and sterile, with new government-issued furniture. However, it was just as well I had three bedrooms, because during these years I almost ran a pension. I had more visitors in Moscow than in all my other assignments combined. Many friends just wanted to visit the new Russia, but some needed a place to stay while trying to establish business connections. I had several friends in place for a month or two. That was fine, but they were more or less on their own as I rarely got home before nine or later. I did make the time to show around some old American and German friends with no Russian experience.

One oddity of this assignment was that I had supervisory responsibility for the POW/MIA unit. This was a team of military and retired military officers who worked with Russian authorities to locate the remains of American service personnel from the Second World War and the Cold War under a new bilateral agreement. They did good work, but their activities had nothing to do with Political/Internal. The decision to attach the team to me was made while I was out of town, and made no logical sense. They did not want to be associated with the DAO, to avoid any implication they were involved in intelligence work. However, they should logically have been attached either to Political/Military or Political/External. They were not much of a burden to me, as they were a self-administering team and needed me only to authorize their reporting. They gave me no trouble, but it showed the danger of leaving the office for even a short domestic trip; something would be dropped in my in box while away.

In that regard, I got into hot water in the embassy due to one trip. I had given Ambassador

Strauss – at his request, I might note – some thoughts in writing about post management out of frustration at the slow adaptation of the embassy to the new demands on us. I was fed up with always hearing the excuse that something could not be done because this was Moscow. Tasks that could be accomplished in real hardship posts in the Third World were routinely ruled “impossible” in Moscow. Strauss had reached similar conclusions on his own and, while I was away, sent Secretary Baker what he called a “Come to Jesus” telegram about what the embassy needed, but he incorporated my memo in the telegram in toto. Naturally, that message circulated within the Department and then came back to Moscow, where it won me no friends in Admin, though I maintain everything I said was valid.

During early 1992, Washington and Moscow were settling into a new relationship. Yeltsin made his first visit as Russian president to Washington, where he was greeted with the public enthusiasm previously enjoyed by Gorbachev. I wrote the scene-setter telegram for his February meeting with Bush at Camp David, in which I tried to encapsulate what made Yeltsin different from Gorbachev. I quoted Aleksandr Yakovlev's view that Gorbachev was by nature a democrat, but always afraid of democracy. In contrast, I said, Yeltsin was not by nature a democrat, but not afraid of democracy. He believed that empowerment of Russia's people, both political and economic, was the solution to the country's problems and the road to its future. The meeting was a success and overcame some of Bush's earlier doubts about Yeltsin. Also, at Camp David, Yeltsin discovered M&Ms, which we later supplied to him.

At the end of the Russian winter, I really needed a break. I hadn't had any leave at all from before the August putsch right through to the spring of 1992, except for a short illness in February. I had had very few Sundays off. I had just finished the annual performance evaluations on my very large team and, I am happy to say, everyone who was eligible for promotion was promoted. Nothing like being on the cusp of history to provide good material for an EER. In the spring I went on home leave, the only full home leave I ever got in the Foreign Service. I did several weeks of camping with friends in the wonderful national parks of Colorado, Utah and Arizona. Just what the doctor ordered! I also saw relatives and friends in the Midwest and on the East Coast, and returned to Moscow with the strong impression that President Bush was in real political trouble. In the embassy the view was Bush could not lose, as he had won a war to liberate Kuwait with subsequent sky-high popularity numbers. When President Bush lost the election, I was one of the less surprised people at the embassy, because I had heard so much on home leave that, while Bush was respected, he certainly wasn't liked and was seen as out of touch on domestic issues.

Russia was not an election issue in the United States in 1992, because the view of Yeltsin as a good guy was pretty consensual among Republicans and Democrats in Washington. Strauss had a lot to do with that. Personal encounters also helped to overcome skepticism. A number of congressional delegations came to Moscow initially quite skeptical about Yeltsin because of things they had heard about him. After a meeting the Congressmen would come away dazzled with his charisma, his convictions, just his sheer political dynamism. I recall one House delegation that had three meetings in one day. The first was with the speaker of the parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov. The second was with the vice president, Alexander Rutskoi. The third was with Yeltsin. That evening, they were prepared to give Yeltsin almost a blank check, because they had seen what some of the alternatives might be.

We had one congressional delegation which I actually enjoyed – though I should say I think congressmen need to travel abroad more, not less, as part of their duties. Jim Collins asked me to shepherd Newt Gingrich during a delegation visit because Gingrich wanted to speak with someone with experience of August 1991 for a book he was writing. I complained, as I thought of Gingrich as the “Peck’s Bad Boy” of American politics, but I was given the job. As it happened, Gingrich was great, one of the best congressional visitors I have ever experienced. He was very low-maintenance, courteous, intensely curious about everything Russian and very smart. I took him on a long cross-town walk to show him things while briefing him, and he liked it a lot. The next year, when the same delegation returned, I actually volunteered to be control officer for Gingrich, which I have never done for any other Hill visitor. Years later, I traveled to Russia with him in a different context and found him again unusually interested and sympathetic to Russia’s reality.

However, 1992 was the year which demonstrated the fundamental weakness of the constitutional and legal constructs of post-Soviet Russia. The Russian Federation had a government system and a constitution, but they were of the Soviet-era Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, the RSFSR with some modifications. This was not a viable legal foundation for the new Russia because the RSFSR had always been kind of a legal fiction within the Soviet Union. In the turmoil of 1991-92 there was never time or political energy to replace the existing constitution, although everyone understood that constitutional reform would be necessary for post-Soviet Russia. What kind of government the new country should have was a critical question. Many Russians, including many Western-oriented political figures, worried about Yeltsin exercising too much power. They worried that a presidential republic would not break from what later was called the “vertical of power.” After decades of Soviet over-centralization and excessive executive power, the inclination among many Russians was for a parliamentary type of government like that of Germany or Britain, rather than a presidential system like France or America. Given the pace of other changes, constitutional reform was pushed back from month to month until brought to the fore by political confrontation at the end of 1992.

Yeltsin and his prime minister, Yegor Gaidar—who was never confirmed in the job, he was always acting prime minister—were operating under one-year emergency powers granted to Yeltsin by the Russian Federation legislature in November 1991 which would expire at the end of November 1992. Almost everything the Russian government did in economic policy during 1992, often in cooperation with Western governments and the International Financial Institutions, was under this temporary emergency power. That included the first stages of “shock therapy,” the elimination of price controls which created massive inflation, the collapse of many industries with consequent unemployment, the dramatic increase in poverty and the growing crisis of public health. The negative consequences of the Soviet collapse were attributed, by much of the Russian public, to the economic policies of the government, with Western sponsorship. Not surprisingly, these policies were not popular in Russia and were deeply resented by most of the legislators who had given Yeltsin his emergency powers. As the year went on, it was difficult to convince Washington that this situation was not going to last; the emergency powers were going to expire and almost certainly would not be renewed. The legislature of the Russian Federation was a real legislature, and it contained many people opposed to the policies plus many opposed to Yeltsin himself. The emergency semi-dictatorship

was not going to last beyond the end of November. However, if you tried to explain this to people from Washington, they just didn't want to listen.

Q: Was this a problem that so often happens, that straight-line projection?

MERRY: Oh, yes, to some extent. The view was "We like Yeltsin. We think Yeltsin's a great guy. We support Yeltsin. So what's the problem?" The problem was that not everybody in Russia supported Yeltsin, not by a long shot. Yeltsin's popular support started going downhill from about October of 1991. Many people never forgave him for his role in bringing about the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and many others fundamentally disagreed with the character of the government he put together and the policies they promulgated throughout 1992. The opposition started with Yeltsin's own vice president, Rutskoy, and represented a majority of the Supreme Soviet. The pain associated with the economic reform policies was very great for normal people. Anybody who paid attention to the dynamics of Russian politics—but frankly, there were very few foreigners who did—understood there was a lot more than just Boris Yeltsin and his government. Washington wanted to believe that Yeltsin could do whatever he wanted because he had been popularly elected.

Q: When you say Washington, it's not George, it's Washington. It had me thinking of a few people. Was this the White House, or the secretary of state?

MERRY: Oh, no. I think it was almost everyone. It was the White House, it was members of Congress, it was the State Department, it was the Defense Department, the Treasury, particularly people on the economic side. There was a belief that, since Yeltsin has our support, he must be able to do whatever he wants – meaning, whatever we want. Yeltsin, like Gorbachev before him, had become much more popular in the West and among Western governments than he was at home, and the same forces which had ultimately disabled Gorbachev now had their sights on Yeltsin. This would happen more quickly with Yeltsin than it had with Gorbachev, because the new power structure lacked the legitimacy previously exercised by the Soviet system. These realities were just not understood on our side. Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party stood atop a mechanism of real control and of established legitimacy. Yeltsin had only his position as the elected president of Russia and the twelve-month emergency powers on the economy. The fact that Gaidar was never confirmed as prime minister showed the parliament was already pushing back.

In point of fact, the Russian Federation constitution gave much more power to the legislature, the Supreme Soviet, than it did to the president. The presidency was an ad hoc position created during the waning months of the Soviet Union, and was never fully fleshed out in law. Yeltsin exercised power because he exercised power, not because he had the juridical power of an American or French president. The legislators had bequeathed much of their power to him in the crisis conditions of late 1991, but come midnight at the end of November 1992 that would turn into a pumpkin, as his legal authority to do things on his own would disappear. That was a very hard message to get across because it was, to put it mildly, a very unpopular message. Finally, in November 1992, I sat down and wrote a blunt report, entitled The Underlying Russian Political Crisis. This explained in, I hope, clear terms that from early December the terms of reference of Yeltsin's authority in Russia would be fundamentally different. I predicted this situation would

precipitate a broader political confrontation between Yeltsin and the legislature, which could well turn violent. I expected the crisis to come in the spring of 1993, although I do not recall whether I actually made that prediction in the message; I expect I did not as I tend to shy away from explicit predictions.

This message got a fair amount of attention back home, indeed, much too much. In fact, it was promptly leaked to CBS News and some of it was read by Dan Rather on the CBS Evening News. This upset a lot of people in Washington and, I was told bluntly from the Department, the Treasury wanted me fired. I hadn't leaked the message; I had written it and everything in it was valid, so far as I was concerned. It was a cleared embassy telegram. This was a case of the "shoot the messenger" psychosis that exists even in modern governments, that the Treasury blamed me because Dan Rather read extracts from this message on the CBS Evening News. As it happened, CBS used the message quite responsibly. The quotes they used were not taken out of context or irresponsible at all. It could have been much worse.

However, the consequences on the far side of the world were briefly serious, though preposterous as well. The Ops Center told me the Treasury was in a lather because the Japanese yen and the Tokyo stock market were in free fall, supposedly because of my message. This, as you might imagine, baffled me. It took a couple of days to figure out what had happened, with help from the CBS rep in Moscow and from our colleagues in Tokyo. The CBS Evening News was broadcast in Tokyo with a simultaneous voice-over translation, during the start of the business day in Japan. The translation in this case garbled things so badly as to imply a violent crisis was actually underway in Moscow, rather than in prospect as I had written. This provoked short-term panic selling of the yen and a downturn in the Nikkei, for which the Treasury people held me responsible. I learned from colleagues in Tokyo that no real harm was done as the markets recovered within hours. For a brief time, however, it really looked like my goose was about to be cooked just for doing my job.

This message did focus some attention in Washington to the fact that, with the December session of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies and the expiration of the emergency powers, Yeltsin would be forced to restructure his government and change some of his policies unless he wanted to go outside the constitution and the law. One of the remarkable things about this period in post-Soviet Russia was the extent to which people really did value legality and its appearance. Maintaining respect for legal structures, even those left over from Soviet law, was quite important, because Russians wanted to believe their country was now truly European and a country based on law. Russians watched what was happening in Georgia, where the civil war was destroying the center of Tbilisi, and at other conflict areas around the former Soviet Union, and thought of themselves as superior, as a European country where things were now done in legal, civilized ways. In the event, Yeltsin had to make considerable concessions which he was very loath to do, including the replacement of Gaidar by Viktor Chernomyrdin, and the modification of some policies, particularly ones favored and sponsored by the United States.

This political confrontation at the end of 1992 ended entirely peacefully, but it foreshadowed what would take place less than a year later, which would end violently. The political crisis of late 1992 established the terms of reference for the coming confrontation between Yeltsin and his supporters with the forces in opposition to him. This did not, by any means, divide good guys

from bad guys, despite Washington's perceptions. Many people moved into opposition to Yeltsin, not because they favored Soviet policies, but because they were increasingly concerned about the directions of Russian legality. I knew a number of these people, including most prominently the Chairman of the Russian Constitutional Court, Valery Zorkin. These people had been Yeltsin's political allies in the late Soviet period, and certainly had joined enthusiastically with the effort to build a new, independent, non-communist Russia, but they were increasingly concerned about the basis of legitimacy of the government and its policies. Many of these policies seemed, to them, wrong for Russia. That these policies were all advocated—and often originated—in Washington meant Russian policy increasingly appeared to be made in the United States. We were seen as on Yeltsin's side, while Yeltsin was seen as our man. This was, indeed, the way many people in Washington viewed things. This perception became an important problem for Yeltsin and for American interests with Russia.

In November 1992 we also had an election in the United States, and that would be important for the embassy and for our Russia policy. I had seen a little of the run-up to the election when on home leave in the United States in the spring of 1992. The change of administration from Bush to Clinton meant a change of ambassador. I had been fairly close to Ambassador Robert Strauss, had worked as his speechwriter and had unusual access to him. I thought he was a first-class ambassador and a hell of a lot of fun. The embassy farewell party for Strauss was very genuine in its warmth, the most heartfelt outpouring of affection for an ambassador I have ever seen. But Strauss had taken the Moscow ambassadorship reluctantly, because of his age, because his family didn't want to live in Moscow, and because this was so far afield from what he really did, which was American politics. Even though he had been a Democrat working for a Republican administration, he made it clear to President-Elect Clinton that he wanted to go home.

Clinton correctly assessed that relations with Russia were going to be one of the most important foreign policy issues of his presidency and he wanted an ambassador who would have the kind of stature Strauss had. So he offered the job to former Vice President Fritz Mondale, who accepted. In Moscow, under instructions from Washington, we went to the Russian government to get what's called "agrément" (concurrence) for Mondale; this is standard international diplomatic practice. Not surprisingly, Yeltsin was delighted. Yeltsin had the highest regard for Strauss, but now was getting a former vice president, a former Senator, a former presidential candidate, someone of major political stature.

Then Mondale changed his mind; decided, on reflection, he didn't want to go to Moscow, but to be ambassador in Tokyo. Clinton agreed, and decided to send the senior-ranking U.S. professional diplomat, i.e., somebody who would go where he was told. That was Thomas Pickering, who had been in New Delhi for less than a year on his sixth ambassadorship, which had included the United Nations in New York. He had no experience in Russia or the region and, as far as I could tell, had never served in a country with real winter. Russia was one of the few parts of the world he did not know from direct experience. We informed the Russian government, including Yeltsin, that they were getting a career Foreign Service officer, albeit the most senior and experienced we had, but were not getting someone with political stature. Thus, the new U.S. Administration started things off with Russia a bit on the wrong foot.

Outgoing President Bush made a final overseas trip, mostly to the Persian Gulf but with a stop in

Moscow on New Year's Day. You might notice that our holidays at Embassy Moscow tended to get scrambled by political events. This summit, with Yeltsin, was supposed to take place in Sochi, on the Black Sea coast, because someone in Washington saw Sochi as comparable to Yalta in geography. Unfortunately, the planners did not ask enough questions about the climate in Sochi, so they got a winter weather mess worse than Bush's December summit with Gorbachev in Malta in 1989. In this case, the White House advance team plus 95 embassy staff went to Sochi to conduct the event and then got stuck there by bad weather, when the summit was switched to Moscow. This meant the remaining embassy staff had to organize and carry out a summit meeting on 24-hours notice and do so on New Year's Day. Can you imagine what it is like to get Russian officials to do anything on New Year's Eve? It was a challenge but, fortunately, the visit was short. It was also damned cold, minus 28 Fahrenheit, for visitors with almost no winter clothing. For once, I volunteered my services, to look after the Eagleburgers, because Larry (then Secretary of State) and Marlene were on this trip. This allowed me to return a bit of the hospitality they had accorded me as a summer intern in Brussels back in 1971. Mostly, I took Marlene shopping on the Arbat Street, and later listened to Larry grumping about her purchases at the hotel. Just like old times. For me, that was more important than the presidential meetings.

During this transitional period in Washington, support for Russia and for Yeltsin was still bipartisan. Russia had not been an issue in the presidential campaign, and the new Clinton Administration was determined to continue most of the policies the Bush Administration had conducted. After an initially difficult start, Bush and Yeltsin had achieved a good personal rapport. Yeltsin was extremely grateful for the support Bush had expressed in critical moments, and for the support of a more tangible character during 1992. The United States had favored Russia as the sole successor state for the nuclear arsenal of the former Soviet Union, something they obviously appreciated. The relative centrality of Russia in our policy was also appreciated, despite concerns about how active American diplomacy was becoming with the other countries. At the same time, their own resources were so lacking that Russian influence in many of these areas was often either ineffective or not centrally directed from the Russian presidency.

With the change of American administrations, there was concern in Moscow that the priorities of the U.S. Administration would change. The new administration tried to project continuity, but the inability to send out Mondale as ambassador communicated a lessening of priority in Russian eyes. Only a handful of people knew about this episode, but that handful included Yeltsin and that's what really mattered.

Collins remained deputy chief of mission to Ambassador Pickering. I was never personally as close to Pickering as I had been to Strauss. I think that was just a matter of personality. Pickering was certainly one of the most skilled professional diplomats I have seen or anybody has ever seen. He was a very quick learner about Russia. He was very interested in anything we had to tell him about Russia, but his focus, I think, was more on the changing international environment involving Russia, for example in Yugoslavia. That would have been true with any ambassador.

I had noticed that Pickering's presentation of credentials ceremony was, by chance, on the same day as Andrei Sakharov's birthday. There was an annual memorial concert in the evening in the Great Hall of the Conservatory, in memory of Sakharov with many political and intellectual

figures in attendance. I sent Pickering a memo proposing that, after his presentation of credentials and first meeting with Yeltsin in the afternoon, his first public act as ambassador be to attend this memorial concert for Andrei Sakharov. I thought that would be very well received and send exactly the right message. He agreed, and so the first thing I did with the new ambassador was to escort him to what is, perhaps, my favorite single public space in Russia, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, and to introduce him to some of the Russian intelligentsia. His attendance was front-page news the next day. So, it all went really quite well.

Q: Did you get any feel for Warren Christopher vis-à-vis Russia?

MERRY: I never did. Within the new State Department team, Russia was the purview of Strobe Talbott, who did not at the outset have a really top-level position, but he had access to the president, which is what Washington power is really about. The new State Department front office, Christopher and such, made almost no impression in Moscow at all. It was a complete change from James Baker, who had exercised a personal relationship with Eduard Shevardnadze in the Gorbachev period and had spearheaded many missions to Russia and other former Soviet countries. He had negotiated the terms of United States engagement with all the successor states, and spent considerable time directly with Yeltsin and foreign minister Kozyrev and others. That kind of personal engagement by the American secretary of state didn't exist under Christopher. He made some trips, but I doubt he made much more of an impression on the Russians than he made, obviously, on my memory.

Q: On us here in the States, he kind of came across as the president's lawyer on international affairs.

MERRY: As a personality, he could scarcely have been in greater contrast to Baker. Baker was certainly not my favorite human being. As an official visitor, he was a royal pain in the neck. Even Strauss got fed up with Baker's entourage. As I mentioned, the embassy leadership assigned me to other duties during those visits, because I could be kind of short-tempered with those folks. But you have to give the man credit as an activist foreign minister for our country, in dealing with the leaderships of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, dealing with people like Yeltsin, Nazarbayev and others in a very personal, engaging and sometimes downright physical embrace. For example, being in the banya (sauna) with those guys and conducting diplomacy in the flesh, quite literally. That was something James Baker could do very effectively. That wasn't Warren Christopher at all. That just wasn't his style, that wasn't his way.

Q: Did you get any feel for Strobe Talbott? Was he a positive influence, in your perspective, or not?

MERRY: Talbott was the president's man on Russia, and was for the duration of Clinton's presidency. I never had any kind of personal relationship with Talbott. I met him a number of times, briefed him, but there was never any real chemistry between us. I was never a Washington player during this period. I was in Moscow, and my job was to inform Washington through reporting and talking to visitors from Washington, whether they be official visitors or journalists or anything else. Increasingly, I was the bearer of bad tidings, the purveyor of the view that Russia was not going to be the miraculous reform success story that Washington wanted. If

nothing else, my reputation for candor and skepticism about the applicability of the “Washington consensus” to Russia made me less than a welcome voice. I knew that was so, and embraced the role. I was certainly not a hapless victim, as I knew perfectly well how I came across. For me, the opportunity to be that voice during this period in Russian history was a great opportunity, but it carried with it the duty to pour cold water on many easy and false beliefs at the other end.

The new administration—Clinton and company—quickly adopted the same uncritical, wholesale support for Yeltsin that had been the case under their predecessors. Now, let me be clear: I was, and indeed remain, a fan of Boris Yeltsin. He later made some terrible, terrible mistakes, of which the worst was the war in Chechnya. But I had the highest admiration for Yeltsin as the Russian leader willing to jettison the entire Leninist project and the Soviet empire to seek a very different future for his country. Where Gorbachev was a failed reformer, despite his epic achievement in helping to bring an end to the Cold War, Yeltsin was a true revolutionary, a man willing to reject the entire political and ideological system of which he was a product. My problem as head of Political/Internal was to communicate that Yeltsin was only part of a broader political dynamic in Russia, which was, curiously enough, still a democratic political dynamic. The legislature may have been a holdover from Soviet times, but it was an elected legislature, just as Yeltsin himself had been democratically elected. This political dynamic reflected pluralism and the many conflicting interests within Russian society, often not committed to Yeltsin either as a leader or to his policies. The new Clinton Administration engaged in unthinking, uncritical support for “Boris”—not even Yeltsin, it just became “good old Boris.” Washington wanted Russia to be democratic but for its leader to rule by decree. This was not, I thought, a very sophisticated or nuanced approach to dealing with a Russia that was going to have very serious internal political difficulties.

One thing I found curious and off-putting about the Clinton approach was this use of first names, to refer to the president of Russia by his first name. In Russian terms you could refer to him as Boris Nikolayevich, which is perfectly respectable. You could refer to him as President Yeltsin or just as Yeltsin. But to refer to him just as “Boris,” and to do that quite openly and publicly, had a distinctly condescending quality. Clinton tended to condescend to Russia in ways Bush had not. The public speeches Clinton made in Moscow made me wince. He also conveyed that people in Washington didn’t understand that Yeltsin was not Russia. The United States needed to maintain relationships with a broader spectrum of Russian political figures than just those associated with Yeltsin. I became increasingly concerned about this. Keep in mind that the new U.S. administration had many other things to deal with, so they tended to be reactive to events in Russia. Ambassador Pickering, for example, was not in place until late May when the deterioration of the Russian domestic political situation was already fairly far advanced.

The political confrontation from the end of 1992 resumed early in the following year and resulted in the violent crisis of the fall of 1993. However, the entire year was one of political crisis, with only short lapses. At the start of the year, Yeltsin was in a depressive funk. Yeltsin as a personality was definitely manic-depressive and had occasional depressive periods, but he tended to come out of them with bouts of manic energy. This happened in the late winter when his opponents in the Supreme Soviet attempted to impeach him. This was an interesting concept. There isn’t even a word in Russian for impeachment. They used the English word and concept, impeachment, because such a thing had no precedent in Russian history. The notion that a chief

of state could be removed from office through legal means obviously is not very Russian. This standoff between president and parliament progressed into March and could very easily have become violent – indeed, I expected it would – but did not for two reasons. First, the opposition retreated in real fear from an open and direct confrontation with Yeltsin, which they knew they would lose. A vote to impeach the president failed; though it is impossible to say what would have happened had it passed. Second, Yeltsin came up with an alternative. On television he proposed a national referendum on four questions. This referendum in April was about the direction of national policy and the authority of the president, and was pushed by the government under the slogan “Da, Da, Nyet, Da,” meaning they wanted people to vote “Yes, yes, no, yes” on the four questions.

The idea behind the four-part referendum was to create public pressure and momentum for a constitutional convention, to rewrite the Russian Federation constitution from the relic of the Soviet period which was still the legal framework of the country. This was, I thought, a brilliant stroke by Yeltsin. It avoided what might otherwise have been a very destructive confrontation; whether an effort at impeachment by the Supreme Soviet or direct rule by Yeltsin himself. It had the advantage of going back to the people, of transcending the existing constitutional structure through direct democracy in a national referendum. Initially, the scheme worked pretty well. The opposition was flustered and could not unite on a tactical response. The government won the vote with sufficient majorities to achieve credibility for a constitutional drafting convention, which began in the early summer. Then, characteristically with Yeltsin after a fight, the momentum slowed and his leadership lost dynamism. Whenever Yeltsin was in an overt confrontation, whether in late 1992 or earlier in '91, or later in '93, or in this particular confrontation in February and March of 1993, when Yeltsin was in a battle, he was in his element. But in the follow-through—the detailed political effort required for a constitutional convention to create a new basic law and get it put into place—his attention wandered and the whole thing lost momentum in the summer. Yeltsin was always a great fighter, but not a patient and detailed political in-fighter.

This concerned me because I had said to Washington, in my cable of November of the previous year, that the underlying Russian political crisis would have to be resolved, either with the reformulation of constitutional structures by peaceful means or by violent confrontation. The dilemma could not go on for an extended period. The dissipation of focus in the middle of '93 was worrisome. It was compounded, at the end of the summer, by a terribly ill-advised currency reform, when the Russian government withdrew a massive amount of currency from circulation. This created public panic during the height of the summer vacation season, when people didn't know if their money was going to be worth anything, if they could pay their holiday bills. It was done in a way that conveyed to the Russian people that the officials who made policy were indifferent to the impact of their actions on everyday life for the people, that this was still a top-down, authoritarian state. This action stood in terrible contrast with the national referenda in the spring, which had said, “The people rule here.” In the late summer, the utterly heavy-handed and unnecessary currency reform showed people how little they really mattered. This set the stage for the autumn crisis of 1993, as the finance minister, Boris Fyodorov, initiated a series of macroeconomic tightening measures during the autumn, which produced major economic pain throughout much of urban Russia.

This is a complex subject, and my views on whether or not these measures were good economics are not universally shared. However, whether they were good economics or not, they were certainly lousy politics. The Russian people had been through a couple of very, very difficult years, including the winter of '91-'92, and then through '92 into '93. People had survived those two very difficult years with massive inflation and huge disruptions. By the middle of 1993, Russians were beginning to feel they were over the worst, that they were over the hump, that things were beginning to improve, and people were beginning to see what you might call a light at the end of the tunnel. Then came these macroeconomic stabilization measures that just knocked the support out from under the basic livelihood of much of the urban, blue-collar labor force. In my view, this was unnecessary and certainly politically very foolish. Yeltsin was already looking toward another national referendum on a new constitution and to elections for a new legislature. To manufacture a major deterioration in working class living standards in preparation for such elections showed the arrogance and political blindness of many of the so-called Westernizers and economic reformers.

I dwell on this because many people think the confrontation between Yeltsin and his parliamentary opposition in late September and early October was about personalities and came out of nowhere. Washington saw the confrontation as a morality play, of good guys versus bad guys. This is false. The confrontation had a long and deep context. Yeltsin was always a controversial figure, even during his greatest days in 1991, but this confrontation involved a chain of events including the expiration of his emergency powers at the end of November '92; his capitulation on large elements of policy to the Supreme Soviet in December of '92; the replacement of much of his government; his decision, in February of '93, to challenge the legislature again; the failed effort at impeachment that followed; the spring confrontation that resulted in the four-part national referendum; the constitutional drafting process and its loss of momentum; the currency reform, and the fiscal tightening measures. These all created an environment in which the underlying dilemma of Russia's constitutional structure came to a head in the second half of September of 1993. The world remembers the images on CNN of the violent confrontation in Moscow in early October, but that was the culmination, if you will, of something that had been in process for over a year, and had been more or less unavoidable for months. I think violence could have been avoided, but the basic political confrontation could not. There was a lot of history—including personal history among the participants, of course—so that at the end of September, Yeltsin's own vice president, Alexander Rutskoy, was on the other side of the barricade. The parliamentary speaker, Ruslan Khasbulatov, was on the other side of the barricade. The head of the constitutional court, Zorkin, was on the other side of the barricade. People who had been working very diligently in the summer on constitutional revision, like Oleg Rumyantsev, ended up on the other side of the barricade. These had all been Yeltsin's allies earlier.

The step which provoked the ultimate confrontation was Yeltsin's. He became frustrated, impatient, fed-up with what he saw as the lack of progress on constitutional reform. After a series of political maneuvers, Yeltsin decided to prorogue the legislature. He lacked the legal authority to do so, but did it anyway. He went on television and dismissed the legislature with a call for new elections, plus the writing of a new constitution and a referendum on it, which in theory was what they were working toward anyway. But he decided, on September 21, to short-circuit a process he saw not going where he wanted or as quickly as he wanted.

To Yeltsin's surprise, I am sure, the opposition, if I can use that broad term, decided to take a leaf from Boris Yeltsin's own book from August 1991 by rallying their forces to the same place he had rallied his forces then, which was the Russian White House, the seat of the Russian Parliament. The Supreme Soviet voted to declare Yeltsin a traitor and Rutskoy as acting president. Rutskoy, Khasbulatov and others, under the banner of constitutional legitimacy and legality, summoned everyone who was in opposition to what Yeltsin was trying to do. This included a very wide spectrum of people who ranged from the most ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic, vicious people you could imagine to many of the most, I would say, liberal, progressive, pro-Western, democratizing individuals in the country. For example, Oleg Rummyantsev, who had portrayed himself as the James Madison of Russia and was the leading intellectual light in the fashioning of a new constitution, could not swallow what Yeltsin was doing, the man for whom he had sought to fashion that constitution. One should not imagine this confrontation was progressives versus communists, or reformers versus reactionaries. Many of the best people in Russia simply could not abide Yeltsin's departure from legality. However, the other end of the opposition spectrum was in a swamp. I remember vividly a piece of graffiti inside a telephone booth near the Russian White House that said, "Death to the Jew Yeltsin!" The notion of Boris Yeltsin being Jewish was preposterous, but this graffiti associated Yeltsin in the minds of some of these people with the ancient "Jewish enemy" in Russia. This anti-Semitic spleen was directed at Yeltsin, as well as at Gaidar and others, some of whom actually were Jewish.

The ability of the opposition to rally large numbers of people to the Russian White House, with its important symbolism from August 1991, very much caught Yeltsin by surprise. The crowds around the White House in 1993 were not the youth of 1991, but they were more or less on the same scale. He held off using riot police or troops, hoping his opponents would lose heart or lose face or at least seek a compromise with him. None of those things happened. The anti-Yeltsin forces remained steadfast and even grew in numbers and determination. They saw this moment as their opportunity either to reject the Western-oriented policy of the government or to establish genuine constitutional legitimacy, depending on their point of view. Compromise was not in the air. There was plenty of political rhetoric, none of it very productive, which extended from September 21 into early October.

One of the things I had learned from August 1991 was to have changes of underwear and other spare clothing in the embassy, in case we had another extended crisis. It was just as well, because this time I did not leave the embassy compound for 10 days. This time we did not have day and night shifts. So, I was working about 18 hours a day in the embassy, and sleeping in the sub-basement of the DCM's residence. I needed someplace to sleep, so I used what had originally, I think, been intended as a maid's room. Each night I would wash out one set of shirt and underwear in rotation for the night ahead, and for dinner I had the leftovers from a large reception Collins had hosted a few days before. There were enough leftover canapés and partial bottles of wine to keep me, but they got to be pretty stale.

The DCM, Jim Collins, was in Washington at the time, and his advice and counsel were so valued they wouldn't let him come back to Moscow. Ambassador Pickering was in Moscow without his deputy, but he had been through a number of similar events in other countries in his time. I think Jim probably was more valuable staying in Washington. Keep in mind that this time

the embassy was not showing solidarity with the people inside and around the White House. We did maintain contacts there for reporting purposes, but it was nothing like the interchange we had in August 1991. We were much less activist this time and certainly not seen as friends within the White House. Indeed, there came a point when even our normal contacts became difficult to maintain due to the general hostility we faced. The embassy was in a very insecure location because it faced directly toward the Russian White House with only the low compound wall for protection. In contrast to August 1991, there were a lot of people in the crowd with guns of various kinds.

Each evening before I went to sleep about midnight I had a phone conversation with Collins back at the Operations Center in the Department, to discuss where I thought things were that day. This was in addition to our classified reporting and analysis and was more in the nature of a personal exchange of views, me to him. I could say some things, even over an open phone link, that I might not in cleared embassy reporting. This routine went on for a week and a half. Candidly, I often did not have much of substance to say. Our access to knowledgeable contacts during this Russian crisis was a fraction of what we had had in 1991, on both sides. The Kremlin was not saying very much, in part because they really did not know how things might develop. We had people covering the crowd outside the White House and talking with contacts inside, but this got to be dicey. Talking to Americans was not popular in the White House, as it was clear the United States supported Yeltsin. The mood of the crowd sometimes was pretty ugly and potentially threatening toward embassy staff. At one point, I pulled some people back for their own safety. I often had little to report other than rumors, but that reflected the fact there was little real news from either side. The adversaries were talking past each other and both were trying to wait the other out. The Moscow public was sitting on the sidelines, just hoping for a peaceful outcome.

At the end of ten days, we were into the first weekend in October, and things at least appeared to be moving toward a resolution. Russian Patriarch Alexy had been on a trip to the United States when the crisis occurred and had cut it short to return to Moscow. He then started mediating high-level political talks at the Danilov Monastery. This mediation process was really the first ray of hope for a peaceful end of the crisis, as both sides were at least willing to take part given the prestige and stature of the patriarch. I had considerable respect for Alexy and knew that neither side would want to appear to rebuff his peacemaking efforts. So, it looked like things might yet sort out or at least remain calm during the mediation talks, but as there was little news emanating from the Danilov Monastery, there was little for the embassy or for me to do but wait.

October 3 was a Sunday morning and a beautiful autumn day. As it happens, it was also my birthday, and I decided I could go home for part of the day. I wanted to get some really clean clothing and do a few things. I thought I could leave the embassy for a Sunday. And, sure enough, that's when the whole thing just blew sky high.

Q: During this period before things blew sky high, how were you getting information?

MERRY: As in August of 1991, we had an expanded reporting team, though much more concentrated on the Political Section and not working around the clock. We had reasonable contacts with Yeltsin's people, and with some of the opposition. Things started off all right, as everybody initially wanted to tell their position to the Americans. That attitude deteriorated as

the crisis became protracted. I was out a few times in the crowds around the Russian White House, and the type of people there changed for the worse as time past. To begin with, it was sort of a middle-class law-and-order crowd, but with the passing days the crowd got to be ugly, paranoid and antagonistic. We still had adequate access, but it was a very different mood than in 1991. In the previous crisis, we at the embassy felt empathy and support for the people across the street, but in 1993 it was quite the contrary. My job as coordinator and editor was similar, but the tone was strikingly different.

Q: Did we have any either overt or covert position? How did we want this thing to come out?

MERRY: Washington supported Yeltsin, but without much sense of nuance or what our support would mean in Russia. They tended to view things in black and white, that the people on the other side of the barricades must be the bad guys of Russia.

Q: One of the things that can poison any view, if someone has extreme anti-Semitic views, and the opposition, as you mentioned, there was this—

MERRY: It certainly contained that.

Q: What was the name of the group that was sort of a party or something?

MERRY: There were a number of people involved of a fascist character, some of whom we actually knew. But, the opposition was internally diffuse and inconsistent. It contained factions ranging from brown through red, plus people with no faction. There were fascists through communists, plus many people I would characterize as legalists. There were a few odd characters who wanted a military government, but agendas were all over the map. If the opposition had won the confrontation with Yeltsin, their own fragmentation would have been almost instantaneous. What united them for the moment was opposition to Yeltsin, rather than the leadership of Rutskoy or any other figure. What Washington thought was that opponents of “our guy Boris” are bad people.

Q: I thought we might stop at this point. It's a good place to pick up, where the fighting started.

MERRY: OK, October 3rd. My birthday.

Q: Actually, I was sitting in Bishkek at the time, watching it on TV. I was out there. I had been retired for some years. I retired in '85. But I was sent up by USIA as a consultant, to set up the Kyrgyz government, to set up a consular corps. So I was watching this damn thing on—anyway.

MERRY: Well, let me tell you, it got damn exciting.

Q: Today is the 10th of June 2010 with Wayne Merry. Just briefly, where did we go up to and where did we leave off?

MERRY: We had gotten to the 3rd of October 1993, a very dramatic day in modern Russia. In fact, this was the one of the few events in the post-Soviet period in Russia that I think can

legitimately qualify for that much-overused term, historic. This was the date when the country really faced a crunch point.

For the preceding week and a half, there had been a largely peaceful but nonetheless very high-tension confrontation between Boris Yeltsin's government and his opposition, who were holed up in the Russian White House. This involved large scale demonstrations around the White House, which is right across the street from the American Embassy complex, and a very tense standoff over Yeltsin's effort to abrogate the then-existing Russian Supreme Soviet with an eye to new elections and a new constitution. A constitutional drafting process had been in progress for much of the previous six months, but had essentially bogged down. Yeltsin had always intended that the Russian Federation would get a new constitutional structure to replace that which it had inherited from the Soviet Union, and this would create a much more presidential-style system, patterned somewhat on De Gaulle's Fifth French Republic. In the late summer that effort ran out of steam, partly because of lack of focus by Yeltsin himself but for a variety of other reasons. In the early fall, the political process was in drift. Yeltsin, in mid-September, decided to cut the Gordian knot by dismissing the Supreme Soviet, which constitutionally he did not have the authority to do. He called for new elections, not just for a new legislature, but for a new constitution, which was at that point half written.

The opposition to Yeltsin was now led by Yeltsin's own vice president, the former air force general, Alexander Rutskoy, and the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, both of whom had been close allies to Yeltsin in the crisis of 1991. They were now leading the opposition, which was an unstable amalgam of very conflicting Russian political forces, some of them neo-Soviet, members of the Russian Communist Party, but also members of groups that were semi-fascist, some of them entirely fascist, a few people who overtly advocated a military government—actually quite few in number but quite extreme in their politics—and many people who were simply opposed to Yeltsin, Yeltsin's reforms, Yeltsin's government. The opposition had attracted a motley but intense group of people distressed because of the breakup of the Soviet Union, the loss of the Soviet Russian empire, and of course, the extreme economic turmoil in the country during the late Gorbachev period and the first two years of Yeltsin's presidency.

Also in the opposition were what I would call progressive, pro-democracy, pro-market, pro-Western liberal reformers, who felt that Yeltsin's approach had itself become too authoritarian. Their commitment was to the existing legal constitutional norms, with a view to their replacement but through legal means. What united what I would call liberal reformers with what I would call reactionary neo-Soviets and semi-fascists was an opposition to Yeltsin's unequivocally illegal and unconstitutional methods to try to resolve the political crisis. He did not have the authority to abrogate the Supreme Soviet. He did not have authority on his own to drive a constitutional revision. I think it's fair to say he did not have broad popular legitimacy in doing so. This led to the confrontation on the streets of Moscow, centered around the Russian White House, which had gone on for a week and a half.

On Sunday, the 3rd of October, a process of mediation was taking place under the sponsorship of the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexy, at the Danilov Monastery, the headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate. Alexy had been on a tour of Russian

Orthodox sites in North America and had cut that short to come back to Russia to try to help resolve the political crisis. His stature was such that pretty much everybody in leadership positions on both sides, both in the government and in the opposition, agreed to let Alexy try to work out some kind of a resolution to this crisis. That was ongoing that weekend. I believe that if this process had started earlier, maybe four or five days earlier, Alexy might have been able to pull it off. We'll never know. There were many people on both sides trying to find a way out of this confrontation that would not involve use of force by either side, and the one person who had a real chance to pull this off was Alexy. As it happened, he came too late.

As I mentioned before, I had been in the embassy for a week and a half without a break. This being a Sunday and a day when the confrontation was supposedly in abeyance because of the mediation effort, it looked to me to be a good day to go home and get some change of clothing and take care of a few personal things. It also happened to be my birthday. I thought, "I've been working 18 hours a day for the past 10 days; maybe I can take this Sunday off and go home." Well, it didn't work out that way.

My apartment was in a high-rise building which overlooked October Square, one of the main traffic interchanges in Moscow and also, at its center, site of the largest statue of Lenin in Moscow. Representatives of both sides were engaged in the mediation effort, while Yeltsin and other senior members of the government had decided to do what I did, which was to take this Sunday off, as they were mostly at their dachas. With nobody in charge locally on either side, people on the street took events into their own hands. There was a demonstration scheduled for October Square in front of the Lenin statue to rally people opposed to Yeltsin. In principle, this should have been a normal peaceful manifestation of political opposition to the government, and it could have been. The problem was two-fold: first, many of the people who showed up for this demonstration were in a very foul mood after 10 days of confrontation. Many of them had been camping out around the Russian White House for days, if not a week or more, and some were looking for a fight. Unfortunately, they got it because of the second factor. The Ministry of Interior behaved stupidly. Rather than let this demonstration take place and let people vent their anger, they decided to send in riot cops to break it up. What they sent were a bunch of young, inexperienced, semi-trained riot cops who really didn't know what they were doing. As it happens, my kitchen looked right down on the square and on the demonstration. I had a panoramic view of the collapse of peace.

The riot police, instead of standing to the side to let the demonstration take place or keeping it where it wouldn't interfere with traffic, closed in on it from all sides. They compressed the demonstrators, which was foolish beyond belief. They didn't try to push them off in one direction. They actually pushed in from various directions. A lot of the demonstrators were older people, and older Russians have fairly thin skins about being pushed by young people in the best of times. At some point, the compression caused a human explosion and the demonstrators surged out and just stormed right through the riot cops, who were mostly kids and didn't know what they were doing. There was no effective leadership and the demonstrators trampled these symbols of government authority pretty much underfoot. Then it was, "Katie, bar the door."

I had not the faintest notion that this relatively local event I had witnessed spelled the collapse of political peace in general. If I had, I would have returned to the embassy immediately, rather

than just reporting what I had seen by phone. It did not occur to me that this event would spark others and lead to a loss of government control in much of the central part of the city, but that is just what happened. The demonstration – now a full-bore riot, in my view – started moving up the street, what’s called the Garden Ring, in groups to the area in front of Gorky Park, across a bridge over the Moscow River, and then on toward where they had come from, which was the Russian White House. On the way they engaged in increasing levels of violence, particularly when they got to the square in front of the Foreign Ministry. By the time they got back to the Russian White House, and of course to the American Embassy, the police forces on the street had disintegrated, and, for the most part, simply fled for their own safety. There obviously was a lack of leadership and organization on the police side on this Sunday afternoon. Most of the senior people were at their dachas. Some of the Russian police who provided security at the entrances to our embassy actually had to take refuge inside to keep from getting beaten up by the crowds.

At this point much of central Moscow on this Sunday afternoon belonged to the opposition. It was really messy. It illustrated one of those things Russians are always telling you, that Russian society is either strictly controlled or it’s anarchy. Russians, particularly elite Russians, often justify the authoritarian nature of Russian government on the argument that, without a strong hand, Russians will just descend into chaos. In this instance, the analysis was valid. I saw it happen, though I do not assert this was uniquely Russian behavior. During the course of the afternoon any kind of organized government control disappeared. The demonstrators took over the part of the city centered on the Russian White House. They had most of the major streets in that district in their hands. They decided to commandeer vehicles and go north to Ostankino, where the main television broadcast tower and production studios are located. There was a violent confrontation with police at Ostankino, but the government never lost control of the airwaves, which was very important. By that time, the government started to get its act together and sent forces to the television complex.

I reported to the embassy by phone what was happening – because my kitchen was a prime vantage point – and learned that things were much worse than I had thought. The embassy faced a real security problem, because the embassy complex, which included something like 155 residences of families with kids, was right in the middle of this urban battle zone. The exterior perimeter wall had been deliberately built not very high so as not to be intimidating. It was only about eight feet high, or nine feet high at the most, and energetic, athletic demonstrators could get over that wall. If, as seemed almost certain, a large-scale battle between government forces and opposition forces was impending, the embassy would be right smack in the middle of it, much more so than in August 1991. In 1991, nobody would target the Americans, whereas in 1993, most of the opposition forces regarded the United States as being deeply in bed with Yeltsin, as being Yeltsin’s principal foreign support. The hostility towards the United States among some opposition figures was quite extreme. So there was a real chance the embassy could be in danger, or even physically overrun, which would not have been difficult.

Ambassador Pickering had previous experience with comparable situations—this was his seventh ambassadorship, and he had, in previous assignments, seen political violence on a large scale—and was in his element. He got everybody hunkered down. Everyone in the embassy not in essential duties was moved into the large underground gymnasium, which was the safest place

in the compound. Nobody was allowed to be in their residences. Some people were working in their offices, which, for the most part, were also underground, and the Marines were providing our security. Those who lived off compound, the majority of embassy staff, were instructed to stay at home.

Ambassador Pickering understood the embassy might actually be cut off or overwhelmed, and decided to establish a backup embassy. He assigned me to that duty, as officer in charge. This was in part because I was not in the embassy at that time. I was still at home, reporting by telephone what was happening on the streets. I was assigned to gather together a small team of people not in the embassy compound—because the area around the embassy now was a battle zone—and to go to his residence, Spaso House, which is about a mile and a half away from the embassy, and establish a backup embassy in case of need. The team consisted of two of my own Political/Internal officers living in the same building I did, two military attachés, two people from the Station and a couple of communicators, and we all proceeded—mostly by Metro, because the streets were not very navigable due to the chaos, but the Metro was still functioning—to Spaso House, where late on a Sunday afternoon we set up an Inmarsat for communication and established ourselves as potentially the replacement U.S. Embassy in case the main embassy was overrun.

Q: Spaso House is the residence of the ambassador.

MERRY: It's the ambassador's residence, in a fine old neo-classical building. It was built shortly before the First World War. The problem was that Spaso House is also very centrally located. It's about a mile and a half or so, as the crow flies, from the embassy, which the next day proved to be not as far away as I would have liked. In any case, we camped out to wait and see what happened. We had a direct phone link with the embassy, so I could stay in touch with the Political/Internal team there. We watched Russian television during the evening and into the night. The two defense attachés, who had a vehicle, knew where to look for the units with heavy weapons the government would bring into the city. They found them on the outskirts of Moscow camping down for the evening, bivouacking for the night. It was quite clear the government was not going to confront the opposition in a major way until daylight. This was another proof of the essential role of our military colleagues in covering a wide-ranging event that transcended the political. None of us FSOs could have performed this task. We reported this vital information to the embassy. During the hours of darkness the opposition forces engaged in sporadic fighting with security forces on foot. With the exception of the television station and the Kremlin area, they were just rampaging with frequent gun fire. This included the area around the embassy, which received some hostile fire. The very worst moment of this period, for me, was when word came over our radio net that one of the Marines had been shot. We did not know how bad he was, but the fact one of our Marines was hurt sent a chill through me. I recall vividly the sick feeling I had at that moment. However, we had done our job, reporting that significant armed forces were on the outskirts of Moscow and would come in pretty much at first light.

Once we had properly communicated to Ambassador Pickering and Washington, it seemed to me the rational thing to do was get some sleep. I tried to encourage all the members of the team to do the same. I couldn't get them to go to bed because they were just glued to the television in these events. For me, I decided it had been a long week and a half already and God knew what

tomorrow would be like and the days after that. So, I went to one of the guest bedrooms and went to bed, went right to sleep. I suspect I may have been the only adult in the embassy who got a good sleep that night. What woke me was the reverberation from the first 120 millimeter tank cannon round being fired into the upper floors of the Russian White House.

Q: By the way, 120 millimeter—that's pretty big stuff.

MERRY: This is a big—

Q: During World War II they had what we called "long Tom," which is 155.

MERRY: This was a long-barreled tank gun. In any case, the reverberation from a 120 millimeter tank gun, fired from almost two miles away, shook the windows of Spaso House. That's what woke me up. I found out what was going on, had enough sense to take a shower before I got dressed, knowing this was going to be a long day, and then we had little else to do than watch on television what the world was watching on CNN. Remember, our job in Spaso was to be a reserve embassy, not to be out covering the events and reporting on them. Ambassador Pickering's instructions about our role kept us in Spaso House, even though our inclinations were to be out on the streets. CNN's cameras were on the other side of a major bridge on which the army's tanks were deployed as they were firing at the Russian White House from the south.

Q: Why was this the target? You have this mob going around, and so what was...

MERRY: The world saw only a very limited part of what was going on. While the visual imagery of that day is of tanks firing into the upper floors of the Russian parliament building, the real fighting was out of sight of the cameras. There was a large-scale battle underway on the streets between government forces and opposition. This battle zone was fairly extensive, about two and a half miles wide and maybe a mile and a half deep. The center of the battle was on the north side of the Russian White House, in an area partly between the Russian White House and the perimeter wall of the American Embassy compound. There's a large park and a soccer field north of the White House and across the main street from our compound. That's where the biggest battle was going on. The government forces used the soccer field as a staging area for an assault on the building. The tanks were firing from the south into the upper floors of the White House to suppress sniper and automatic weapons fire from windows on the north side. The tanks were maybe a quarter of a mile away on the other side, and were firing high-explosive rounds into the upper floors of the tower of the Russian White House to suppress that fire. The tower of the Russian White House is wide east-west but is quite shallow north-south. It's only maybe 80 or 100 feet deep. If they had used armor-piercing rounds, the shells would have gone all the way through the building and out the other side. The tanks fired into the building as their part of the larger battle on the other side that the world did not see because CNN's cameras couldn't show it. That battle was taking place literally right in front of the American embassy.

Q: Were any Russian TV stations involved in this?

MERRY: I cannot recall. We were watching both, but my memory may not distinguish correctly

what I saw on Russian television and what on CNN.

Q: I was watching the thing, of all places, in Bishkek at the time.

MERRY: What you were watching was CNN, because they were the only media covering the events with a camera. The problem, and this is often the case, is that what television can photograph is what the world thinks is happening. In point of fact, the battle going on that Monday was quite extensive, involving thousands of people.

Q: Were there any disaffected troops involved?

MERRY: There are debates about that. Certainly not any units, but probably some individuals. The government forces were elite army units and forces of the Ministry of Interior, domestic security forces.

Q: You mean the old KGB types?

MERRY: The Ministry of the Interior. The army supplied the tanks, though the tanks were crewed only by officers, who were regarded as more politically reliable. We later learned there had been a very intense debate between Yeltsin and the leadership of the army, as to what should be the army's role—because the army was very reluctant to get involved in a domestic political dispute—and there was also the question who could be trusted. The tanks were manned exclusively by officers because they were somewhat reluctant to trust enlisted personnel in such a delicate operation.

Exchanges of automatic weapons fire went literally right over the walls of the American Embassy. There was a small hotel, the “Mir,” across from our main gate, where opposition forces holed up. Government forces fired at the “Mir” over the corner of the American Embassy; some of our walls and structures were heavily pockmarked with bullets. A lot of our windows were shot through. Most of the personnel were safely underground in the gym and offices, but this was a strenuous day, because we had several hundred Americans, basically families, in the center of this battle zone.

Then the battle came to us at Spaso House. As the government forces closed in on the Russian White House, various opposition elements moved off in other directions. By establishing the alternate embassy at the ambassador's residence, we had made ourselves, if anything, potentially more vulnerable than the people in the embassy compound, because the ambassador's residence was a wide-open piece of property with no security at all. We had no Marines. The gate was open. Soon, armed figures were moving around in the garden. It was hard to tell who was who, because when you see a guy dressed all in black with a ski mask and an automatic weapon you have no idea who the hell he is. The American flag was flying on the flagpole from the front of the building. I wished I'd had enough sense to take that down during the night but I hadn't thought to do so, and it made us rather conspicuous. There were also snipers operating from balconies on high-rise buildings in the area. At one point, we were gathered in refuge in a basement room when several guys in black ski masks started looking through the window into this basement room. We quickly shifted our refuge to the attic of this 1912-era building. I doubt

more than a handful of people have ever been in the attic of the ambassador's residence in Moscow. But it seemed to be the safest place to go for a while.

Q: You have the street mobs and snipers. How were they getting guns? I would assume that guns were not easily obtained in Russia?

MERRY: By 1993 the opposition had plenty of weapons. There was no lack of small arms firepower on either side. At this point, we in the ambassador's residence were actually in greater physical peril than the people in the main embassy. This was a nasty irony. The lesson was that we should have established the alternate embassy at what's called the "near dacha," a little weekend place we have that's inside the city of Moscow but far enough away that we wouldn't have been at any risk.

Once the battle had moved away from the White House, the embassy had to evacuate us, as if they did not have more than enough to worry about. The ambassador's vehicle was an armored limousine, and our regional security officer came to rescue us. This was a superb guy who had come to Moscow from an assignment in Beirut and knew difficult security situations very well. The vehicle had to make three trips to get us all out. Pickering came over on the first run to get some things, but soon returned to the embassy. I forget exactly how many of us there were, but it took three trips to get us all out. After the first trip, the opposition forces in the area understood what was going on, that an evacuation was underway. For the second run, the one I was in with the ambassador, there was a lot of automatic weapons fire at the gate. Initially, we couldn't get out the gate to the street. After communications by walkie-talkie with the embassy and then with the authorities, the Russian security forces nearby used automatic weapons to suppress hostile fire at the gate. We went out the gate pedal to the metal, across the plaza, and down the street, and finally into the embassy, which was surrounded by what looked like a battle zone. There were burning buildings and burning automobiles and burning debris, the detritus of an urban battle.

We all got safely out of the ambassador's residence, which I'm happy to say was not damaged. I then learned the embassy the previous evening had started something which we had never really thought about for Moscow: emergency destruction of classified material. Most vulnerable embassies are supposed to maintain a relatively small amount of classified materials, so an emergency destruction can be done within a certain specified period of time. The embassy in Moscow, to put it mildly, had never been in compliance with those standards because during the Cold War the joke had always been that, if the American Embassy in Moscow had to destroy classified material, a U.S. thermonuclear warhead would do the job. We had years and years of back files. When they started the destruction process, it quickly became a shambles. The paper shredders jammed. Fortunately, they didn't get to shredding any of my files, which was nice. One of my colleagues steered them away from my safe. This demonstrated how completely unprepared, mentally, we Old Moscow Hands were, that this could take place in a city which we had all thought of as the paradigm of the police state, that the one thing we would never have to worry about was being overrun by domestic violence.

Something much more serious was the injury to one of our Marines by gunfire. Corporal Bell, a young Marine, was a very popular guy, much loved by embassy kids who regarded him as a

collective big brother. He was in an observation post on top of the new office building, which was still unoccupied. He was shot through the neck, perhaps by one of the government forces who had no idea what they were shooting at. There was nothing on the compound to identify it as the American embassy. We didn't have the flag out. Most of the troops brought in by the government didn't know the city of Moscow. This was just another building, and they saw a guy in a helmet and uniform on top of a building and somebody shot at him. He was nearly killed. Our embassy doctor took care of him, and we received, I'm happy to say, good cooperation from the Russian authorities in evacuating him to a Russian hospital and saving his life. Despite the hugely important political events taking place around us, I suspect that for many of the Americans involved, the shooting of Corporal Bell is the most painful memory of those days.

The embassy didn't really do much in terms of reporting that day because Ambassador Pickering had given orders the previous day that everybody who was not in the embassy compound—and most embassy personnel lived somewhere else—were to stay at their residences. People were not to go out and observe what was going on. They were not to engage in reporting activity. People were to stay away from the battle zones. A number of the staff disobeyed that order, feeling this was a major political crisis and we were there as reporters and that was what we should be doing. I myself felt uncomfortable with the limitations on our reporting activities. In retrospect, I understand why Ambassador Pickering did what he did. He was a man who had seen this kind of violence before, several times in his career. He made the judgment that no reporting message is worth somebody getting killed. Ultimately, of course, it was his authority, it was his decision. Today, I agree with it. Then, I felt frustrated by it. Most of my staff felt very frustrated and complained. In retrospect, I think it was the correct thing to do.

During the remainder of that Monday, October 4th, and into the next day, the American Embassy remained hunkered down. That night was particularly eerie for me because I quite seriously believe I was the only person in the place who had been to bed the night before. Everybody else was utterly exhausted by Monday night. Other than a handful of Marines, who were on their shift providing security, I was the only person awake most of that night. I was the embassy duty officer that night because I was able to stay awake and functional. This was a strange night, with embassy staff sleeping on the floors under their desks. Ambassador Pickering was asleep on the floor of his office. The staff were asleep throughout the embassy offices, which were in semi-darkness. The one person awake, maintaining periodic contact over the phone with the Operations Center in Washington, was me. I rejected every effort by people in Washington to wake up Ambassador Pickering or wake up somebody else to ask a question. My feeling was that tomorrow would be a long day, too. These people all needed some sleep. From time to time, I watched the Russian White House burn across the street, as the tower was reduced to a gutted ruin. As the hours passed, I maintained communications to Washington, which mostly meant telling people things they should already have known, answering obvious questions repeatedly.

The one thing of value I contributed—other than that somebody had to be on duty that night—was my concern about Corporal Bell. After it was clear he was out of danger, I tried to get somebody in Washington at a senior level to call his widowed mother. This proved difficult because these events in Moscow were simultaneous with the so-called “Black Hawk Down” events in Mogadishu, when a number of U.S. Army Rangers were killed. Washington's immediate focus was not on Russia, it was on Somalia. The White House and the State

Department and the Defense Department treated the crisis in Moscow as a second-tier issue that was overshadowed in American public interest by the fight in Mogadishu, the famous or infamous “Black Hawk Down” incident. The president, the vice president, the secretary of state and secretary of defense were making phone calls to the families of the troops who were killed or wounded in Mogadishu. I tried for, I forget how long, for several hours, to get somebody to call the mother of our casualty. Finally, Strobe Talbott as deputy secretary of state did, which I much appreciated. I was quite struck how the attention of senior figures in Washington was not on the crisis in Russia, which we naturally considered the most important event going on anywhere in the world, but on events which attracted more American domestic interest—and of course, American media attention—which was the fighting in Mogadishu. That place was nowhere near as important as Russia, but it involved American fatalities. So, we played second fiddle that night. It was a good lesson for me.

In the immediate aftermath of these events, most of the leaders of the opposition were arrested and taken to Lefortovo Prison. The Russian government began cleanup operations, including the rebuilding of the White House. The view in Washington was that Yeltsin had won and that’s good. This was a view with which I strongly disagreed. I acknowledged that, once it came down to a real shootout between Yeltsin and the opposition, it was necessary that Yeltsin win. However, the Clinton Administration saw a victory by Boris Yeltsin as a victory for reform in Russia, that the economic shock therapy we had been advocating would now be carried out and everything would be wonderful. I believed the confrontation had been a disaster for reform in Russia and for Yeltsin’s ability to maintain genuine political legitimacy. People in Russia had felt pride until then that there had been no political violence of the kind they saw in Tbilisi or in Tajikistan. Russia had not been like Romania, but now it was. Russians, regardless of which side they had been on or whether they were on a side at all, felt real shame and disappointment that their country had been reduced to kind of Third World status, with a shootout involving tanks and troops in the middle of the capital. I felt very strongly the episode represented a huge failure for Yeltsin’s leadership and was a huge setback for the development rule of law in Russia.

In contrast, Washington was almost ebullient that Yeltsin’s opponents were now in prison while people we liked were the winners; therefore the policies we favored would be carried out. I can tell you, my view that this victory was Pyrrhic was not welcome in Washington, nor really even within parts of the embassy. People visiting Moscow who heard this view from me were not pleased. They also did not like to hear that Yeltsin’s image among his fellow countrymen, among Russians, had been irredeemably tarnished by his choice of overt confrontation. There was no question the underlying problems of Russian constitutional government needed resolution, but it was Yeltsin’s choice in mid-September to violate the law, to use extraconstitutional means, which placed the burden of the crisis on him rather than on his opponents. Having chosen to abandon the slow process of political compromise, he bore the responsibility for what would come afterwards. That people in the opposition actually initiated the violence and the looting did not, in my view, obviate the fact that Yeltsin set the stage for it.

In addition, during the crisis, Yeltsin’s government had been pretty ineffectual in dealing with it. They just waited for the opposition to get tired and go home, to either give up or compromise. They were caught completely flatfooted on the Sunday and had no better response than battle tanks. That the confrontation could challenge the integrity of Yeltsin’s government was not, I

think, well understood in the Kremlin. The ineffectualness of Yeltsin's approach was demonstrated by the fact it took an initiative by the Patriarch to even begin a process of discussion which could have led to a peaceful resolution. Whether or not Patriarch Alexy could have succeeded in that we'll never know, but he alone had the prestige and popular legitimacy even to try; Yeltsin did not.

I tried to put my views into a major analysis, but never finished the message. The pace of ensuing political events in Moscow took up all my time and energy, but I also had some difficulty in bringing my thoughts into coherent written form. With more time, or perhaps with more determination, I could have produced a significant message, but I did not. My views were certainly not a secret, but there was no point in having those views if they were not made available to Washington in writing. That was my job, even if it made enemies. Not completing and sending that message was a personal and professional failure, which I still regret.

Another policy issue from that period which merits comment, even though I was not directly involved, was U.S. policy on the future of NATO and the expansion of the Alliance to include former Warsaw Pact countries. This obviously was a sensitive topic for Russia, as Moscow believed it had made a deal with the previous Bush Administration that Soviet acquiescence with German unification was linked with a Western commitment not to push NATO eastwards. Obviously, events in the region quickly went far beyond Germany and the context looked very different in late 1993. Nonetheless, this was a delicate topic in our relations with Russia. That fall, Washington proposed and NATO adopted a new program called Partnership for Peace. In Moscow, we presented this program to the government, meaning to Yeltsin, as the substitute for NATO expansion. Not surprisingly, he was very pleased and very appreciative toward President Clinton. However, on the very same day, the program was presented in eastern European capitals as their accelerated path to NATO membership.

I recall the next morning holding in one hand our outgoing report on what we had told the Russians and in my other hand a report from Embassy Warsaw on what we had told the Poles. The contrast was quite stark, as was our duplicity. The Poles and others publicly trumpeted their achievement of quick entry into NATO, so the Russians knew we had more or less lied to them. I never understood why we did this. It would have been much better to tell Yeltsin the truth and work with Moscow on how to manage the issue to improve ties between NATO and Russia. I think it was a characteristic of the Clinton Administration, especially in its relations with Russia, to believe it could have its cake and eat it too, that we could blatantly deceive the Russians about a matter of great importance to them without some loss of credence on their part in our word and in our intentions. Good diplomacy is not lying for your country, as is often said. Good diplomacy is being known as true to your word. Our approach to Russia on issues like NATO expansion was, in my view, shortsighted and inconsistent with long-term American interests. Evidently, people in Washington did not perceive a problem which could not somehow be managed.

It was at this time that the embassy staff moved back into the old chancery building, which had been rebuilt after the fire of early 1991. It was a huge disappointment. Most of the place was pretty much what I remembered from the early 80s, with little more than cosmetic changes. In particular, the fire safety improvements were a disgrace, with the exit stairs still with broken steps and broken handrails from when the building was built under Stalin. The Political Section

was on the top floor, so we had the furthest to go in case of a fire. I knew enough about the building – a fire trap for decades – to order all Political/Internal staff not to secure classified material in case of a fire alarm, just to get out as fast as they could. Someone reported this to someone, and the Admin counselor complained about it during a staff meeting. The result was that Ambassador Pickering applied that order to the entire embassy. More than two years were spent redoing that structure, and the result convinced me more than ever that we should have let the damn thing burn down when we had the chance. Today, we finally are in the new embassy, but the old building is still in use, at least till the next time it catches fire.

Well, back to the domestic political story. In the aftermath of the very dramatic events of early October, the Russian government scheduled national elections for mid-December to include a referendum on a new constitution, which would be written entirely by Yeltsin's people rather than reflecting a wide spectrum of viewpoints and political forces. What became known as the "Yeltsin Constitution" was an amalgam of Russian and Western models, but in its essence was patterned on the constitution of the Fifth French Republic written for De Gaulle. There would also be elections for the new parliament, both upper and lower chambers, to be created by the constitution. The lower chamber, the State Duma, was patterned on the German Bundestag, with half the seats elected in districts and half from national party lists. The elections presumed that the constitutional referendum would both pass and attain the 50 percent participation needed to be valid. So, Russians on one day were going to vote for two members of the upper chamber, two members of the lower chamber and the constitutional referendum. In some cases, there would be regional and local elections as well. This was going to be a very big election.

Washington assumed the election would be a great triumph for Yeltsin, reflecting his victory in early October, and would set the stage for a vast new wave of reforms favored by the United States. My job during November and early December was to try to convince Washington that such expectations were wrong. It became obvious to me rather early, both from anecdotal evidence and from polling data, that the party led by Gaidar, called "Russia's Choice" and essentially Yeltsin's party, was not going to have an easy walk to victory in the election. In part this reflected the popular revulsion against what had taken place in early October, but, even more so, it was due to public unhappiness with government economic policy. Simultaneous with the political confrontation, the finance minister, Boris Fyodorov, had instituted a very stringent program of macroeconomic stabilization, which had produced a severe tightening of the domestic Russian economy. While the outside world focused on the very visible political events, most Russians were more keenly aware of the sharp deterioration of their economic situation, and particularly that the macroeconomic stabilization program was leading to massive loss of livelihood for urban blue-collar workers.

This economic tightening was instituted just as Russians thought things were starting to improve a bit. Russian families had endured a series of economic traumas in the late Gorbachev era, during the breakup of the Soviet Union, and afterwards. By mid-1993, people had a sense the worst was over and now things would slowly get better. Indeed, they had been promised by the Yeltsin government that things were going to get better. Then with the autumn of 1993 government policies threw many people back into economic crisis again. This was particularly true for urban blue-collar males. The level of frustration Russians felt with their government over economic policy was largely invisible to the outside world. In conversations with visitors from

Washington, I was struck that they didn't even make a connection with the political process. They assumed Russians would vote in favor of Yeltsin's constitution and Yeltsin's party, because Yeltsin had won the political confrontation on the streets of Moscow—had won it with firepower but had won it. They completely missed the fact that what most Russians, not just in Moscow but across the length and breadth of this vast country, were concerned about were their livelihoods, and the fear they were going into yet another period of economic stringency. As the weeks went by, the more palpable was this sense of fear, real fear. This was something I had not seen in 1991 or 1992, but did in late 1993.

It is curious in retrospect that three of the most important messages I wrote in Moscow were in the month of November. In 1991 it had been my "Goetterdaemmerung" message to get Washington to understand that the Soviet Union and Gorbachev were toast. In 1992 it had been my cable on the underlying constitutional crisis to explain that Yeltsin was heading for a serious confrontation. Now, in 1993 it was time to try to shake up Washington again, to tell Washington what it needed to know rather than what it wanted to hear. This time, the message would be really unpalatable.

Near the end of the month, I wrote a telegram predicting the election, which was now slightly over two weeks away, was going to be a disaster for the government. First, I was concerned that the referendum on the constitution would not achieve a 50 percent level of participation, required under the law to be valid. It wasn't so much that people would vote against the constitution, rather that not enough people would cast a ballot, that they would abstain as a means of opposing the new constitution. Second, I thought it very likely that Gaidar's party, "Russia's Choice," would do very poorly in the voting for the new parliament and would not be in a dominant position in the new State Duma.

Ambassador Pickering faced a difficult choice. Obviously, such a firebrand message required approval by the ambassador; I would never have considered sending it out without his clearance. He was presented with a message that said, from the subject line to the final line, things Washington did not want to hear, and said so in fairly bleak terms. Pickering showed his mettle as an ambassador because, even though he did not agree with me—he thought I was overstating the case, he thought I was excessively pessimistic—he sent out the telegram and only altered the subject line. He didn't change so much as a punctuation mark in the text. My subject line had been something like "Russian Election Countdown: A Grim Prognosis," and he changed it to "Russian Election Countdown: Watch for Surprises." He didn't alter any of the predictions in the telegram even though he didn't agree with me because he felt it was my job to analyze these things. I must say that most ambassadors, in my experience, wouldn't have had the integrity to send in a telegram that Washington would really hate on matters of such importance. Strauss, yes, but not many ambassadors from the career service.

Q: When you talk about Washington are you talking about ...

MERRY: Pretty much everybody.

Q: Strobe Talbott, basically?

MERRY: I'm talking about the State Department, the Treasury and the White House, including Talbott who, by that point, was deputy secretary of state and very much the president's leading man on Russia. I am by no means pointing a finger at Talbott. He was always, I thought, an informed and attentive senior reader of our product. If we had an open-minded reader at a policy level in Washington, he was it. Such was not the case in the Treasury. The Treasury Department hated the telegram. I got a lot of negative feedback, to put it mildly. By this point, I think it's fair to say I had been identified in the minds of people dealing with Russia policy as the naysayer in Moscow.

Q: Where was the CIA in this?

MERRY: Hard to say. Keep in mind that we did not see what they sent to the White House. I think George Kolt at the National Intelligence Council—he was the National Intelligence Officer for Russia—shared some of my concerns but he didn't go as far as I did in anticipating popular blowback against Yeltsin.

As the elections, which took place on the 10th of December, approached, my view that the government was going to be decisively defeated increased. The information we had about probable voting intentions got worse rather than better, especially after national television appearances by all the leading political candidates. An irony was that the 1993 elections were, without question, the most legitimate, free and fair elections that have ever taken place in Russia, before or since. The government was so completely confident it would win that it engaged in very little cheating. This was the first full national post-Soviet election. Two years later the elections would not be as legitimate. There were some exceptions, especially in a few places with regional elections where local authorities cooked the books for their own purposes, but these were the most legitimate reflection of popular sentiment at the ballot box that Russia has ever had.

Election day was a Sunday in Russia. Of course, we had a full-court press for reporting. I was in the embassy as sort of "election center" to collate reports from our various observers and to keep Washington informed on a continuing basis. As it happened, Vice President Gore, accompanied by Deputy Secretary Talbott and others, was in the region. They were in Central Asia on election day and would arrive in Moscow the following day. The idea was that the vice president and a big American delegation would arrive in Moscow just after election day to congratulate and celebrate the victory of Yeltsin, Gaidar and the pro-American forces. The vice president would bless this great democratic victory for the American program in Russia.

In the middle of the afternoon I got a phone call from Talbott's chief aide traveling with the vice president's party in Almaty. She had recently worked for me in Moscow and was calling to get my sense as to how things were going. I told her bluntly over an unclassified telephone line that the election would be a disaster, that Yeltsin's forces would be soundly defeated, and the big winners of the election were going to be the Russian Communist Party on the left and a right-wing neo-fascist character named Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Whatever reporting we had sent in—and our reporting in the days immediately before the election reflected even more grim evidence than had been available when I wrote my long telegram in late November—Washington just didn't buy it. I later learned the vice president's party were expecting Yeltsin's people to win.

They expected a great victory at the polls in Russia, even though their own embassy had told them just the contrary for over two weeks.

As the election numbers came in during the course of the night, things turned out even worse than I had predicted. I had been optimistic, wouldn't you know? On the positive side, the first of my dire predictions was not borne out, in that the referendum on the new constitution did get over 50 percent participation and hence was valid. There was – and, indeed, still is – debate on that subject in Russia, whether some ballot boxes had been stuffed to push participation above the required level. My detailed analysis after the fact was that it did get over 50 percent but not by very much, certainly not by the official 54 percent. My concern that the referendum would fail because of inadequate participation proved wrong, but it was a near-run thing.

In contrast, the voting for the new State Duma, the main house of the new national legislature, turned out even worse than I had predicted, because Gaidar's party, "Russia's Choice," got only 15 percent of the vote, which for a ruling party in any democratic election is pretty bad. Due to the mixed party list/constituency system, "Russia's Choice" did somewhat better in parliamentary seats, but they still were badly outnumbered by opposition parties. The communists got slightly less, which was still impressive given that many of its leaders were in prison. The shocker was Zhirinovskiy's party, the ill-named "Liberal Democratic Party," which got almost a quarter of the vote. I had predicted, in the days just before the election, that Zhirinovskiy would get 17 to 18 percent, and some colleagues at the embassy told me I was hysterical, that it was impossible. In point of fact, he got between 23 and 24 percent of the vote. Zhirinovskiy became almost overnight a worldwide celebrity—I think it's fair to say most people in the West had never even heard of Zhirinovskiy before the election—but he became an instant symbol of what seemed the rise of fascism in post-Soviet Russia. In the Political/Internal Section, we knew Zhirinovskiy quite well. Several people on my staff had even been to his home and had reported on him in some depth. We knew the guy.

With analysis after the fact, it became clear to me what had happened. Zhirinovskiy had inspired the urban blue-collar male labor force to turn out overwhelmingly for him. He had used television very effectively; in the televised political debates before the election, he had performed well. He did not behave like a clown, which he sometimes could do. He talked directly into the camera and he addressed real peoples' real concerns, whereas most of the television appearances by candidates from across the political spectrum were just boring. They talked down to the people, which Zhirinovskiy did not do.

Q: It was the old Soviet style, I assume, of using television to propagandize? Was that the...

MERRY: Just about everybody except Zhirinovskiy was tedious on television. Zhirinovskiy looked right into the camera, looked right at the people watching, and talked about tangible issues, about jobs, about prices, about availability of goods, about security of employment. He spoke directly to the concerns of those people who had been most damaged by the macroeconomic stabilization policy the government had been implementing for the preceding months. His high showing on election day reflected two factors: first, Zhirinovskiy got two-thirds of the votes of the urban male blue-collar labor force, which is to say, in Marxist terms, the proletariat, but, second, they turned out to vote in unusually high numbers. The participation rate

of his political demographic was higher than any other, by almost a dozen percentage points. As a result, he got almost a quarter of the vote in this one election. Two years later, his vote total fell in half, and in the election after that it had fallen in half again, back to what was basically its norm before 1993, which was six to eight percent. However, a key point is that the proletariat did not vote red, it voted brown, as has happened in France and some other places.

Therefore, the political forces Washington expected to roll easily to overwhelming victory got about one vote in six while a brownish demagogue got about one vote in four. Combined with the votes given to other parties, the anti-government tally was about three to one. If this didn't demonstrate a rejection of the government in power and of the policies it represented, I can't imagine what would.

We had an interesting situation. The vice president was showing up on Monday, the next day. What was he going to say? Our expectations—or Washington's expectations—had been somewhat shattered. I must say, I did personally feel a bit of *schadenfreude* (pleasure derived from the misfortune of others) because there would have been no surprise if Washington had paid attention to what we, and particularly I, had been saying. The major telegrams conveying bad news had been written by me, in part because I believed so strongly in the analysis and in part because this was how I interpreted the job, to be the bearer of bad tidings. Most of my experienced team in Political/Internal had rotated the previous summer, so my role as the most seasoned person increased my responsibility to take on the dirty work. It was an excellent group of new officers, but they understandably were still adjusting to the turmoil of Russian political events.

Q: For the vocabulary impaired, I might mention schadenfreude is a German word for joy in the shadow. In other words, if things are bad, at least I'm looking good.

MERRY: Well, I understood during those last weeks before the election—and this came up in conversations a number of times—that if I was proven wrong, my credibility as a political analyst would be gone and nobody would ever let me hear the end of it. If I proved right—which I did—nobody would ever forgive me for that. Washington never forgives the bearer of bad news who is proven right. Never.

Q: Oh, absolutely. Also, for anybody reading this transcript at a later date, then all of us, when there were elections, particularly if there's an unpredictability about them, political officers get a special place in heaven for their own satisfaction if they get it right. But as Wayne is saying the system itself just does not appreciate being proved wrong.

MERRY: In this case, we had an interesting situation, in that the U.S. Government was going to have to make up its mind what to say real quick because the vice president was arriving and a big reception was scheduled at the ambassador's residence, to which we had invited hundreds of Russian political figures and journalists. The plan was for it to be a victory celebration. Now it wasn't going to be.

After the vice president, Talbott and the rest of the delegation arrived, there were some fairly hurried and intense consultations in which I played no role whatsoever. Nobody from

Washington wanted to talk to me. Nobody in this delegation wanted to consult the person who had been telling them for a month that this was going to happen. Nobody was interested in learning why Zhirinovskiy had done so well and Gaidar so poorly. There were some high-level telephone conversations over the secure phone with the White House, and they had a choice. The United States could take the position that “the voice of the people is the voice of God,” that the Russian people had spoken, and the elections represented legitimate popular choice and democracy. However, that was not the decision the U.S. Government made. The decision was to say publicly that perhaps our policy of “shock therapy” had involved too much shock and not enough therapy. The solution was to modify the program slightly and proceed with it. We communicated to the Russian leadership, to Yeltsin, Gaidar and company, that we felt they should stay with the program and since, obviously, this program could not be conducted in conjunction with the newly elected parliament, that it should be pursued outside the brand-new constitution, in defiance of popular will expressed at the polls.

The Yeltsin constitution was something of a patchwork, and not all the pieces fit together very smoothly. The structure was patterned on the French Fifth Republic constitution of De Gaulle. But it had a lower-house electoral system based on the German Federal Republic and it had a few imports from the American system, while drawing a good deal on Russian traditions as well. It allowed the presidency and the government a great deal of leeway in many areas of policy. But in economic policy, the government shouldn't have been able to conduct policies without the agreement and the participation of the legislature. The new State Duma clearly had been elected by the people to change economic policy. However, the word Washington gave to the people we supported in Moscow, who had just been very decisively rejected by the Russian people in the most legitimate expression of popular will at the ballot box that Russia's ever had or is likely to have for a long time, was basically to ignore the will of the people and to give the people what we felt they should have rather than what they had publicly and openly said they wanted.

Q: I take it the establishment in Washington felt almost that we owned the Russian system, that we were in charge in a way.

MERRY: Well, to an extent your question leads me toward the next major event in my story. I am accelerating a bit, but in the aftermath of the December elections and the establishment of the new constitutional structure and the new parliament, which was completely dominated by people antithetical to what the United States had been advocating in economic policy, there developed in Russia essentially parallel governments. There was the legislature that had just been elected and there were the structures of the presidency and the executive conducting policies of dubious legitimacy within the new constitutional system. There was something similar to what in France is called “cohabitation.” In the French system, there was a period in which Francois Mitterrand was president and the opposition was in control of the legislature.

Q: Jacques Chirac, I think, did that. His crew.

MERRY: Yes. In a very real sense, what Russia had was cohabitation with one side of the political spectrum controlling the executive and very different forces controlling the legislature. There were two important distinctions. In the French case, the prime minister is answerable to the parliament while in Russia the government answers directly to the president, and in Russia

this situation came into being from the very initiation of the constitutional system. Yeltsin's constitution, which was referred to fairly openly as the "Yeltsin Constitution," since it had been written for him and was pushed to a national referendum by him, was now violated by Yeltsin himself and his people in rejection of the obvious will of the Russian people as expressed in national elections.

There was some debate, within the Kremlin, whether Yeltsin should try again, should abrogate this legislature as he had done in September. That would have been particularly egregious because this legislature had just been elected and elected very legitimately, and because he would have abrogated a body created by his own will in the new constitution. The very fact they were even considering this alternative demonstrates how unhappy the Kremlin was with the verdict the Russian people had delivered as a judgment on its policies. The new State Duma showed its attitude toward the Kremlin early in 1994 by releasing from prison via amnesty all of those involved both in the 1993 confrontation and the coup plotters from 1991. Thus was set the stage for a period of competing parallel national authorities, but this time Yeltsin did not enjoy any advantage of electoral legitimacy. His strongest card, as was the case with Gorbachev toward the end of the Soviet Union, was support from the West and especially from Washington.

My own feeling, a strong feeling, was that the real villain of this story was the so-called "Washington consensus," the ideology of macroeconomic stabilization which the United States had favored, and which the finance minister, Boris Fyodorov, had instituted with such vigor in the early autumn. The Russian people were not rejecting democracy. Not at all. They were not rejecting a Western-oriented Russia or engagement with the outside world. What they were rejecting was a policy of economic stringency. Within the embassy we had intense, shall we say, discussions on the validity of these policies. One of my colleagues later said on an episode of "Frontline," the Public Television program, that there had been a "war" within the embassy between the Political and Economics Sections, between people who knew Russia and people who were advocates of the "Washington consensus." The new USAID mission actually discouraged the hiring of people with on-the-ground Russian experience as somehow tainted – with realism, in my view. I thought Fyodorov's policies were not appropriate for Russia, could not work successfully and were a mistake. However, even if they were valid, it was lunacy to carry out a stringent macroeconomic tightening in the run-up to a general election. In any rational democratic system, if you've got to engage in severe belt-tightening, you do it after the election. You don't do it before the election.

I think this period demonstrated the incredible arrogance of Russian elites, that they believed they could crush the living standards of blue-collar workers all over the country, but those workers would turn around and vote for the elites if given a legitimate election. The arrogance of this, to flog the workers and then expect the workers to kiss their hand in gratitude, demonstrated that many of the pro-market, pro-Western elites of Russia in the Yeltsin years were just as arrogant and just as contemptuous of the Russian people as were the Soviet elites before them and the Russian aristocratic elites before them. One very senior figure on Yeltsin's team privately referred to the Russian people as "the manure of history." It's one of the depressing recurrent characteristics of Russian political culture, that people in the ruling classes, whether Romanovs or Soviets or post-Soviets and whether Gorbachev, Yeltsin or Putin, display an arrogance toward the Russian people that just beggars belief. It's a medieval attitude and it tells you something

about the integrity of a society in which elites are so detached from everyday life in their own country and where the people, the “narod,” are so alienated from their rulers. It’s one of the great shortcomings of Russian society.

The arrogance on their side was matched, in my view, by comparable arrogance on ours. This was reflected in the really shameless conflicts of interest of some of the Americans involved. One case eventually went to court in the United States, that of the link among several people in the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID), USAID and various Russian counterparts. Of course, nobody went to jail, but at least there was some public embarrassment for Harvard, but not a jot in comparison with what was deserved. The “old boy” links between Russian and American elitists who treated the Russian people as little better than fuel for their theories and even their self-aggrandizement is well remembered in Russia today. Putin recently made a public comment about the HIID scandal, in which he simply took it for granted that these people had been part of a CIA plot to impoverish Russia. Sadly, understanding of the American-sourced scandals in Russia of this period is almost zero in our country. The one exception is a landmark book by Janine Wedel called Collision and Collusion which deservedly won a major journalism prize.

The conflict within the embassy, what one of my colleagues later characterized as a “war,” reflected a change in the top levels of the Economics Section in mid-1993. During the previous two years, there had been good working relations between Political/Internal and Econ. We did not always agree, but every discussion was professional and collegial. I liked Ken Yalowitz, the counselor, very much and always felt an ease in working with him. Things changed that summer when he departed. As disagreements over matters of policy increased, the level of professional courtesy and mutual respect declined very sharply. I cannot deny some culpability in this regard, as I am not the least opinionated person and, after two years of intense work in Moscow plus my previous experience in Russia, I felt I knew something about the place. The Economics Section, however, now was run on “Washington consensus” lines, with priority given to doctrine, while lack of prior experience in the country was viewed as an actual asset rather than as a liability. Relationships within the embassy deteriorated and never recovered. I can only say in my own defense that, so I have been told, things became even worse later, after my departure, so I was not entirely the cause of the problems.

By this time I had attained some notoriety within the halls of Washington. This is not to say I was in any way a famous person, but only that people who dealt with Russia policy at the NSC, State, Treasury, the Pentagon knew there was a political analyst out in Moscow who was not “with the program.” That was absolutely true. I was not alone. Much of the Political Section felt the policy of macro-economic stabilization was not going to work in Russia. There was a good deal of tension with some, but not all, people in the Economics Section, as well as the Treasury attaché’s office, whose whole function in Moscow was to carry out the “Washington consensus” in Russia. A bitter irony in my eyes was that the Russian people had rejected the Soviet Union in large measure as a revolt against ideologically-driven social and economic policies. The United States responded with a new ideologically-driven set of policies of our own. In the final days of the Soviet Union one of the most common slogans in demonstrations was, “No more experiments!” So, what did they get from us? They got a policy which viewed Russia as a vast economic and social laboratory and the Russian people as little better than laboratory rats. If you

think I exaggerate, you do not know the champions of the “Washington consensus.” Whatever attitudes the neoconservatives later took to Iraq was matched in full by the neoliberals in Russia.

For me, there was never a question of being pro-Russian or anti-Russian, but of being realistic about what Russian society and Russian political culture could sustain in the early years of the post-Soviet era. I considered myself to be strongly anti-Soviet, but not anti-Russian – a distinction not always shared within our government. To me, the question was how to serve American interests by forging a working, cooperative relationship with the new Russian Republic. I had no fantasies of alliance or even of partnership, but only of generally cooperative relations developed slowly. To me, the worst approach was to seek to turn Russia into an economic dependency. The Russians remained intensely proud and deeply insular. Other than a few intellectuals, they would not accept tutelage from the United States, while they profoundly resented what they perceived as American condescension and arrogance. Their perception was, sadly, often justified.

The institutional focus for U.S. Policy was the so-called Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, established by the Clinton White House in cooperation with the Kremlin to expedite bilateral initiatives. The idea was to engage the American vice president and Russian prime minister to cut through bureaucratic delays and opposition. I welcomed this approach and hoped it would really speed things up. Unfortunately, in the way of bureaucracy the world over, the Commission became a bureaucratic mechanism all its own. In some areas of cooperation where things were proceeding well, the Commission may actually have slowed things down. In other areas, the Commission was more a vehicle for periodic signing ceremonies and formulaic assertions of progress where little was actually occurring. The Commission came to resemble a Soviet planning mechanism, with its stress on meeting regular production targets, regardless of the quality or substance of the targets; it existed more to justify itself than anything else. This was sad, because the Commission might have been a real turning point in bilateral cooperation, if it had been tempered by an understanding of Russian realities. On the American side, people associated with the Commission did not want to hear bad news or questions about the program.

Within the Economics Section itself, there were a number of younger officers who had good Russian language skills and traveled extensively, and who became skeptical about how things were going. I know because their draft reports would come to me first for a political clearance before approval within the Economics Section. I cleared on almost twenty draft messages reporting bad news that never left the embassy. These reporting officers were reporting grim truths, or at least trying to, and their messages never got out. Some of them came to me, often rather anguished and in one case in tears, because they couldn't get their messages approved. The Economics Section was no longer in the business of telling Washington the truth about our programs in Russia.

The disputes over policy became confrontational by the spring. At this point, I was approaching the end of my Moscow assignment with the knowledge that I didn't have much in the way of onward prospects. Too many bridges had been burned as the bearer of bad tidings. So, I decided, yet again, to write a long telegram, and this really was a long telegram – as I recall it was 75 paragraphs. It argued basically three things. First, macroeconomic stabilization and the whole “Washington consensus” program wasn't working in Russia and could not work. The legacy of

seven decades of the Soviet Union had created conditions in which these policies were inappropriate and premature; it would take years or decades for Russia to transform before these economic mechanisms could work. Second, by trying to impose on Russia an American economic model—trying to force the Russian round peg into an American square hole—we were creating enormous antipathy toward the United States, both among Russian elites and also among the broad mass of the Russian people. The failures of these policies were attributed by Russians to their American authors; increasingly Russians blamed their daily pain of unemployment or inadequate wages on the United States. Third, rather than fostering a useful potential partner in an American-led global system, we were doing exactly the opposite. A humiliated Russia would become an adversary rather than a partner. Thus, our policies were compounding the legacy of the Soviet era and poisoning the environment in Russia toward the United States.

Finally, I argued Russian reform was fundamentally none of our business. Ultimately, Russia was going to have to find its own way to a post-Soviet identity and ways of doing things. The Russian historical legacy was an enormous burden, particularly from the Soviet era but even from before it. The Russian collective national experience was so completely different from our own that Americans had really very little that was applicable or appropriate by way of models or lessons. American policy would be much more self-serving if we would keep our hands off of Russian internal affairs and let the Russians figure things out as best they could. This would take a long time. To involve the United States directly in Russian affairs and to sponsor political allies and economic policies, as we were very much doing, would generate hostility toward our country which would last much longer than the policies. In most of these arguments I was, of course, following in the footsteps of George Kennan, so I can hardly claim originality.

This telegram was very long, perhaps too long, but it certainly was from the heart. My title was pretty blunt: “Whose Russia is It, Anyway? Toward a Policy of Benign Neglect.” The title had two literary references. One was to a stage play I had seen in London called Whose Life is It, Anyway?, about the right to die. The other was to Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s famous policy proposal advocating benign neglect toward African American society in the United States, arguing government policies made things worse rather than better. What I intended the title to communicate was that Russia is beyond American capacity to transform and we serve our own interests better by keeping our hands off. Although I could not know it at the time, I was making essentially the same argument against the neoliberal agenda in Russia as I would later against the neoconservative agenda in Iraq. I see strong parallels, especially in terms of the pernicious combination of institutional ignorance and arrogance in both instances.

This message was going to be a very hard sell in Washington, and I never expected it to receive embassy clearance. Ambassador Pickering chaired a small meeting about the draft, in which he again showed his consummate professionalism by saying he was willing to send the message out front channel, but clearly labeled as an expression of my personal views. I thought that was very generous of him, since the message said the entirety of American policy towards Russia was wrong. He was prepared to let that message go to Washington so long as it was clearly labeled as just one person’s viewpoint, which was fine by me. That provoked very strong opposition from the economics counselor and from the Treasury attaché, who said that if the message went in it would give Larry Summers a heart attack.

Q: He was secretary of the treasury at the time.

MERRY: Actually, he was undersecretary at the time but he was the leading American architect of the macroeconomic stabilization program in Russia. In any case, I felt that, while Ambassador Pickering was very generous in offering to send the message in front channel, given how controversial the text was and how completely outside the frame of U.S. policy, it would be more appropriate to take upon myself to send it in via what's called Dissent Channel. The disadvantage of using the Dissent Channel is that the distribution of messages is very narrow. It's only within the State Department. If the message had gone in as Ambassador Pickering offered, it would have been distributed broadly throughout the U.S. government. As Dissent Channel, it went to only a handful of people and only within the Department of State, though I learned later it was leaked around town. A friend in CIA said it was widely read there. So, Xerox machines in Washington did manage to get the thing around.

The message went in Dissent Channel, thought it was quite long even by the standards of Dissent Channel. The procedure is that somebody on the Policy Planning Staff has to write a response to a Dissent Channel message. As it turned out, the response was written by Thomas Graham, my successor in Moscow a few months later. He kept the response polite. More interestingly, the new deputy chief of mission, Richard Miles, showed me a classified letter he received from Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott which was a thoughtful reflection on the message, which he obviously had read with some care. It was a serious, respectful but unpersuaded response, but at least it reflected that Talbott had treated my dissent with intellectual respect. That's about as much as you can expect. Beyond that, the exercise didn't accomplish very much. Of course, the use of Dissent Channel in the Foreign Service is kind of notorious as career suicide, but by this point, I was long past worrying. I at least got my despair with American policy off my chest in this message. It was about this time that I began to think of my role as comparable to that of the Holy Fool in Boris Godunov, who is allowed to speak truth to power, but without any impact.

Some years later, after my retirement, I tried to get a copy of my Dissent Channel message under Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and was refused. An appeal was also refused, with a rationale which shows the hypocrisy of the State Department on the whole subject of dissent. The appeals board said, in writing, that to furnish a Dissent message even to the person who had written it years earlier might discourage other people from making use of Dissent Channel in future! Obviously, the exact opposite is the case, because if FSOs knew they would be able to declassify their Dissents at some point, they would be more likely to write them. This exchange confirms the widespread skepticism within the Service about Department policy both on dissent and on responding to FOIA requests. Indeed, I have heard from good sources that use of Dissent Channel has more or less disappeared during recent administrations. Hardly surprising, when the policy is to punish the messenger and bury the message.

The spring of 1994 continued to be a full and demanding period for political reporting. There was a lot of work, other than pursuing my personal Quixotic crusade. Political/Internal remained a top-flight group of reporting officers, though it lacked some of the "band of brothers" quality of previous years. One very positive experience for me was having a Fascell Fellow in Political/Internal. This is a terrific program, and I can only regret it was not created much earlier.

We were back in the old embassy building by now, on the top floor of one of the worst conceived chanceries ever. We should have let that building burn down when we had the chance.

These months of 1994 are something of the tail end of these three years in Moscow. To be a close eyewitness to so much historical change was exciting but exhausting. By the late spring, I was pretty burned out—physically, psychologically—even though this was still a superlatively high-quality post in which to work: Ambassador Pickering, his deputy, Richard Miles, my own staff in Political/Internal. For a few months I worked for Bill Burns, the new minister counselor for the Political Section, who was delightful. I had nothing but the most professional and personal treatment by Ambassador Pickering and Ambassador Miles. In retrospect, I realize how unique were the conditions I enjoyed as head of Political/Internal during those three years. Obviously, it was the most important and interesting time to hold the job. In addition, I worked for two ambassadors who were both entirely supportive but not themselves Russia hands. I suspect that an ambassador who had a background in Soviet and Russian affairs would have taken a more direct role in the analysis the post sent to Washington on domestic political developments. That would have been entirely appropriate, as an ambassador who really knows the country should be the top embassy analyst. In my case, Strauss and Pickering came to Moscow without Russian experience, so tended to let their subordinates take the lead on interpreting what was happening. This gave me a special freedom which I suspect few FSOs in such a critical place and time have ever enjoyed, but it also entailed special responsibilities as I saw them. I suspect that ambassadors of lesser stature – less confident of themselves – would not have been so supportive or tolerant.

However, the disputes over policy within post had deteriorated to the point of being unprofessional. I include myself in that regard. They had become personalized and antagonistic. The atmosphere had become fairly poisonous, to which I was clearly a contributor. One of my predecessors as head of Pol/Int had warned me before I got to Moscow not to serve a fourth year in the job, that the burnout factor would be too much. He was right. It was clear that it was about time to go. The question: go where? At this point, I was largely persona non grata in the Department of State. I did get a Superior Honor Award out of all this. Not that it ever makes much difference.

In terms of an onward assignment, pickings were a little thin. One possibility was Lahore, in Pakistan, as principal officer. I was fascinated by the idea of the Punjab as a completely new intellectual and personal experience. I think it would have been a good change of pace for me. As it happens, they assigned another officer who was better-qualified. Another option was Algiers as the deputy chief of mission, which obviously was about as far from dealing with Russian policy as I could get. I almost did that, but declined because both my parents were very elderly. I had had three assignments abroad and very little leave time at home. I felt an obligation to return to the United States for family reasons. Otherwise, I would have been just as happy to stay abroad.

A third option was really out of the blue, and that was to go to Nagorno-Karabakh, the disputed territory over which the newly independent Armenia and Azerbaijan had fought a bitter and bloody war during previous years. An OSCE-sponsored mediation effort was underway, with the U.S. one of the leaders, seeking a peace agreement. In April I was in Prague on vacation, for the

music festival and to see the Czech capital really in its glory, when I received a phone call from the Department wanting me to deploy within weeks to Karabakh as the senior American in a multi-national peacekeeping mission. I was astonished, as I had no notion the negotiations were that close to an agreement, but the offer was intriguing. The concept was for a peacekeeping force commanded by a Finnish two-star general with a Russian one-star deputy and an American political deputy. I told them I was interested, but could not commit to anything without clearing it with Ambassador Pickering as it would leave a short-term gap in his staffing. As it happens, expectations of a deal on Karabakh were premature. There was no peace agreement nor peacekeeping mission nor job for me. It would have been arduous, that is for sure, but also interesting.

Then came another offer, from the Pentagon. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) had military personnel, particularly Army officers, who spoke Russian and had Russian experience, but was weak in civilians with a comparable background. There were lots of people who dealt with Russia on a variety of issues—arms control, nuclear cooperation and so forth—but OSD did not have a civilian who was, you could say, a Russia hand. Military officers, yes; civilians, no. Secretary William Perry gave very high priority to improving defense and military contacts between the United States and the Russian Federation, and with other countries of the former Soviet Union. The senior uniformed Russia hand was General John Reppert, with whom I had served twice in Moscow when he had been an Army attaché. Evidently, John fingered me. I don't know to what extent Reppert understood that I needed a job, but the offer was made to me, to go back to Washington, not to the State Department but to the Pentagon.

Q: OK, well, I'm just looking at the time, Wayne, and this would be a good place to stop.

MERRY: Let me spend two minutes on this and then we'll wrap it up.

Q: OK, well.

MERRY: I thought about this. I understood perfectly well that if I went outside of the Department that was also career non-enhancing, because I had done that before. My only real reservation was this would be my third assignment with the Department of Defense. I had served at Marine Corps Headquarters and at the Army Russian Institute. This would be three detached assignments to the Department of Defense. I'm not sure that's a record in the Foreign Service, but it's certainly a lot.

The offer was a generous one, and would give me a new start in a part of the U.S. Government that was trying to do positive things with Russia. The fact they wanted me when, in my own department not many people did, seemed rather gracious. I accepted the offer, and then the State Department fought it for petty and bureaucratic reasons of turf. The State Department didn't want me, but objected to a Pentagon initiative, that the Office of the Secretary of Defense had undertaken a job search and identified the State person they wanted by themselves. Eventually, it was resolved, but after a ridiculous waste of effort which went all the way to the deputy secretaries.

I left Moscow in midsummer, with some sense of relief but also with a good deal of regret, as the

place meant a lot to me. I had not only intellectual and professional involvement with Russia but also a lot of emotional attachment. The two places I have served which engaged my emotions in the long term were East Germany and Russia; in both cases, the political system was adversarial, but the societies and the people were warm and engaging. I have retained a sentimental attachment to both places entirely separate from my political views; perhaps in part because both societies have been so wounded over the past century. I tried to distill some of what I had learned about Russia into a final message, my last telegram from Moscow of hundreds. This was a very personal statement, and was labeled up front as my views rather than the embassy's. It was an individual view sent in by courtesy of the Ambassador. Allowing individual expression of views was something of a tradition at Embassy Moscow, though I doubt anyone took advantage of it as often as I did. Still, I think it is a very fine tradition which should become the norm within the Foreign Service. The Department of State would be well served, if routinely annoyed, by that kind of message coming in from many posts.

My conclusions after these event-filled years in Russia were that we, the U.S. government, gave far too much attention to high-level political events, to the political facade of the post-Soviet transformation of Russia. Obviously, a government and an embassy must devote considerable time and attention to the kind of political issues which had dominated my work for the previous three years, but I argued we were losing sight of the broader and more important changes in Russian society from which future political developments would emerge. I identified two topics in need of greater U.S. attention. First and most important was the condition of the Russian nation – the people, not the state – and the demographic and health crises left behind by the Soviet era as manifested in social problems like alcoholism. Second, I recommended we watch the Russian Orthodox Church as a bellwether for where Russian society was going, for good and for ill. I said the church contained reactionary and nationalist forces as well as progressive and outward-looking forces. Which way the church would go could tell us a lot about where Russia as a society and political culture would go, because the church is the deepest-rooted and longest-lasting institution of the Russian nation. While governments and parties and even ideologies come and go, the Orthodox identity of Russians is permanent, even for those without religious belief. I kept this message fairly short and non-controversial, but I felt good about finishing my tour with something of this kind. A Russia specialist at DIA later told me he had a copy of it framed on the wall of his office.

Q: OK, so we'll pick this up. This is 1994?

MERRY: 1994.

HAROLD W. GEISEL
Counselor for Administration
Moscow (1992-1993)

Ambassador Harold W. Geisel was born in Illinois in 1947. He received his BA from Johns Hopkins and his MBA from the University of Virginia. After entering the Foreign Service in 1971, he was posted in Brussels, Oslo, Bern, Bamako,

Durban, Rome, Bonn and Moscow and served as Ambassador to Mauritius. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 30, 2006

GEISEL: This was Moscow in the summer of 1992.

Q: Okay, so we'll pick this up in Moscow of 1992.

GEISEL: Great.

Q: Good.

Now, today is the 28th of July, 2006. Harry, Moscow, 1992. In the first place, did you speak Russian or did you have any Russian?

GEISEL: None. But before we do that I want to go back to Germany for just one little bit because I told you how the last year there I was working very hard with George Ward on Berlin 2000 but I never really bothered to speak much about Bob Kimmitt, who was my last ambassador, for less than a year but he had a big influence on me. I'm not speaking of Germany and my life in Germany per se because I think I covered that pretty well but as a Foreign Service officer I had never really worked for such a high powered, in the sense of both intellect and drive, political appointee before. Dick Walters was certainly high powered but Dick Walters was coming to the end of his career after being ambassador to the United Nations and I loved Dick Walters and I learned a lot from him. Most people who got pretty high in the Foreign Service had worked for a Bob Kimmitt before but I had not. And he taught me a lot of things that I wish I had learned earlier on. It was as little as we were not allowed to write any papers for him that were longer than a page-and-a-half and better still, if they were a page-and-a-quarter and they could have attachments but you had to tell him everything in a page-and-a-half. And of course anyone who's worked for seventh floor principals knows that's the way the seventh floor works, by and large. I didn't know that. Bob was a stickler for grammar; he was fanatic and that was very, very good for me. For example, you were never allowed to use the word "this" as a noun; it could only be used as an adjective. A very good lesson. But I also learned a lot from Bob watching his ability to work so very, very hard. I used to joke and say that Bob Kimmitt had a fantastic sense of priorities; the really important stuff had to be done right away and so did everything else. And it taught me a lot about how people at the high level political life actually think and work. I just wanted to mention that for anyone who happens to listen to what I'm saying. I have to doubt that Bob will go still higher. I mean, he's now deputy secretary of the treasury and I wouldn't be surprised if he ended up director of central intelligence one day or in the Negroponte job or something like that.

Q: I don't think I asked this question, but when you were looking at Berlin 2000 was there a thought of saying okay, our special relationship in Berlin is over, you know, things are changing, were we thinking of saying let's get this establishment down a bit?

GEISEL: Oh, there certainly were and what we did in Berlin 2000 and it's worked to some extent albeit not as well as the State Department people would have liked it to work, we asked right away what really has to be in Berlin and if it doesn't have to be in Berlin because it's not

key to the bilateral relationship, where should it be? And most of the time we ended up with Frankfurt because we had quite a bit of property there and it turned out we got some more property and the name of the game in Europe is owning, and Western Europe certainly, well in most of Europe, is owning your own property because otherwise we just can't afford to be there. So the answer is yes and I think the result is that our footprint is a little smaller in Berlin than it would have been otherwise albeit not at all as small as I would have liked to have seen it. I don't know that we ever said hey, the special relationship is over; we're no longer going to be an occupying power. I mean, I'm sure we said it but I don't know that we pounded it hard enough. It's so hard to say because so much of our presence at U.S. embassies, as you know, is not Department of State.

Q: I know it.

Okay. Well, you're off to Moscow in '92.

GEISEL: Right.

Q: How did you prepare it and- well in the first place, you were there from when to when?

GEISEL: Well, I was actually only there, not counting visits and TDYs (Tour of Dutys), from I think it turned out to be August of 1992 to, would you believe, June of '93?

Q: Good heavens. Alright, well tell me, when you went there, what was sort of the administrative problem, I mean, issue?

GEISEL: Well let's say issue, that's a good word, and it's the "s" word, of course, security.

Q: Yes.

GEISEL: Remember that less than a year, I don't think it was more than a year, year before we'd had that terrible fire at the chancery which made it uninhabitable and Russians had, the Russian KGB had penetrated everywhere. We used to joke about the silver suits because of the firemen who came pouring into the place. Now, the fire was not set by the Russians, it was an accident from our own people who I believe were working on some equipment in the elevator shaft but we have the Russian firemen and the ordinary firemen were wearing stuff that looked pretty unsophisticated and beaten down. Then there were, I forgot now whether we called them silver suits or shiny suits but that was magnificent equipment, newest of the new and it was obvious that they were the guys who were waiting for a fire, you know, literally must have been intelligence guys who one of their collateral duties was wait for the fire at the American Embassy. So where did we go for the classified work? Congress gave us a lot of money and we went into what was called the "submarine" which was half of the underground parking that we had had for both official vehicles and personally owned vehicles of people who lived on the compound. And of course what that meant is personal vehicles had to somehow find parking on the street, which was not always easy. Those secure facilities were probably about the most soulless facilities I've ever seen outside of a prison, as I'm sure you can imagine, but they were safe.

Now, the compound at Moscow, of course, the NEC, as they called it, the new embassy compound, was supposed to be our housing, and these were townhouses for the big shots and apartments for everyone else, was supposed to be dominated by the chancery and of course it was. This was the chancery that we found was riddled with bugs. So here we were desperate for space. All of our unclassified activities, with the exception of consular work and USIA, were in townhouses on the compound. It was an awful mess; morale was crummy. Well, I shouldn't say that. Morale was crummy in terms of the way that people perceived support from the embassy. It was such an exciting time substantively, if you could imagine, in 1992; Yeltsin had just taken over as president of Russia on December 31, 1991, after the previous summer when we saw the tanks and all the rest and Gorbachev unable to do anything. Very, very exciting and of course we had just finished feeding an awful lot of hungry Russians for I guess it was two winters straight. So Russia was a broken place and they were really looking up to the Americans in those days so it was a heck of a time to be there.

But as you said, what were my problems? My problems all were with the "s" word, security. We had virtually no Foreign Service nationals at the time; they had all been fired because they were spies some years earlier or accused of being spies and I suspect most of them were, certainly under the Soviet Union as opposed to Russia.

Q: We all assumed, I mean, I served in Yugoslavia, I mean, we assumed that everybody was at least reporting.

GEISEL: Reporting, yes. Maybe not even highly motivated.

Q: But reporting.

GEISEL: Yes. Well, here is another thing that I saw that just really frosted me. It was the painted lines. On all of the admin type buildings there were red lines, yellow lines and green lines. And Russian employees, and we had a handful then, Russian employees who were all in green jumpsuits by the way; I mean, the indignity of it all, it was madness, could go freely where there were green lines, they had to be escorted where there were yellow lines and they couldn't go where there were red lines. I don't know who put up those lines but they were a bit bizarre. Now, I thought this was all a bunch of crap, pardon me, because who was doing the work? Two groups of people were doing the work. I'm talking about the unclassified work, the support work, the people who worked for me, by and large, except for, of course, the security officers. We had either what were contractors who were mostly young college graduates who were drivers and cleaners in sensitive areas and translators and all sorts of things who worked for a contractor, Pacific Architects and Engineers, at great expense. But then the people doing the real scut work in the kitchens were Filipinos, they were mostly Filipinos who lived in Russia; there were a lot of medical students who apparently weren't very good medical students and I don't know what else. I used to get very indignant and I would always be telling off security and intelligence people and I would say, what makes you think that these Filipinos are any less likely to be coerced by the KGB than the Russians? I said if anything, they have more to lose because they have their money, they have their apartments, they have everything and many of them don't speak Russian, they're fish out of water, this was nonsense.

Now, one of my goals, which I succeeded in, was to get us many, many more Russian employees. And I felt that the Filipinos, nice as so many of them were and some of them are still there, were giving us a false sense of security because you know, you would see these guys and even though you weren't ever supposed to discuss classified things in unclassified areas everyone does it, or may even discuss things is not classified that is still- you put the various pieces together and you get something. So, I pushed hard and quickly to get rid of the uniforms, I pushed to get rid of the painted lines because this was all stuff that was giving us a false security and costing us a heck of a lot of money and I considered that to be money wasted.

Q: Well did you find, I mean, one of the things that's always concerned me is when you have something like a PA and E hiring people, I went through this in Vietnam, I saw the same group. You know, you, you hire people, especially college kids and all doing stuff, these are far more likely to get themselves into compromising positions. I mean, they don't take it seriously. It's better, and you don't get as much work out of them as you would a Russian citizen.

GEISEL: Well, the KGB was kind enough to have lots and lots of prostitutes at the Ukania Hotel, which was the nearest hotel to us, and of course we had Bechtel working on fixing up the old, burned up chancery. The kids and the construction workers, yes, you know, it was a lot of money and I don't know that we got for our money what we should have.

Q: Well, showing how it is, it's déjà vu all over again. I interviewed somebody who was vice consul at our embassy in, first in Moscow and then, this is during World War II when they evacuated to Kuybyshev or something?

GEISEL: Yes.

Q: But they moved and went to Belonevostok. But he said it was very obvious, he was single at the time, he said we were essentially assigned young ladies. And if you were high ranking you got a ballerina. I said at his level, a vice consul, you got a circus acrobat, which sounded like a pretty good deal.

GEISEL: Yes, that's what I was thinking.

Q: But anyway, you know, this was like-

GEISEL: In the Soviet Union. It was Russia by the time I got there by a few months but it was still in many ways the Soviet Union.

So anyway, we spoke that security pervaded everything and my life was really, the way I looked at it, to get things done and highly respect security but not get stupid. I'll give you another example. Bob Strauss was our ambassador and I can go on and on and talk about him, I have all the time in the world for him. And he called me into his office one day and he said Harry, in this Texas twang, is your mama still alive? I said, why yes. And he said well, you know, I had this terrible thought. You know, your mama's going to visit you one day, isn't she? And I said oh, absolutely. And he said well, it's going to be on a Saturday afternoon and she's going to be

walking out on the Arbot or something like that and she's going to fall and hurt herself and she's going to call the embassy. Or you know, maybe that Russian hospital's going to call the embassy and that Marine guard is going to pick up and he's not going to speak any Russian or maybe there's going to be a PA and E operator there and he's going to be overwhelmed by all the calls we get on the weekend and your poor mama's going to be in the hospital and you're not going to know where she is and don't you think we ought to do something about not having good telephone operator service? Well, that was typical Strauss and of course typical Strauss was absolutely right.

Q: Yes.

GEISEL: And I thought and I thought and I thought what are the issues? And they were both security related. So the first issue is dialing in. And I knew that we could get what they called DID, which we have everywhere here and we take it for granted, Direct Inward Dialing, where you dial the exchange and then the last four digits are the extension. And that was an easy sale to the intelligence and security folks; they were delighted. Of course what it meant is that they didn't have to worry about, even though the operators, if you will, were cleared, people could still dial right in. They dialed in faster. Now then, the other thing of course Strauss wanted me to do was to get Russian-English speaking operators. I knew that I was going to have some trouble with the community but fortunately- when I say community of course I mean the intelligence community- fortunately we had some pretty smart people. And I went to the station chief and I said look, as part of the briefing we were told that all calls are listened to from I forgot where the building was, just outside. He said yes, that's right. And I said you feel very comfortable that that's so. He said absolutely, there's no question. And I said well then why do we have to have cleared telephone operators since the Russians are listening anyway? He agreed and we hired lots of English speaking Russian operators. Bless you, Bob Strauss, you got the telephones answered.

I found the money and I found the legality and we put in cable television into the compound so that everyone on the compound and embassy offices not in restricted areas could have CNN, which was very important. CNN, BBC, I forgot what else we got but it made a heck of a difference. I mean, half the time we were seeing our own city on it and that's why we really had to have it and that's why Uncle Sam needed to pay for it.

I'll now digress and tell a story because it really isn't digressing but I mentioned CNN and here again this had a big influence on my future career in the Foreign Service. One night I was walking in to the DCM's office, actually it was charge at the time, Jim Collins, who later became our ambassador. And there again, a wonderful, wonderful person who was as knowledgeable as you could hope to have and with good sense, better than anyone. Jim was having a tremendous argument with a person at the NSC who later on went to State and because I like this person I'm not going to say who it was because she was being so stupid. But anyway, here is what was happening. On CNN you could see, was a new Moscow correspondent named Siobhan Darrow, who as far as I know is still on CNN but she was very, very new in Moscow in 1992. Now, the reason that she was on and no one else was is the bureau chief was a fellow named Steve Hurst, who I think may also still be on CNN, and the number two, who was another very knowledgeable person was a woman and I can't think of her name right now. The long and the short of it, which I didn't know then, I just knew they weren't there, was that the two of them

were rumored to be having an affair and were out of Moscow. So Siobhan was on the scene with the camera and the mike and what was happening is that she was reporting that there was a virtual coup d'etat going on; troops were in the street, no one knew what was going on and it was all very scary. This lady at the National Security Council was badgering Jim, you know, what's going on? And Jim kept on saying nothing is going on, trust me, we know it, we know it. We sent a flash message this afternoon because all of the Western embassies were briefed together that tonight Yeltsin was going to crack down on, I don't know if it was the legislature or particular people or whatever, this was all absolutely in the cards, there was no danger, we were told all about it. We sent, I repeat, a flash telegram, you know, that's supposed to be war and peace. It didn't matter because this lady said but I see this, I'm watching it on CNN. And finally Jim got fed up and he said look. You're going to have to decide. Are you going to believe me or are you going to believe what you're seeing on CNN? Fortunately but just barely they accepted what our charge d'affaires, a tremendously knowledgeable and experienced and reasonable person said and this taught me a big lesson, you know. Boy, that image on TV, that picture conquers a State Department telegram hands down. The telegram was marked "secret" and probably "NODIS" and "flash" and all the rest and it didn't matter; nobody had read the damn telegram.

Q: You said you could go on and on about Ambassador Strauss. Go on and on about Ambassador Strauss.

GEISEL: Okay, okay. Here's a good one. I was distressed by how barren the submarine looked, or the near submarine, because the submarine itself where it was shielded enclosures, you couldn't put anything in but the ambassador and political section, other people had offices just outside of the submarine where, you know, you could sort of do business but you weren't supposed to talk about anything too classified but you could work on your classified documents, for example, you could type- no, you couldn't type your telegrams, that would be inside an enclosure. But you could read your traffic, for example. And all the corridors there were just painted white and that was the end of it. As I said, they were not electronically sensitive areas because we assumed they were compromised. So I came up with the bright idea that in the interest of morale, at the end of the fiscal year, we ended up with money we didn't know what to do with except I knew what to do with it. I appointed a committee under the chairmanship of the cultural affairs officer to go out and buy art for the embassy. Because you had brilliant stuff; this was 1992, you had wonderful, wonderful stuff that you could get for 100 bucks, maybe at most 200 bucks a painting. Now, that changed fast, just in the time that I was there. But I forgot how many paintings we bought but we bought a lot of paintings and put them up, where we could, and everyone was in love with them and it made things so much better, as you can imagine.

Now, when Strauss got ready to leave, I'm skipping ahead but just because it's one of the better Strauss stories, he didn't even say he was leaving, but he called for me and he said I want to walk around the embassy with you, Harry. I knew he was up to something. And he said now, I'm so happy you bought this wonderful art and you know, let's walk and take a look at it. We walked around, he comes to one painting and he says you know, that's my favorite painting, Harry, I'd like to buy that from the embassy. I mean, this is typical admin officer problem. He said I'll pay you; I'll pay the embassy what the embassy paid. I said I can't do that, Mr. Ambassador. He said what do you mean? You're not losing anything. I said suppose that that painting for which we

paid, I believe, \$200, is worth \$20,000? How can I sell it to you for \$200? And he said have you got regulations? I said I sure as hell do. And if you want to buy it you'll have to buy it at an auction. He said okay, okay, I'll buy it at an auction. I said no, but I'm not putting it up at an auction, the only things we put on auction are the stuff that we don't need anymore. So he left it. I mean, he's the kind of guy who would. Except he didn't quite leave it. He said well, take me around and show me your favorite painting. So I took him around to show him a big, big, big painting that was, what do you call the style where it's all in dots?

Q: Pointillism.

GEISEL: Exactly.

Q: Seurat.

GEISEL: Yes. A huge one of a birch forest done actually as you could imagine by a guy who is not so much an artist as he was a set designer. And here's where the story gets good. He says that's the ugliest f'ing painting I've ever seen. Which he didn't really mean but, you know. Well, a few weeks later I walked into his office, I said, you know that ugly painting that you didn't like that I liked so much? He said yes. I said I bought it. He said you WHAT? I hadn't really planned to buy it. I said well here is the story and you can check it out. That was the only painting that we had that we hadn't bought. It was on consignment. The NBC reporter at the time was a guy named Bob Abernathy and his wife was a White Russian duchess or something like that or descended from them. Oh, Sheremetyevo, same name as the airport. She was sort of sponsoring artists and she had asked if we could put up some art on consignment as well. Now, it wasn't actually where the owned stuff was, I think it was over by the cafeteria or something. And I liked it but I just did this to get at Strauss. So I bought it, I think for \$150. The thing is huge. I had it framed for \$13; you could do that in those days.

Another Strauss story is I came late one day into the enclosure; we were having a country team meeting. He looked up and he said, Harry, that is the ugliest f'ing suit I have ever seen anyone wear. So I said yes, I know, I bought it from your tailor and I paid half of what you paid. Because he had the identical suit and had worn it the day before. He was the kind of guy that you could do it with. I think he was a masterful ambassador; he was exactly what we needed at the time.

Q: Well, you know, I've interviewed him and I was very impressed also. How would you describe your relations and impressions of the Russian authorities you were dealing with in Moscow?

GEISEL: Excellent question. All admin people had the misfortune of having to deal what was called the UPDK, which in Russian stood for Office of Services to the Diplomatic Corps. And they had been around forever and at the time they were run by an Armenian crook.

Q: That's crook not cook.

GEISEL: It sure was crook, I should say. And these guys had been used to getting their way all the time, especially on property. I wined and dined them and chatted them up and tried to BS

them as much as I could and a couple of guys I got vaguely friendly with but a) I didn't trust them, b) I assumed they all were or had been KGB types and they were, on a personal sense reasonably pleasant but in terms of my being able to do my job they made my job infinitely harder, especially when we had no choice and we had to use them for something.

Q: Well were things approaching the point where, you know, you're moving out of the Soviet era, I can go out on the open market and hire people or not?

GEISEL: Yes, yes. After we fired all the UPDK people, I guess it was in the earlier '90s, we got our own people. No doubt some of them were spies but I had that great blessing which my predecessors a couple times removed hadn't had. We could make our own mistakes.

Q: Did you find that given the atmosphere and the KGB influence and all, at the same time you were dealing with more Russians than probably anybody else in the embassy, that you were getting pretty good information of how to work the system from your people?

GEISEL: Yes. Well, it depended, because remember, almost by definition if we cleared these people, I mean cleared in the security sense such as it was, they probably didn't know how to work the system that well themselves. You know, many of them had been teachers who weren't being paid. I would say we had a handful of people who were awfully good and did understand the system but it wasn't like a typical embassy where the admin people- admin Americans can sit back and to have these wonderful, wonderful FSNs who have been at the embassy forever-

Q: As in Bonn or something.

GEISEL: As in Bonn, exactly. I wonder now, you know, this is how many years later? Let's see, that was '93, let's say, and this is 2006? Thirteen years later? I wonder what's happening. One of the problems we had, which Jim Collins told me just the other day is not such a problem anymore, is American businesses were stealing our people as fast as we could bring them on because a) they were reasonably security cleared and b) they were trained in English and-

Q: And you could pay more and they-

GEISEL: They could pay far more, that's where- On average they used to steal our people and pay triple what we paid. Russians have gotten more expensive now and also a lot more are available and hopefully we still have some of the good people.

I heard a little while ago that one of the guys I liked the best was a guy who we hired as chief telephone operator and I heard he was still there and he was a wonderful, wonderful witty, very, very bright guy and we had the good sense to pay him well so he hadn't left.

Q: Did you have any problem with the Marine security guard?

GEISEL: Wasn't I lucky? I didn't. You know, I wasn't there long enough. But no, no Lonetree or anything even close to that. Remember that by then Russia was so swinging, there were so many foreigners there that they could find all the girlfriends they wanted who weren't Russians,

even though I must say, you know, the first time I visited Russia was 1973, it was on a tourism thing when I was assigned to Norway. And when I came back in 1992, 19 years later, I said where did all these good looking Russian girls come from? Of course they were always there but all of a sudden there were clothes to buy, there was makeup, there were Western magazines and I guess, you know, these were the daughters of the mothers that I wouldn't even waste my time looking at.

Q: I can recall the wives of Soviet diplomats up to a certain point all looked like Nina Khrushchev, you know, nice little babushkas but plump and with a wart on their-

GEISEL: Nose or anywhere.

Q: Yes. And then oh my God, all of a sudden the Russian diplomats started coming up with these svelte young ladies.

GEISEL: Yes.

Q: I mean, you know, it was as though somebody pushed a button and they changed their production line.

GEISEL: It was remarkable. And of course this gets back to what I was saying before; that it was so exciting to be in Russia then. Look, it was hard, it was drab. I don't know that I ever worked as hard in my life, not even in Rome, not even in Africa as I did in Moscow; it was just one problem after another. Look, the admin minister counselor, whatever I was, had to invest not hours but days figuring out how to get gas for the vehicles because you'd either have feast or famine, you never knew what the price was. The whole place was wild.

Q: This was in a state that had one of the largest reserves in the world.

GEISEL: Absolutely. Now, what we ultimately did, and of course, the Russians were playing us and everyone off; all of a sudden there'd be these artificial scarcities, no stations would have gas. We would have drivers, when I got there, we had PA&E drivers who were always out looking for gas. Well, I said, this is crap. Why don't we have tanks on the compound? And they said FBO forbids it because of the fire and everything else. I said well, we've got to have them and I called up FBO and I said we're going to have tanks. Oh no, no, no, you can't. I said I'm not asking you, I'm telling you, we're going to have tanks. Now, if you want you can have someone come out and help us build them safely or you cannot. And you know, I said to you, on a telegram from Strauss, how shall we work this? So they helped us construct safe tanks and we had very strict procedures on filling up. We used to get our gas from ESSO in Finland and of course it cost a fortune but we had it. And hey, guess what? Within, I'd say, about three or four months the Russians stopped jerking us around on the gas because they knew we were going to get it under a diplomatic shipment from Finland

Q: Did you run across or get out or have any intimation, I mean, you had Moscow and St. Petersburg there, you know, these were cities and they were really going, and then going out into the countryside I'm told, you know, by people it's like going back into the 14th century. I ran

across this in Yugoslavia-

GEISEL: Oh sure.

Q: -a couple decades before, you know.

GEISEL: There was the element of the Potemkin village, not so much in Moscow itself because Moscow was just becoming a real European city at breathtaking speed. But no, absolutely. We'd take rides out in the country, then all of a sudden the roads would disintegrate before your eyes and you'd see these miserable little shops with nothing in them and the awful housing and all the rest and people dressed in one step from rags. Sure. But then all of a sudden you never knew what you were going to run into. You could run into a terrific dacha or whatever. The place was changing so fast.

Q: Did you have any problems with what people call the Russian mafia? I mean, there were the old guard sort of buying up all the stuff, I mean, they were getting Soviet apparatchiks who got in-

GEISEL: Well, look at Yukos or Khodorkovsky who bought Yukos for what Philip Hoffman who was the Washington Post bureau chief there said was probably about one cent on the dollar. He rigged the auction and for quite awhile there were all these foundations that were well paid by Khodorkovsky, bleeding and crying about how he was, victimized. I actually wrote a little story for an investment publication I write for and my title, which was changed by the editor, was "He Stole it, They Stole it Back". We didn't have many problems with the oligarchs and I take my hat off to the economic section because I think their reporting was very good, I think they got it right. Ken Yalowitz was the head in my day. Have you interviewed him yet?

Q: Who?

GEISEL: Ken, Kenneth Yalowitz. He ended up being ambassador in Belarus and Georgia.

Q: And where is he now?

GEISEL: I think he's retired, I'm pretty sure he's retired and he is a wonderful person and he had some great people working for him. We would have problems and occasionally we'd be warned off and told, you know, don't buy stuff there, the mafia runs it or watch out, you don't want to hire that firm, it's mafia. Or we had one case which happened after I left but I knew the chap. We had had a young man working in our economic section. He was originally PA&E, but he was a college grad who spoke great Russian and had his feet on the ground, really, for economics and we used him a lot and he ultimately left the embassy to go into business and he was murdered.

Q: What about crime?

GEISEL: We didn't experience much of it. You know, the bad guys were warned off, you know, stay away from the embassy, stay away from diplomats and they were smart enough to do it. The cops were pretty corrupt, especially the road traffic police but again, they would leave us alone if

they would see it was diplomatic. So no, I certainly felt as safe in Moscow as I felt anywhere.

The gypsies had come. The same gypsies, I mean not literally the same. Well, who knows? Maybe they were. I remembered them with less than fondness from my Rome days when they would be up and down the Via Veneto with the little kids and their signs and ripping off tourists and occasionally ripping off embassy staff members.

Q: Pick pocketing.

GEISEL: Pickpockets were there and we were warned, especially around tourist sites like the circus, to be very, very careful. But certainly organized crime or real criminals, violent criminals especially no, I felt safer there than just about anywhere.

Q: How did you find the embassy community? I'm talking about all the embassies. During Soviet times, you know, this was, particularly embassies from the West-

GEISEL: All stuck together.

Q: -all stuck together.

GEISEL: That's right. And the Marine house was the hangout in those days. I remember going there in those days, you know.

Q: How was it at this point?

GEISEL: I would say we still had very good relations. Remember, schooling was an issue and the school, THE school in Moscow was the Anglo-American School, which was jointly run by the American embassy and the British embassy and we broke a lot of rules in those days that I hope we're still breaking today. The Russians didn't care. We accredited all the teachers as attaches and gave them some privileges and of course we had to find them housing.

GEISEL: We used to get some terrific teachers at that school. We could get anything we wanted from our business communities because of course there was far more demand for places in that school than we had room after we took care of diplomats. We had a real pecking order but my counterpart, Jim Daly, the British admin minister counselor and I worked hand in glove to see that the embassies were recognized for their kindness by the business communities and they paid well. They were happy to pay. I mean, I had calls from very high level corporate officials saying you've got to get so-and-so's daughter a place, he won't stay in Moscow otherwise. This is vital to our business. I loved it.

Now, just as a funny aside, I ended up being ambassador in Mauritius a few years later and one day, of course I'd been tipped off, I was driving to a cocktail party, no, I dinner party that a friend was giving for us, and we watched for another car and we made sure we were behind that car and that car's passengers got out and it was the new British high commissioner and his wife.

I'd been there about a year and of course that British high commissioner was Jim Daly, who was my friend in Moscow some years before.

Q: Well, you left fairly early.

GEISEL: I left in, well, I was recruited, and my God, in April I was a bit shocked. It was a two year tour because it was considered a real hardship in those days. They weren't sure, you know, the Democrats had come in, not that that had anything to do with me but it was a new administration and various people knew me and I didn't even know that they knew me. I was told that I was wanted to be chief financial office and I was told to come back to be interviewed by Brian Atwood who was supposed to be undersecretary for management. You know, he was for I believe it was 11 days before he went to AID. And Brian interviewed me and he said no, I've got to have a diversity candidate in that job but I'd love you to be my executive assistant. Well, after my time with John Rogers I was not about to, I'd learned not to say no to the undersecretary of state for management. So I said sure and I went back to Moscow and I told my wife that this would be happening and she had the same mixed emotions that I had. We were terribly excited by Moscow but it was a drab place and it was a tough life and I was working dreadfully hard and I said it would be in my career interest to do this and we decided to take it. We then took a holiday down in South Africa and I got all these crazy calls from various people back at State while I was in South Africa and the long and the short of it, which they wouldn't say over the phone but it was that Atwood was not going to be M, it was going to be Dick Moose and somehow, when I finally found that out I said, well for God's sake, Moose was assistant secretary for Africa when I was in Bamako and when I had the AF roving administrative team. I know him, he knows me. Ah, he knows you, well please come. Then all of a sudden someone said well we've checked around and yes, you're still wanted to come back. So of course I came back to be executive assistant in M.

RICHARD L. STOCKMAN
Consultant (Retired Foreign Service Officer)
Tashkent, Tbilisi, and Bishkek (1992-1993)

Richard L. Stockman was born in 1940 and raised in Kansas. He attended the Vincentian Fathers seminar in Perryville, Missouri for nine years until 1962. In 1963, he entered the U.S. Army. Mr. Stockman's Foreign Service career included positions in Brazil, Honduras, Singapore, Togo, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, (Ireland), Saudi Arabia, Canada, Kyrgyzstan, and Georgia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 12, 1993.

STOCKMAN: ...I went to Tashkent in the summer of 1992, June, July and part of August; followed by Tbilisi in October, November and part of December. In between those two assignments I was asked to go to New York for a brief period, which turned out to be a month. So I had a pretty active year the second half of 1992. And then this year when 1993 rolled around there was kind of a down period until about the end of March when they asked me to go to Caracas for about a month. I had never been there before and I enjoyed that. But it was still not

the kind of assignment that these are out here in the former Soviet Union. This makes my second trip to Bishkek.

Q: Well, as long as I have you here, tell me a little about Tashkent. What was your impression?. The Soviet Union has basically collapsed and some of its component parts have become independent states. What was your impression of Tashkent which was the capital of Uzbekistan and what you saw there and also how our very new embassy was operating there?

STOCKMAN: Well, as you can appreciate, for someone who had never worked or traveled behind the Iron Curtain, almost anything you do or see is an adventure. You arrive knowing very little about the assignment other than a few simple briefings that advanced teams can give you. You might pick up an atlas or some other type of informational guide to give you a clue before you pack or do anything else. But at any rate the initial reactions for me were very, very profound and unforgettable experiences. Tashkent was supposed to have been the fourth largest city in the Soviet Union. I really have my doubts after seeing Tashkent for ten weeks...June, July and August of 1992...I seriously have my doubts about its superpower status...the Soviet Union and Tashkent's role in it...judging by what I saw.

You arrive there after a very long trip, having overnights in Moscow. In those days all of us entered through Moscow and fanned out to the various independent states by way of Aeroflot. Well, of course, it is quite a shock to fly on Aeroflot . I don't care how experienced you are travelings, that is a unique experience.

Q: What's it like?

STOCKMAN: Oh, it is like no other airline in the world. I really think the kindest description you can give of Aeroflot is simply a wide bodied cattle car. They are not designed with comfort in mind or any of the amenities of life that we are accustomed to, as Westerners, as Americans. They are simply devices for getting huge numbers of people point to point at the cheapest possible cost. Some of the impressions I you got will last with me forever. It is a very impersonal experience. You find a seat and somehow as Westerners you seem to get the last remaining seats on this huge plane. They are not very clean, to put it mildly. They are not very comfortable. And I wonder how well they are maintained as far as safety goes. The tires, for example, looked very bald. The ride is okay. You are not about to be entertained on these flights in any form and you are not going to receive any kind of food or drink that you might expect on a normal airline. Consequently you are quite happy when you get there.

Eventually you get there. The only arrangement for housing was the Intourist Hotel where we stayed for ten solid weeks. Again the same type of experience that the former Soviet Union offered foreigners. The all over city of Tashkent, itself, is kind of unique. They had a major earthquake there in the late '60s. Apparently the entire city had to be completely rebuilt. It took the Soviets, they say, ten years to do that. Judging from the looks of things today, I don't think that they ever went back and remodeled anything. Soviet construction is quite a joke. A US seismologist passed through and took a few days look of the overall city and quickly reached the conclusion that if they were to have another major earthquake of the same proportions, 6 or 7 on the Richter scale, the same thing would happen all over again. In other words they didn't learn

much from the previous experience.

Soviet construction per se is crude, it functions, it is not particularly esthetically pleasing and I really don't have much to say for it. An Intourist hotel might be a classic example of how not to do it. It works, more or less, but certainly is not comfortable. It is monotonous. It is just not a very pleasant experience. Food, drink, culture, customs...Tashkent is described as a moderate Moslem city. People are very sober. They dress very modestly. Nothing is flashy or stylish in their clothing. The food that is available is again pretty much the same type, very basic. You don't see very many over weight people there, which I think speaks for itself. I would expect that the diet is not exceptionally nutritious based upon what we were served in the Intourist hotel day after day. It is not very plentiful either. Meats and dairy products are almost nonexistent.

The city, itself, is kind of nondescript in the sense that it is not alive. You see huge, huge avenues laid out in typical Soviet style that would dwarf any US city. We would not be able to afford the luxury of taking such huge spaces for large avenues and underpasses for pedestrians. Many and most of these things were designed for two reasons. I think one to psychologically give the people a sense of openness because they were living in such congested, disagreeable apartments and when they got out into the open people had a sense of freedom. They typically have theaters, a building dedicated to annual circus visits, things of this nature that were all very socialist in design and intent.

You didn't really see what you see so commonly in America. For example, obviously you didn't see churches, because of the prohibition on religion. You didn't see buildings easily identified as schools. You didn't see hospitals as such. Yes you would see ambulances from time to time. You saw police and civil guards. Tashkent had more than its share of those. They were more readily visible in the government building area grounds for obvious reasons. But likewise they were very apt to stop motorists frequently and randomly one suspects more for bribes than anything else. Or maybe it was their only source of income. Who knows.

Tashkent, not unlike some other cities I have seen, are very dark at night. They are poorly lighted. It is very dangerous from a physical point of view to walk on their sidewalks at night because they have so many open holes and dangerous debris lying around. There is not the cleanliness and the upkeep of the buildings. There would be debris everywhere. Tashkent in its own right was far better and cleaner than other places that I have seen for whatever reason I don't understand. Maybe because there were the vehicles and crews to do these kinds of chores of maintaining some standard of living and hygiene.

You would go to open markets where the farming community would sell the products to the local community which was quite an interesting sight. The conclusion that I reached very quickly was that what was produced today is consumed today. Not much technology in terms of preservation which must obviously create great problems in the winter time. How do you survive in the winter? Some very basic questions from which you can draw obvious conclusions just by observing and watching and seeing what goes on. Everywhere you go in this part of the world, also there must be concern about the availability of fuel, whether it is for the few cars that are around or the planes in which you can get in and out of these places. It's becoming a real serious problem for all purposes...government, transportation, industrial production...the lack of vehicles,

the maintenance of roads, the availability of fuel. The railroads that you do see, and I have noticed this now in two of the three countries I have been in, look poorly maintained. The equipment is old, it is rusty, it is dilapidated. I don't think you could find anything similar to this anywhere in the US today, other than in a museum, perhaps. It is incredible.

Q: What was your impression of our embassy in Tashkent?

STOCKMAN: Well, this was my first experience in this program, working out here in these new CIS countries.

Q: CIS stands for?

STOCKMAN: At this point of time we used Commonwealth of Independent States.

Q: These are sort of the central Asian states including up through Georgia, too.

STOCKMAN: Yes, I think there is a total of 15.

Q: Really former Soviet states not including Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

STOCKMAN: Right. In all probability we will only serve on this program for maybe three or four years total, five perhaps. Maybe they will eventually designate a permanent party. But, anyway, getting back to your point. This particular embassy superficially appeared to be a beautiful building, an ideal selected spot. It was obviously going to be an area in which the Uzbek government wanted the diplomatic missions who were coming to stay in. We were given a building which was originally supposed to be used for say a chamber of commerce or exhibition hall. As it turned out it was anything but functional. It actually had a fully furnished discotheque with refrigerators and everything in the basement of it. We had no real protective security means to cordon off that area. For security reasons in the beginning it was a nightmare. We didn't know who was down there, who would use it. We couldn't use it freely even for a luncheon facility. That is just one of the anomalies of this whole thing.

As you went into the building there was an atrium running up through 60 percent of the building from the main floor up to the ceiling with non-usable space. We were left with 40 percent of the building to use as an embassy which was just unworkable. No matter what operation you are talking about. Whether it was consular operations or GSO or communications, or USIS, or administration, it really didn't matter. The offices were tiny. In addition, from a physical standpoint of view, the building used the typical aluminum wiring, nothing worked. It was dangerous and easily set on fire. The engineering of it was very poor. The Brazilians have an expression that pretty well sizes it up. They say *bonito mas ordinario*, "cute but ordinary," and that was really it in a nutshell.

Q: What was the spirit of the embassy? Here was a brand new state and we were setting up things. Could you describe the feeling?

STOCKMAN: That is a very interesting question because you could ask the same question, of

course, in each and every embassy in the 15 newly established places. I actually arrived there after it had been opened for about two and a half months. I was starting from scratch building communications. Even the equipment had not arrived when I was first there. What did come in came in on support flights. But getting to your point and question, initially, of course, there was a tremendous problem in staffing these embassies. You can imagine being tasked with opening 15 embassies at one time. How do you start? Who do you choose? Language skills. Who is available? So somehow you get a team together, brief them and assure them that you will hold their hand and support them. So spirits are high. Volunteers are in some cases ambitious, some are just simply romantic, some are well prepared, and some are not prepared to even do the task that has to be accomplished.

I would say initially the personal relationships are really key to getting something going effectively. In this particular case, Tashkent, had such a high number in turnover, rotation of TDYers, that it was really painful to those few who were permanent party. They were tired of this constant turnover. They had no assurances that others would volunteer and become permanent party and quite honestly I don't think their expectations were very high. What they did see or were able to predict was not something that you really wanted to think about too long. In other words, .we raised the flag, we opened the doors, a few of us knew what we were supposed to do and how to get it started. We have a cadre of FSNs who didn't even understand what an FSN was.

Q: FSN being Foreign Service National, local employees.

STOCKMAN: How these people were selected, cleared and hired god only knows. Obviously mistakes were made. Some of the wrong people may have been hired, some overqualified and unhappy in their jobs as well. They are looking to us for guidance and instruction as to what they are supposed to do not having the faintest idea what GSO stands for...

Q: General Services Officer.

STOCKMAN: You can appreciate this situation. In the case of Tashkent there were a few extra demands made upon us there, which eventually started to tax everyone's perseverance and patience. That was security requirements. The building was not in any shape or form whereby we could walk off in the evening and leave it unattended. We literally had to become Marine Security Guards there after hours. So we set up rosters. Everyone took their fair share. In other words from six in the evening until six in the morning we had American presence on the property. You did your fair share and there were only seven or eight of us there so your duty came up pretty regularly.

There was another problem, the roof was leaking on this new building and it had to be repaired. Well, from a security point of view you can not let a lot of foreign workers on the top of the embassy unattended or unaccompanied. So we had to climb up the side of the building in the hot sun, sit up there and roast with them and do duty on the roof. But not everybody could do this. Some had fear of heights and were afraid to go on the roof. So it seemed like you could not find enough time to do your real job, the job you were sent out there for.

And then too, I think, older, more experienced people realized that they would have to do a little bit more than they were sent out there to do. They have to be leaders. They have to show a little bit of initiative, motivation and all of those things you would expect of older people. Younger people, if they were not well prepared before coming out there, had to be baby sat. Then there was the language problem. Not everybody could speak Russian. So that became a problem. There were just many logistical problems. You would run out of this or that. Something as simple as a stapler, or paper for a laser jet printer. Something you would take for granted anywhere else. Or the fuses or lights would go and you couldn't find any replacements. This or that wouldn't work. Or the drivers would go off and disappear and leave you stranded at night. What do you do? Hitchhike, take the subway, or what? It was always something new. Or you would go to the airport to pick up some diplomatic pouches. No one had ever done this, so how do we do this? Or how do we pay for these pouches? No one knew how to do it. There was no form. They didn't know how much to charge you for excess baggage. Every time you turned there was a new problem or new question that nobody could answer and therefore nothing happened. And on and on it went.

I would say that most could enjoy the challenge for about six weeks and then a combination of things would start to set in and you would say, "Well, how many more days do I have to go?" And maybe the next person who came in would have a few more answers. But you kept looking for continuity, but you wouldn't always find it. I think it was painful in the administrative cone. The other officers...there was usually only one officer for each responsibility and some officers had to double up doing political/econ reporting. Those who were qualified in languages had extra duties because they had to help be interpreters all the time and their patience would get thin some times.

But I think overall most people seriously enjoyed the challenge, but they knew that the only way to get this off the ground eventually was to get a permanent party cadre established there, and that was not easy to do.

Q: Well then you went to Georgia, to Tbilisi. Now I assume a great deal that you said about Tashkent applied to Tbilisi. Could you talk about what was different...How are we doing on time?

STOCKMAN: I think just about everything was different in Tbilisi in a sense that Tashkent seemed to be a template of Moscow in many respects, whereas Georgia was very much Georgian, not only in the topography, the weather, but I think more importantly in the people, their independent nature. As we know right now the armed conflict has really not settled down. No thanks to the Russians taking sides surprisingly in a kind of unappreciative way towards Shevardnadze, but I guess maybe that is predictable too. It was basically from the very start a much different trip. The simple logistics of getting into Tbilisi, which is a very poverty stricken country today, with, I think, very limited resources. Almost the entire infrastructure of the country seems to be coming to a grinding halt.

Transportation, for example. We had to wait in Vienna, Austria because the plane was delayed twelve hours. It is a very unique arrangement that the Austrians have with the government of Georgia to ferry people back and forth. Due to the severe lack of fuel of all kinds for both

heating and transportation, but particularly transportation, flights in and out of Tbilisi are limited to once a week, on Saturdays, or at least they were at that time. I doubt that things have improved a year later. At any rate the Austrians had built two marvelous four star hotels, one in Tbilisi, Georgia and the other one up in the Caucasus Mountains. They seem to have a monopoly on the tourist industry there, what little there is. Basically they would be catering to rich Europeans and other Westerners who ski and want to get away to a unique romantic type of place. At any rate they also have locked into this hotel arrangement, one charter flight a week, which is a small Aeroflot type plane which carries both cargo and people once a week on Saturdays. That is how we managed to get in there in October.

In the course of that two and a half months of TDY there it was very interesting. By the contrast the Georgian people are very lively. They are well known for their dancing, their culture, their songs, their history and likewise their food, at least in the times when it was plentiful. They are marvelous entertainers. They will offer 50 toasts a night at any Georgian table to which one would be invited. And yet, it is very sad to be there because you can see the strong, horrible evidence of a civil war that took place right in the heart of Tbilisi where very selectively key government buildings were literally destroyed in the civil war which took place I believe December, January, February of say late 1991, early 1992. Consequently it is almost a miracle that anything of any real importance was left in tact and that Shevardnadze could still run a government. But apparently they did have new parliamentary elections some time in early or mid 1992. His fledgling government was trying to hang on when I arrived there in October, November and December. Consequently what one was able to do in terms of getting a real look at the country was somewhat limited and by that I mean primarily because of very high risk security factors. Travel was or should have been restricted to daylight hours only. At night it was not uncommon to hear gun fire randomly all night long on and off throughout the city and therefore unnecessary travel was completely discouraged. All of us were housed in the four star hotel there at the time for lack of housing, with, I think, two exceptions. Two of the single female officers had found accommodations that were, I guess, adequate. But at any rate the city at night was extremely dark and dangerous and we were pretty much confined to the hotel. We did have a satellite dish on the balcony of my room which we used for emergency communications after hours. There were numerous military flights, humanitarian assistance in a project called Project Hope, and the third or fourth flight was taking place during the time I was there.

But to answer your question, this would be somewhat of an explanation of the contrast between the two places.

Q: Could you explain the state of relations between Georgia and the United States? What were you doing and how were things working out?

STOCKMAN: Well, I think the relationship between the two governments, in light of recent past history with Shevardnadze, were probably as excellent as one could expect. Certainly I would imagine that we were doing everything possible to support him and to try and convince the people that this was a beginning, one in which we were quite interested and of course we were doing everything that could be done, piecemeal fashion, to begin to put things together. One thing I noticed taking place there that I suppose has also happened in other countries out here, is that there was a team of international jurists there at the time. Apparently they were working

together with the new government trying to give them some idea of how to start writing a new constitution. That would really be the first real fundamental legal step in establishing, I suppose, a new democracy that they were not accustomed to.

Q: For the historian later, what was the civil war about?

STOCKMAN: What little that I could piece together, apparently there were many, not unlike other CIS countries, many ethnic groups who, over perhaps decades and decades had their axes to grind. Perhaps family feuds, turf battles, political battles of whatever sort. I suppose if one uses a little imagination, and perhaps even reads Fitzroy McLean, a British diplomat's book, "Eastern Approaches" you could get a real feel for what Joseph Stalin did and the repercussions many years later. His mass deportation of ethnic groups to opposite ends of the Soviet Union obviously had its accumulative effect, in my opinion. I believe we are starting to see reaction to this purging, or ethnic cleansing or whatever you might call it.

Then the fact that he who was in power in the old system had all the perks. And those who were in power didn't want to leave it because it would probably mean a lost of an apartment, a car and all the things that went along with it. So there is a classless society in today's new democracy starting to show what power struggles really mean.

Q: Dick, how were we setting up our embassy at that time?

STOCKMAN: Well the embassy there in Tbilisi was certainly a very unique setup. The government had apparently pointed out one building in the early days and designated it as the most suitable for the US embassy. Apparently that was it, there were not many alternative choices. It was a very old, classical building. The very architecture of the building, quite honestly, did not make it very functional for diplomatic purposes. The ceilings were perhaps 20 feet high and it would be very difficult functionally to use all that space effectively, let alone to heat it in the winter time, which we found out very quickly. The electrical wiring in the building was dilapidated. And yet you could see obvious signs that this was the equivalent of some ministry building with very ornate woodwork and doors, the high ceilings, the tapestry, expensive and old oil paintings in various places throughout the building. In some locations there were fireplaces. So with a little imagination you could just about picture the old establishment, perhaps even the last days of the Tsar, living the life of Riley. And, of course, that came to a quick end.

Q: Who was our Ambassador while you were there?

STOCKMAN: Kent Brown.

Q: Was he an experienced Soviet hand?

STOCKMAN: Well, I understand that most all of these Ambassadors at one time or another were very experienced Soviet hands. I did not know any of them personally not having served in the Soviet Union or behind the Iron Curtain. But I would certainly say he and his wife were probably two of the most charming people and in my opinion expertly chosen to be ambassador and

leaders for a new embassy. They were really, really appreciated by all the embassy staff. And the team loyalty that they had generated was showing obvious results there. Because it is a difficult post in many respects to work in and yet the morale seemed very, very high for obvious reasons, they had very strong leadership.

Q: How was it communications-wise?

STOCKMAN: The commo set up was pretty much the same as it is in all of these embassies. It was effective. The Achilles heel to all of it, of course, is the city power that we rely upon...most of these embassies that don't have real true generators that we need for emergencies, during power failures in the city... for all practical purposes the telephone installation there and the communications gear was very effective. Thank god.

Q: Well, you were there for how long?

STOCKMAN: Two and a half months.

Q: Was there any consideration because of the fighting that they might close it down again?

STOCKMAN: At that point in time I don't think there was any such consideration. There was not actually out right civil war in the city during the time I was there. There were factions, of course, that were doing their thing at night time, primarily gun running and smuggling I suppose of all kinds. Of course the lack of fuel kept that to a minimum too. The real true fighting was up in the one corner of the country where they are having the secessionist effort, I believe the Russians are backing to some extent. It did make you feel nervous because after all you came out of the hotel in the morning and you would see the ground covered with shell casings on the street and you could hear it at night. Sometimes umpteen animals would come strolling into the hotel, the lobby, with their automatic weapons, somewhat drunk. So anything could have happened without any advanced notice. So you had to keep your wits about you and look and observe and literally stay out of trouble or avoid it.

Q: Well then lets move to the Kyrgyz Republic where you are now on a temporary assignment. Were you here when we first set this place up?

STOCKMAN: No. My first visit here was this year in July and August.

Q: When was it set up?

STOCKMAN: Well, I believe it was one of the very first. I recall seeing it on the front of State Magazine and would guess that was probably in early 1992. There was a large group of us who were recruited in the spring of that year, retired annuitants, to help alleviate the personnel shortages. We eventually got out into the field...most of us went into Moscow and then fanned out over the various CIS countries. This was in May and June, 1992. So I think the few embassies which were able to get open and staffed quickly probably did so in early 1992.

Q: How did you find Kyrgyzstan different from the other places?

STOCKMAN: Well, in this situation here...I am particularly fond of Kyrgyzstan. The people are marvelous. I have learned an awful lot in being able to talk with the people about their culture. One can visit a museum that is full of antiquities and historical artifacts. It is very accessible. It shows you a very, very sharp contrast with their historical past up to and including 70 years of communism, all within the same museum. So if that is your thing, it is available here. But I would say equally importantly is that fact that one can freely talk to the Kyrgyz people here and get a perspective...this is all in English, of course...of their country and traditions and still get a balanced feel for their patience and tolerance of other ethnic groups, particularly the Russians. I think that really shows a great deal of maturity on their part which may not be the case in many of the other republics. I believe that is really going to be their strongest trump that will really attract US support. And they may make progress far faster than the others. But there are numerous reasons why Bishkek is very enjoyable.

ROBERT E. MCCARTHY
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Moscow (1992-1995)

Mr. McCarthy was born in Canada and raised in New York City. He was educated at Fordham University, City College of New York and American University. After service in the US Army and studies in Paris, he joined the Foreign Service in 1973. His assignment in the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs was the beginning of a career dealing primarily with Public and Cultural Affairs with USIA. His overseas assignments as Public Affairs and/or Cultural Affairs Officer were in Belgrade, Moscow (twice), Montenegro, Leningrad and Budapest. His Washington assignments also concerned USIA programs. Mr. McCarthy served as Diplomat in Residence at Georgetown University 1995-1996. Mr. McCarthy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: So, what happened to you? In '92?

McCARTHY: Then I went to Russia, from '92 to '95, as Public Affairs Officer.

Q: Now, this must have been quite a tremendous change, wasn't it?

McCARTHY: Yes.

Q: In a way, you had some of the same things happening, but a huge country and all. When you went out there, what were you told would be some of your challenges?

McCARTHY: The challenge was partly just what you said. It's a huge country. You are going from a country of one time zone and ten million people, ethnically homogeneous, who have the luxury of putting all the blame on the Soviet Union, to a country that goes across eleven time zones, has 150 million people, lots of different ethnic groups, and in which reform is by no

means guaranteed. There was an attempted coup the year before I got there, the attempted coup against Gorbachev, that was still fresh in people's minds, and all the arrangements were being worked out. The Soviet Union had collapsed just seven, eight months before I got there. So things were very much in flux, and you had reform from the top, but not really control over the situation. You had a lot of movement from the bottom, but not with the same track record that you had in Hungary and not with the same support. The big challenge was, how do you make an impact with your small staff in this immense country? At that time we were still suffering the effects of no Foreign Service national employees. The Foreign Service national employees for USIA were essential. They were real [a real asset].

Q: Absolutely. For everywhere.

McCARTHY: Yes. But there is a difference, when, because of classified working space, the FSN works in one place, and you are up behind a classified area. That's a little different from really working cheek by jowl and you pop into each other's offices all the time, you share work, you talk about things. There aren't many things off limits really that I can't talk to my FSNs about, you know. So, just to get back to my point, there were no FSNs. We had a contract with Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E), and their staff members were called PA&Eers. We had, I think, three of those in Moscow, and I must say they were superb, but there were only three. That was the year the Freedom of Support Act passed. So we had, about six months after I got there, something like \$100 million worth of exchanges money coming our way. So, the challenge for me as a manager was to conceptualize what it was we had to do, realizing that you couldn't retail things the same way as you could in Hungary. You had to look for big multipliers. Who could multiply things for you? Who could you work with who could then have an impact on others?

Q: Who was the ambassador when you went out there?

McCARTHY: The ambassador, when I first got there, was Ambassador Strauss, who was burning up the lines to Congress about things like aid to Russia and everything, as you know, very, very well connected.

Q: I just finished up another session with him yesterday.

McCARTHY: Oh, did you? That must be the most engaging...

Q: Oh, it is.

McCARTHY: Oh. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] Wonderful, wonderful man.

McCARTHY: Oh, God. He would have these meetings with American correspondents, these sessions over in Spaso House. They'd be sitting in concentric rings, and he'd be a master. He'd keep them entertained and informed for 45 minutes to an hour of informal questions and discussions. It was great.

Q: You got to manage this. How did you approach your job? What do feel you were managing?

McCARTHY: A very large exchange program and extensive information outreach. And in connection with both I was managing relationships with a variety of intermediary organizations. This gets back to how USIA works, and again the tremendous support from Washington. The big USIA programs - International Visitors, Fulbright, special Freedom Support Act initiatives - are all carried out in partnership with non-governmental organizations. For example, for the Fulbright exchange, it's the Council on International Exchange of Scholars that does most of the implementation work on the exchange of scholars. The Institute of International Education that does most of the implementation on the exchange of Fulbright students. We worked through those organizations to implement exchanges on our behalf. Those NGOs were multipliers, bringing great expertise and commitment.

In Russia, prior to the fall of Communism, under the old Soviet Union, as I mentioned, we used to have a bilateral agreement on educational and cultural exchanges. There was a protocol that would go over two years, which would specify exactly what would happen. USIA had been working with some of those NGOs for years during the communist period. Now the numbers were vastly larger and the focus was on reform. But the USIA-NGO relationships were there and the expertise and hands-on experience were there on both sides. Other NGOs came on board as opportunities expanded.

So, what my colleagues and I did work with organizations that were managing exchanges in Russia, to increase their capacity by increasing their grants and by letting them take on additional staff to do work in Russia. And we were very fortunate, because the American alumni of the various exchange programs loved living in Russia. Anybody who studied Russia and Russian history in the Soviet era had this love-hate relationship with that country. There's just no way around it. They're drawn back to it like moths to the flame. And so someone who had spent a year there on an academic exchange leapt at the chance to go out there and work in an office of IREX (the International Research and Exchanges Board) or of ACTR, (the American Council of Teachers of Russian), or the ACC (the American Collegiate Consortium), and run exchange programs. Advertise them, get the applications, have national panels. So, our job was to keep in touch with those on the educational exchange side, keep in touch with those organizations, direct them, set the policy guidelines, and intervene as necessary. Some of their offices were outside of Moscow and that was all to the good. On the press side, it was a very, very big press operation. All the networks had bureaus in Moscow, as did the wire services and the major newspapers. You could have a camera crew on anything, not that they'd come just because you wanted them to, but they were there to cover real news. So, the ambassador's schedule, schedules of visiting delegations (we had congressional delegations all the time) presented opportunities. We had a Presidential visit the first January I was there, and another one later. We had the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, which meant at least one vice presidential visit every year. Lots of Cabinet secretaries all the time. In short, there were non-stop opportunities to engage the press, using the various VIP visits.

The ambassadors also generated press coverage. Ambassador Collins succeeded Ambassador Strauss... He was the DCM and became the Charge after Ambassador Strauss left. He was terrific also. He was a former exchange student there, in the late '50s, in fact I think he had roomed with

the foreign minister. He was very attuned to Russian culture, Russian language, Russian history, was able to articulate our position very sensitively.

And then Ambassador Pickering came, another tremendous ambassador. So the leadership at the top was always excellent, which really helped, and the staffs there were very good throughout in all the sections. So, when managing the public diplomacy portfolio, you tried to work with your colleagues too - more multipliers. You tried to get out of the embassy and leave an institutional presence. One way we did that, and this was because of the Freedom of Support Act, was to establish information centers in some of the regional cities. These, again, were partnerships and were presented as partnerships. What we proposed was, "We will give you a small reference library, we will provide texts of recent journal articles on CD-ROM. We will provide Internet connectivity and student advising materials. You have to provide space, staff and staff salaries, and utilities. We will train the staff. And this will be a partnership. We tried this idea out in several places, picking regional centers, like Yekaterinburg, Nizhniy Novgorod, and Rostov. We succeeded in establishing these centers over the course of several years. It was complicated to do, and they illustrated our approach: "You can't get there yourself, so you have to work with others who can get there for you or with you." Erik Johnson, an Information Resources Officer who came to Russia later, expanded the number of centers greatly. They became known as "American Corners" and ultimately served as a model for a new worldwide program."

Q: Did you find the entrenched bureaucracy more of a problem there than you did in Hungary?

McCARTHY: Yes. Well, yes and no. I think it was a little harder "sell" to talk about openly-advertised merit-based competition where you identify the best and the brightest based on applications submitted from you know not whom and you knew not whence, and only when you see them do you realize that there are these diamonds out there. The going-in Russian position, because this was a system they knew, was that they should select candidates themselves. They wanted to avoid embarrassments. They said that we needed to get the best people, and the only way to do that was to use their knowledge and contacts That would be the best "take" on their position. The worst "take" on it would be, "This is an old boy network, this is a good thing. People want to go to the United States; I want to be associated with it. This will be patronage for me, and I would prefer to remain in control of it, thank you." So that was a long haul, really, getting past that initial position.

But people whose hearts were in the right place saw that these competitions yielded fabulous candidates in a way that would have been possible in no other way, and the impact on the individuals and the individuals' locations and families was dramatic. You have a high school kid, in third year, out someplace behind God's back in Siberia. (Future Leader Exchange Program), backed by Senator Bradley, funded by the Freedom of Support Act.. The student would go to the United States, go to an American high school, live with an American family, and go back. And, people would say, "How did you do that? You don't know anybody. Your family isn't connected. You're like us." And that message, sent through those exchange programs was as important, I think, as anything we put out in written form, outlining American values and beliefs. The proof of the pudding was in the eating. We didn't just talk the talk. We walked the walk. Exchanges reached out into all 89 subjects of the federation, as they call them, all 89 constituent parts of Russia.

In sum, bureaucracy was frustrating in some ways, but the chaotic state of so many things – including bureaucracy, opened up opportunities too.

Q: Did the collapsing nature of the Soviet Union affect you?

McCARTHY: Yes, I think it did. I think it influenced our approach. The big bucks were in the exchanges, and the philosophy was “You really don’t know which one of these horses is going to be out in front at any given time, and you really don’t know which is going to win the race. But you know that if this country is ever going to succeed, and if they are going to become some version of a market economy and some version of a democracy, they’re going to need people who have a democratic point of view and are educated in key fields like business management, economics, public administration law, journalism, etc.” Our theory was, “Select the right field, have an open competition, really get the word out, have an unbiased selection mechanism, select the best people to go into those fields, and ensure they have a worthwhile experience in the United States. They come back into important institutions, they hold democratic views, they rise up in those institutions; gradually, those institutions change. Those institutions are ultimately what the society needs, and the society changes with them. Again, it’s only a part, a small part of what had to happen in Russia, or the other countries in transition, but it was an important part. We thought that our comparative advantage lay in that area rather than trying to retail a lot of individualized rifle shot programs, although, we did some of that, too. As I mentioned with regard to Hungary, exchange programs also let us engage the leadership of the future on issues of central importance to the United States and to Russia.

Q: How about the intelligence services? This thing had been honed to control Russian activities since the czars’ time.

McCARTHY: Yes.

Q: Forever. So, here’s an old dog learning new tricks. You were messing around right where they didn’t want any. Basically, the philosophy had been to keep foreigners from messing around.

McCARTHY: Except that the avowed policy of the Russian government was reform. Regional leaders, legislators would look upon this as a good thing when people came from their districts, had this exchange opportunity, and came back. I think the FSB, or whatever the intelligence service happened to be called at any given time, had bigger fish to fry than this. Remember, you had people coming in who were treasury advisors going into the Finance Ministry; they were building housing for military officers who came back from east central Europe. We were working jointly on a space program; we had Nunn-Lugar money to dispose of nuclear weapons. These programs had greater security implications. I think that would be more where the intelligence service would direct its attention. However, we encountered intelligence service interest occasionally, when the Office of Research did opinion polling outside of Moscow, for example. You’d get blowback on that.

Q: When you got there, it was all Russian, it was no longer Soviet.

McCARTHY: Right.

Q: How about the Russian media? How did you find dealing with that?

McCARTHY: The Russian media were mixed. There was just a tremendous variety in the Russian media. From the crusading, to the “let’s try to get it right,” to the “this is my little niche” to “I’m going to become completely irresponsible and just say whatever I want, in order to sell papers.” Our approach to the situation was this.. We supported an organization called the Russian-American Press Institute. It wasn’t called that in the beginning, though. It was located in the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada. My predecessor, John Katzka, had given them about \$5,000 bucks or so to set up a library. Then we gave them a small grant to build on that.. Then we got funding to bring in a professional-in-residence, as we called it, someone who is a professional media person, journalist, to work there in that American Press Institute and organize activities. Among the activities were cataloguing cases where journalists were interfered with, arrested, or anything like that; following press legislation - so sort of a watchdog function would be part of it. And they did seminars for the press. For example, we went to Nizhny Novgorod, a very reform-minded city in the early days, for a 2-day seminar. The editor of the Moscow News went up. A correspondent for the New York Times, Serge Schmemann, a great correspondent, Russian-speaking, went up. I went up, the professional-in-residence, Lisa Schellinberger from the Russian-American Press Institute went up. We addressed a number of issues relating to freedom of the press and financial independence. Then later, the Press Institute established affiliates in other cities and organized these same types of activities in other parts of Russia.

Something I forgot to mention in Hungary, which also applies to Russia, is the IMF, not the International Monetary Fund, but the International Media Fund, which was funded out of the Freedom of Support Act and SEED. In Budapest, they established a journalism center and donated a journalism library. That was very important. In Russia, the IMF would bring in highly qualified experts to conduct seminars. Rather than our having to do it from our end in USIS, again because our hands were so few, the Russian-American Press Institute would make the arrangements. We would work with the Institute on the concept. The IMF would get this great group of people. They’d come in, join up with some Russian experts, and do the seminar for Russian invitees. They did some of that also in Hungary, and they were great, very responsive. Marvin Stone was the director of that operation.

On one occasion, in Hungary... if I can just skip back to show how responsive the IMF was. ... We’d had the first VOA, Voice of America, affiliate in East Central Europe. At one point this radio station wanted to break the agreement with us, claiming there was no way it could be profitable. Gene Mader, the VP or Deputy Director of the IMF, flew to Budapest on a couple days’ notice. He brought a superstar on management of radios. With him. We sat down with them, worked out a programming schedule on what would make sense economically, etc., etc., and it all worked out. But that’s the type of responsiveness we could count on. Again multipliers. That’s one of the ways we dealt with the press.

We also gave small grants to media, to buy a modem, upgrade a computer, pay Internet service charges. There were internships for journalists in American media outlets (Jim Denton at

Freedom Forum did an excellent job on that), and a lot of International Visitor programs. For example we'd take editors of several papers and they'd go to the United States as IVs. Not only would they have conversations with their professional counterparts, see how the press was run in the United States, but they'd establish links among themselves, even though they were in different regions of Russia and links with Americans. Again, sort of a small part of...

Q: What about, particularly Western Europe, how did you cooperate and work with them?

McCARTHY: There was a separate office in the Embassy to do that. and AID was in there, of course, after a while in a big way. There was a need to do just that. To keep track of what was going on Ambassador Pickering established an assistance unit in the embassy with four people in it. There was a computer program to collect and aggregate by category and region, and other dimensions, all the assistance being given by the G7 countries. On a day-to-day level, frankly, we cooperated in an ad hoc way, with others. For example, if the regional Regional English Language Officer was going to do a three-seminar for teachers of English in the Volga region, he would work with the British Council to do that, rather than compete with the British Council. They shared the load. But the idea of going out and trying to coordinate activities in advance, when there are different funding lines, and when resources come online at different times... different imperatives from host governments was more than we could even consider. So we didn't really do it, frankly.

Q: So, what about... thinking in particular the French and the Germans... The Germans had always had sort of a entree there despite the unpleasantness of two world wars, but Germany is part of that area in a way. What were they doing?

McCARTHY: They had Volga there, they had Volga Germans there too. Gosh, what were the Germans doing?... I know they were all doing things, but for the life of me when you ask me that question now and I try to remember back...

Q: Well, how about the French?

McCARTHY: [laughter] Same thing. I can barely remember what we did.

Q: I'm just thinking that both the Germans and the French... in a way, so much of this, I imagine, was done in either Russian or in English, and that would put them somewhat outside this...

McCARTHY: They had the TACIS program (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States, I believe), which the EU did in addition to what the individual member states did. They were doing things in business development and they were doing things in public administration. They certainly had exchange programs. They certainly brought people to Europe on visits, and we cooperated later on NATO, but by then I wasn't there. You would discover the impact of other countries programs in your travels. We set up reading rooms, and sometimes you'd go around and you'd find out that there was a German room, for example in the Linguistics University in Nizhniy Novgorod, and they'd show it to you. At the Library of Foreign Literature, in Moscow, run by a very dynamic, firm believer in democracy, Yekaterina Genieva, my predecessor had worked with the library to set up an American reading room. Later

that was expanded to be an American Center... a really nice place with American books, several reference librarians, electronic access, meeting rooms. Then, using that pattern, Mrs. Genieva also developed a French center, a German center, a Japanese center, and an Italian center. So those things were going on, and we did influence one another. Resources were available to do things like that. The French tended to do more cultural activities than we did. Their cultural budget was larger than ours. But to give you a comprehensive overview of what the strategy of other countries was, I really don't have a clue at this point.

Q: What was the attitude within Russia at this time? Were you finding a whole younger class or older groups of people who were all of a sudden able to blossom forth? Were you impressed by this, or notice...?

McCARTHY: I was very impressed by this. When you entered a room full of alumni of this FLEX high-school exchange program, who had spent a year in the United States - and you know, I'd do that when I'd travel around... It was like plugging into this gigantic battery. You just got this inflow of juice and energy from them, and it was clear that these kids were terrific and that something good was going to happen to them. In the area of entrepreneurship, we had a program called "Business for Russia," later called "Community Connections." The idea was you'd identify small business people. Here the philosophy again was "Let's stay clear of the big policy decisions." We know that entrepreneurship is permitted; we know that in the United States small business provides most of the jobs. We know it's going to be important in Russia, too. God knows there are niches in the service industry all over Russia. That was one of the big problems. So we know there are going to be small businesses. Let's try to have a program where you identify good people in small business. They go to the United States; they work in a business analogous to their own, they live in an American community with an American family. Then after 5 or 6 weeks, they go back to Russia and they take what they want, discard what they want. They may see bad lessons, they may see good lessons. They'll learn something about it and they'll be practical. We started this off on an experimental basis, adjusted it, etc., and basically it came down to not advertising nationally all at once because it was too complicated. And we wanted to establish ties between a city in Russia and a city in the United States, so that over a 3-year period, you might have several delegations going back and forth. Ultimately, Americans would then travel to follow up. These visits by Americans were unanticipated, but they happened. So we'd take, say, ten oblasts, ten regions at a time. We'd advertise; we'd get applications. We'd screen them and then we'd have interview panels that would talk to them. Select them...And they'd go to the United States. These entrepreneurs were not young but, to return to your question, they also blossomed forth.

Q: These would be mixed panels, Americans and Russians?

McCARTHY: Yes. Mixed panels, Americans and Russians. And this was a surprise. We were told, and I sort of thought this might be true too, all of us were surprised. The conventional wisdom was, "Yes, when you're in Moscow, St. Petersburg, the European part of Russia, maybe the Pacific coast, you will find small business people who also speak English - because you had to speak English for this program in order to imbibe by osmosis what was around you - but one you get out past the Urals, you're not going to find people..." But it turned out that there were people everywhere, and they had the most innovative ideas. Somebody marketing scalpels by

mail... they'd target people. They'd send them one example of their product by mail, for free. And they'd say, "If you like this, get back to us." Marketing steel doors, because crime was a big, big problem. All kinds of people came out of the woodwork, so there was ample work for the binational panels.

So, yes, I was very heartened and surprised, by how widespread interest and ability were in Russia. The program for young professionals, called The Muskie Program, identified young people in law, young lawyers, people starting out in business after having a degree, journalists for graduate study at American universities. They were super and the American universities gave us great reports on them. So people were able to "blossom forth" in different ways. If you think about alumni of USIA exchange programs in Russia, it's like a pyramid, and it's all geared toward finding those people that we just mentioned, the people who are going to come out of the woodwork and be the new generation in Russia. At the bottom of the pyramid you'd have the high school kids, then you'd have high school teachers, then you'd have college students, then you'd have graduate students, then you'd have young professionals, then you'd have professors, and then at the apex of the pyramid if you like you'd have senior scholars and regional leaders and directors in different sectors of Russian society. The layers of the pyramid were interlocking.

Q: Were you having the problem that I was told existed in some places, it certainly did in Africa and all, that colleges and universities in the United States were sort of professional grant type things that took... whatever you want. This how they supported their grad students, not necessarily to the welfare of the country to which they were sent... these were often sent to African countries and mostly aid things. But I was wondering whether this crept in, of people coming, and they knew how to write grant proposals, but essentially the contribution was to do surveys or something that would serve the universities and not the people to whom they were serving.

McCARTHY: Right. There were a couple of problems that these countries faced when they were democratizing rapidly. They'd get all kinds of people coming in, not just universities... think tanks, private organizations... they would portray themselves as having resources, and just wanting to consult on how to use those resources best. In fact, what they were doing was getting material for grant applications which they were going to launch from a zero base of experience, and try to get money and go where the action was. The organizations in Hungary or Russia would spend a lot of time with these people because they'd think they were funded, but they were really just there on spec.

As far as the other points you mentioned - just coming and not wanting to do too much - we didn't have... Our programs weren't really set up so much that way. We had speakers who would come in, but they would be identified by USIA. We would have groups from NGOs that would come in and be linked with local NGOs, but they tended to be okay because the grant proposals would be run by the post first. So you would screen a pile of proposals. You'd see an organization listed and you'd think, "Boy, I'm surprised if anybody's contacted them." And you'd ask, and you'd find, "Oh, yes, somebody said... somebody signed the letter, but we don't know what it's all about." Or the message from the American partner might be: "Don't you worry your head about this. Just sign here and we'll take care of the rest." There were quite a few pro forma agreements, so you really wanted to see some sign of prior contact between these two

organizations that were going to have a partnership before you really gave it your blessing. I think, relatively speaking, we didn't suffer too much from that, mainly because most of it was competitive and individually based, and most grant money for institutional work went to the American partners, which were used to auditing requirements.

Q: And were you sort of keyed to watch for this, too?

McCARTHY: Yes. Several things in the Hungarian experience I took with me to Russia and that was one of them, for sure.

Q: This was a time, talking to Robert Strauss yesterday, a time sort of analogous to a time when our robber barons were out there...

McCARTHY: Yes. [laughter]

Q: In the United States, the railroads, it was all out there for the taking, and in the long run, it worked out, but [laughter] it took quite a while. You know, the Vanderbilts, the Morgans. This is certainly going on in Russia. How did this affect your work and your impressions of it?

McCARTHY: You are absolutely right. You had a vacuum where once there was centralized power. Nothing is there, and you have democratic forces rushing in. You have crime rushing in too. Extortion, shakedowns, carving up cities into regions, payoffs, kickbacks. We would have experienced way more of that in our programs if we had been giving grants directly to Russian institutions. But mainly, we either had most of our money within these individualized grants or working with these partnership organizations where our contribution was in kind, like books or computers or Internet access. Or, it was a grant given to the American partner, like an American university to work with a Russian university. So the temptations that direct grant money might have been posed to the Russian side weren't usually there just because of the types of programs we had. But the potential was everywhere. It influenced what we did. For example, when we sent our computer equipment to Yekaterinburg to set up the information resource center, it was on a truck together with other computer equipment, and there were armed guards on the truck. This was a shipment that somebody else was sending, one of the businesses, for their purposes. We piggybacked on and helped defray the cost, but it was an armed guard on a truck full of computers because it was valuable property and could be ripped off. And that was something you'd never think of in many locations.

Q: No. What was your impression of how things were developing there? Were you aware of how the United States developed? Was this part of your training, your experience of American history...was it sort of a replay or not?

McCARTHY: I didn't think of it as a complete replay, just because of the intellectual sign posts that guided leadership in the United States - the basic readings they'd done, the models they were selecting, they were steeped in that - Montesquieu, Locke, etc. Whereas, Russia hadn't participated in some of the same historical movements, e.g. the Renaissance, the Enlightenment... well the Enlightenment they did to some extent, the Protestant Reformation, developments like that. In the Soviet period the society was intentionally sealed off, so a lot of

information didn't get out to a lot of people. Certainly, in some areas I did see parallels - the wide-open western frontier. People would ask expatriates, "Why did you come here?" "Oh, man, everything's open here. If you've got a good idea and you can figure out how to get there before other people, this is a great opportunity." And the robber baron analogy that you mentioned earlier also applies. But I looked at Russian developments more as groping toward a new system that you can't really see, with resistance at the top all the way as you're trying to go forward, and a population that wants to get there, but there are some hard, big, bitter pills they have to swallow at the same time. Inflation was something like 2,500% when I first arrived. People's savings were wiped out. They'd played by the rules, and suddenly one day everybody... all the rules are changed. People on pension were really hurting. So my image of it was of fits and starts, going forward as worth it in the end, but a lot of pain along the way because you're changing everything and you're not ready for it.

Q: Obviously, you weren't working the political circuit, but what were you getting from your Russian counterparts about first Gorbachev and then Yeltsin? And I want to stop here and move- (end of tape)

McCARTHY: Though I didn't have the political beat, I had contacts with the political class. We would send them on International Visitor programs. I would have governors, mayors, and people like that over to my house before they went to the United States. We would have seminars on federalism and similar topics, where we would meet with regional governors and the local leadership, though not with the main purpose of reporting. Gorbachev, he had no support. The people who wanted reform thought he didn't go fast enough, far enough, that he held too long to the idea of reforming Communism. The Communists thought that he sold the system down the river. He changed the economic system, he changed the control by the party. He gave away Eastern Europe, and he destroyed the Soviet Union. So, he was without support... no, no support. That's what happens to leaders.

Yeltsin, I think, opinions of... some people despised Yeltsin and some supported him. Generally, the people that I had most contact with, I think, either looked at him as some sort of great democratic force, saved Russia, saved reform during the coup, courageous. Then, as he began to be more quixotic, I think a lot of people sort of had this sense that, "We don't want the Communists to come back. Yes, there are a lot of decrees, there are a lot of arbitrary decision, and we're not talking about Thomas Jefferson. But he's dealing in a system where this has to be done. He's our best realistic hope for the time being." Something like that, I would say would be pretty common.

Q: Were you running across a problem, in all that things you were doing, that there wasn't a strong judicial legal framework?

McCARTHY: Yes. That was terrible for business people. You're in a joint venture, the joint venture would be going well, and then you would be displaced... There was at least one high-profile murder. This affected human rights also. The judiciary was poorly paid. No real tradition of an independent judiciary. Everything stacked toward the prosecution. But how did it affect what we were doing? We did support law as one of the fields in our exchange program. We did bring in people to lecture on that. There were experimental jury trials in several of the regions,

but that was something that we didn't take on with a major commitment of resources. I believe there was a pretty big USAID project in that area.

Q: Did you find yourself acting as mother hen or something? You had what were these ten other former Soviet states, the 'Stans' and other places. And they were being put together kind of on the cheap. Which struck me always as a very poor decision. But anyway, how did you...

McCARTHY: Very true. And the same thing was happening in USIA. Our offices in the USSR successor states were put together kind of out of our hide, so to speak, without new money. I tended to know most of the people who were out there in the 'Stans,' and sometimes the expectations of what we could do for them from Moscow were beyond what we really could do, e.g. translate books for them and ship them out. We would try to do things for them. If we had a seminar, for example, on running an information resource center, we would want their people to participate. If we had seminars for staff in student advising centers, we would want their people to come in. Of course, there was also some sensitivity about coming back to Moscow, and you had to factor that in. You know, "I thought we were independent states. Why should we always come back to Moscow for training?" Gradually, they sort of weaned themselves away. But initially I think there were unmet expectations. They thought that we were much better supplied. Here's somebody who's chopping wood to get heat down there in Armenia. How can that person not think that I, with central heating, etc. could do so much, if I just got off my duff and did it? Not that he said that, but it's just [laughter]

Q: [laughter] Yes. What about the officers you were getting out, people on your staff? How did you find them?

McCARTHY: Great. In general, in the Moscow mission, people either really wanted to be there or really didn't. For the USIA people, again, the rewards are tremendous. You run this exchange program. You see these people before they go. You see them when they come back. You have an enrichment program for alumni. You arrange a seminar and you go out and you participate in it. Everybody was getting feedback and reinforcement all the time. Without good junior officers, we could not have done half what we did. David Kennedy, for example, really made those information resource centers happen. On the information side, you dealt with dozens of radio and TV stations spread across 11 time zones. They would send somebody through Moscow to make a couple of calls. We were on the circuit and loaded them up with videotapes. They'd go back to their stations, and those videotapes would go on the air. Audiences all around Russia would be exposed to information about the United States, about democracy, about market economics. Carol Lynn McCurdy did a great job on that. We provided dishes for major stations to bring down WordNet programming. So, in general, I can't think of anybody on our staff who wasn't really positive about being there. That didn't mean there weren't frustrations sometimes. It didn't mean that they weren't under a lot of pressure. They were. And the workload for some was crushing. However, we had the great luxury of being able to hire all our FSNs from scratch. Just go out and hire them. And they were fabulous.

Q: You didn't have to go through that government agency.

McCARTHY: No. That was the old system, exactly. No, this was the new Russia. That was one

of the great advantages. We got wonderful people. People with highly advanced degrees, intelligent people who spoke English.

Q: Well, in many ways, you were duplicating what had happened that I am familiar with that happened in Western Europe, right after the war. Working for the Americans was a big deal. We were getting nieces of prime ministers, and we lived off the fat, that luxury, for three or four decades. It went finally. We were no longer the employer of choice. But at one point we just got wonderful people. I guess you were beginning to...

McCARTHY: Yes, not so much that high connection, but more here's someone who's been an English language teacher but always wanted to do something for building up her country. Some people had minor connections, but I'd say it was more quality...

Q: Then you left there when?

McCARTHY: 1995.

Q: What did you think? Whither Russia when you left?

McCARTHY: I was pretty positive. It all depends on what your frame of reference. If you look at Russia and you think about what the United States is, you think, gosh, there are so many things that are not right. But if you think about Russia, as I remember it in the Brezhnev era, when I left, where everything was just stultified, there was no hope of progress. That was just a dead end. That was just flat-lined. They might continue to have military power, but they weren't going to create wealth. You know, that's one of the big problems with Communism. Once you go through the redistribution of the wealth that has accumulated pre-communism, then what? There is a one-time mobilization when everybody's on board, the new "in" group is suddenly upwardly mobile. After they're there, nothing's going on in those societies. So compared to that, to say nothing of compared to Stalinism with the gulags, millions of people in the gulags, forced collectivization, etc., the change is significant. Where they are now compared to their past is remarkable. The Russian people have a great capacity to surprise. It is remarkable that people in St. Petersburg went in and defeated a handpicked candidate under late communism... There was only one candidate on the ballot, and all you needed was 50% to win, and enough people crossed out the name that the person didn't win. It's so heartening to see that. And seeing these young people, the raw mental and spiritual talent that's in this society, gave me hope. Still does. Still does give me hope.

Q: Well, Bob, why don't we stop at this point, and we'll pick this up at 1995. Where'd you go?

McCARTHY: I went to direct USIA programs for Eastern Europe and the NIS.

DALE V. SLAGHT
Minister Counselor
Moscow (1992-1995)

Mr. Slaght was born in Oregon in 1943. After serving in various capacities on Capitol Hill and in the Department of Commerce, he joined the State Department under the Commerce-State Exchange Program. As expert in commercial and trade policy, Mr. Slaght had assignments as Commercial Attaché and Minister Counselor at US Embassies and Consulates in Uruguay, Panama, Germany, Canada, Soviet Union and Mexico. He also served as Mexico Desk Officer at the Department of Commerce. Mr. Slaght attained the rank of Career Minister. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: You were in Moscow in what, '92? And until when?

SLAGHT: Till the summer of '95. I arrived the summer of '92, and I left the summer of '95.

Q: What was the state of relations between the United States and...we're talking about Soviet Russia, weren't we?

SLAGHT: Yes. That was a big disappointment to me, because when I was assigned the position, of course, I was assigned to the USSR which included Russia and all the other republics, and when I got there, I was in Russia alone, so I missed having responsibility for very interesting places I would have liked to have visited. Ukraine I did go to, but I never got to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in particular.

Relations were pretty good. Yeltsin was in charge of the government. There was a pretty good understanding between our two governments. The Vice-President met every six months with the Russian Prime Minister.

Q: Al Gore.

SLAGHT: That's right, Al Gore. He met with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin every six months either in Moscow or in Washington. We had the leadership of the House, both sides of the House, come every Easter, and the commercial side was very busy. U.S. firms, maybe not unreasonably after the wall came down in the early '90s, believed there were billions to be made in Russia, either through the use of Russian human or natural resources in the country. Russia is a highly educated society: Metallurgists and scientists and mathematicians and computer programmers and, of course, they have oil and gas and diamonds and uranium and titanium out the kazoo. So many U.S. firms saw this as an opportunity to get in early and get in big and make mega bucks. Well, I think only the firms with the deepest pockets made it, and I don't think they made the mega bucks over there. Maybe in the long term they will, but they found working in Russia very, very difficult. The rules, this is a state that had not had any capitalist experience, and the rules of operating were constantly changing, the personalities changed, and, of course, these guys looked to the U.S. Embassy for guidance on what to do and whom to see and what to say, and we were almost as much in the dark as they were. They called on us. They called the ambassador if the U.S. rep was a CEO, and we did our best to guide them. They'd tell us they'd go into meetings with the minister of this or the vice-minister of that and halfway through the conversation, the Russian official would take off his official government hat and put on his

private sector hat, and he says my brother-in-law or my brother is in business out there or up there in Siberia, and he can take care of this problem if you'd work a deal with him. And we had the issue with foreign corruption. We had to deal with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act that prohibits U.S. firms from doing things that other nations can do in terms of greasing the skids with government officials on contracts or things to be done. The relations between the two countries were pretty good at the time, but the pressure on us and the demands on us were considerable. I worked regularly six days a week and sometimes I was in on Sunday afternoons. Very stressful. Then we lost holidays because we'd have Presidents visit us, or Congressional delegations or my own secretary. Very stressful time.

Ambassador Strauss, Robert Strauss, was ambassador when I first arrived. He's a wonderful man. Very interesting, full of anecdotes which he shares with staff. We had a very good relationship. He regaled us once when he made his first call on the KGB. The new head of the intelligence service renamed brought to the meeting a little bag. In the bag, which he gave to Ambassador Strauss, were all the kinds of listening devices that had been implanted in the concrete walls of the embassy building that had been constructed in the end of the '80s and now stood as a vacant, unused facility on the embassy compound because we found out subsequently that it was bugged. Strauss was very supportive of the commercial operation. Anything he could do to help, he would do. Then we had a little bit of time with chargé Collins -- Jim Collins was the chargé before Tom Pickering came. Collins was an excellent chargé, and he was the ambassador after Pickering left. A good man, years in that part of the world, knew the Russian language well. A good man, we got along very well. We lived just two doors down from each other on the compound. A good man.

And then Tom Pickering came. Tom, of course, has a great reputation in the Service. We did some things with him that were useful. The business community was new, of course, not very large, but very interested in having contact with the embassy, so I organized regular once a month breakfast briefing, in my house that Ambassador Pickering would come to and brief the key business leaders about what was going on. I helped establish an American Chamber of Commerce in Russia while I was there and got a real nice award on my departure for that activity. Pickering reminds me of an anecdote that's worth telling. Toward the eighteenth month of my tour there, I hadn't been out of Moscow, I hadn't been out of Russia. Traveled all over Russia, but never out of Russia, and I really needed to get out with my family. So we decided we would go on a cruise over Christmas, we would go home to the States, go over to Miami, get on a boat, and just be served. Out of the winters in Moscow and the lousy service in the system there. So I made these arrangements in the summer and then hoped circumstances would allow me to leave. Well, the closer we got to December, the more talk there was about Secretary Brown bringing a mission over here to Moscow. I knew his staff well. He had been there once before.

Q: He was the Secretary of Commerce.

SLAGHT: Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown. I knew his staff well from other trips, so I was in regular contact with these guys. Is he coming? Is he not coming? What's the story? They didn't know. It was going to be a last minute call. Go ahead, I was told, and make your plans, Dale. You have staff to cover if the Secretary does decide to come. So, I said okay. I went off, had my

home leave, came back, only to find out that Brown had come, and Pickering never forgave me for that. The next time Secretary Brown came to Moscow, he and I met Secretary Brown and the airport, and the first thing out of Tom Pickering's mouth was, "at least Dale is here this time to meet you, Mr. Secretary". My wife, who worked in the personnel office, had regular dealings with Alice Pickering on staff assignments there, and she would razz my wife about, you guys left at the wrong time, didn't you. Anyway, I think Tom Pickering never forgave me for that. He would organize groups of senior officers to go off on driving trips for a week or longer out in the hinterlands. They'd take these vehicles with cans of gasoline strapped to the top, and they'd go off. The stories we'd heard they'd drive way faster than should be driven on those roads. One time one of the cars turned over, and no one was injured or gasoline didn't explode. He always tried to corral me to go on one of those, but I just couldn't see risking my life going on one of those things, so I didn't. He was a good man, but I was glad in July of '95 to be on Delta out of there. It was a very difficult assignment.

Q: Did a businessman, let's say a representative of a major business, would come to you... We really are interested in the Russian market. What do you recommend? What were you seeing as the challenges and the ability of American business?

SLAGHT: The large companies with senior executives knew precisely what they wanted to do when then they got there. They didn't necessarily know how to do it, but they knew what they wanted to do. I remember some Microsystems people coming over from California once, and they had brought a software problem that their software people in Silicon Valley had been unable to solve. They gave it to a group of Russian programmers, and overnight they solved this problem, and the Sun-Microsystems people were blown away. They hired 150 of them to do programming over there for them. Smaller companies were more interested in establishing a relationship with a local firm who would help sell their product. We established a weekly briefing for newcomers, new business-comers to the Russian market to Moscow. Our briefing was carried on CNN. We opened offices in St. Petersburg, in Vladivostok, and in Yekaterinburg, Siberia. A whole series of American Business Centers, ABC, financed by AID, were set up all around Russia and into the former Soviet Union staffed initially by American contractors and later taken over by our local nationals to provide on-the-spot way out in the hinterland counsel, advice and contacts.

Q: This a period when ??? the whole Russian array of businesses and firms and natural resources were being taken over by what was called the Mafia, the Russian people were very good contacts in the government but also were pretty rough in dealing quickly with their own people. Was this so?

SLAGHT: A fellow named Anatoly Chubais, a very capable man, was set up in an office of privatization, and government owned facilities were sold, were auctioned off, to private bidders. This caused undue concern particularly by the Communist Party and former Communist Party members who thought that this was giving up the jewels of the economy to the private sector which in their understanding of the way things work would be difficult for labor and contrary to the interests of the state. He still is, the poor man, he's in the government now. I think he heads their utility sector there. He still has to fight off charges of corruption, charges of favoritism, even though that whole privatization effort took place ten years ago, over ten years ago. I would

say, by and large, had it not been for those privatization efforts, a lot of these firms would have just collapsed. We were told that managers of firms producing thread were told at the beginning of each year in the old regime how much thread and what color they were to produce with no sense of what the demand for that thread was or would be. This went on through all sectors of the economy where someone in Moscow determined how many pairs of pants, how many shoes. Can't work very well.

Q: Were you at all involved in the teaching or training of the capitalistic distribution system at all?

SLAGHT: Insofar as we would deal with Russian small business people and put them in contact with Americans wanting distributors or agents in Russians, I guess we played some minor role. But we didn't offer classes in entrepreneurship. AID was doing a lot of that in the health sector, in the business sector, etc.

Q: What about American firms? As a commercial officer in Saudi Arabia, and we were up against Sharia Laws back in the '50's, but dealing with a country that had it's own legal system which was not compatible with competing with capitalistic problems. How does this work?

SLAGHT: Texaco wanted to do a joint venture arrangement with a Russian petroleum firm, and they felt the only secure way they would have to satisfy their board that the deal struck would be a firm one and satisfy the long-term interest of the Board of Directors of Texaco would be to enter into a production sharing agreement that had been approved by the Duma. Something that had the formal backing of the Russian government on it so no one could say you did this somewhere up in the North Sea or whatever, and this is null and void. Texaco was working on this before we got there in '92, and they were working on it after I left in '95, and to my knowledge, Texaco never got what it wanted out of the Russian government. As far as I know, no deal was ever done. I went up with their staff to the site, up there near the Bering Sea and met with local officials. We went out to the place where the drilling would take place, and some drilling was already going on by the Russian company. I didn't attend this meeting, but they said on an earlier trip up there they had a town meeting with people in the village, and they were explaining to the villagers what benefits, what additional benefits they would have with an American firm up their working. The U.S. firm was saying we're going to paint your school, we're going to do this that and the other thing, and a guy stood up in the back and said why do we need you to paint our buildings? If we need paint we'll just steal it from the company. That was interesting about Russia. There was a sense in Russia that everything belongs to everyone, so you'd go in apartment buildings, and you wouldn't see lights in the hallways. Why wouldn't you see lights in the hallways? Because people would steal the light bulbs and take them to their apartments. It belongs to us. Nice plants put outside in the summertime wouldn't last a day or two. Someone would expropriate them and bring them into their own house or take them out to their dachas in the country. Very interesting place. Culturally, we had a fascinating time, but it was a difficult place to work.

Q: How did you find, and did you ever make contact with the Russian people, social contact?

SLAGHT: Not too much. With my staff yes. We had Russian staff. Luckily, just before we got

there, my predecessor hired four or five people. We were one of the first sections in the embassy allowed to have local staff because our offices were not in the chancellery itself. Remember the case when we had to fire all local staff because we figured most, at least a good percentage, were spies for the KGB. There were about four or five when I got there and left with 20, 25 or so, a very large operation. One incident that maybe history will find interesting. As I said, the senior leadership of the house would come every year, and this one occasion we were asked to provide the person we would control with an evening in a typical Russian house for a meal. I went to my staff and I said look, we have to do this. Any suggestions? I contact him and he was yes, more than delighted to do this. It was for Henry Hyde of Illinois. I went out to his apartment building just to check it out, know where to go. A modest place. I know these poor people worked days getting it cleaned and figuring out what to serve Representative Hyde for a meal, and the day of the event, Hyde cancelled. The day of the event. I was so humiliated to have to call this Russian man and say look, he can't come for whatever reason I made up, I don't know.

Q: This creates a problem.

SLAGHT: I never thought much of Henry Hyde since.

Q: Did you get involved with sort of protecting American business people from getting pressure or look-alike business or hoods or...

SLAGHT: We would give them advice. There was an Amcitt who was a joint partner in a Radisson Hotel in Moscow. Several other partners were involved, including the City of Moscow was a partner. They tried to push him out, the American, and he refused. He lived in the hotel. He would come to receptions in a bullet-proof vest, and they eventually killed him. This was after we left. They killed him in stairs going down to the subway outside the hotel. The Canadians owned a hotel, the Aerostar, with a Russian group. The practice seems to have been once the Russians figured out how to run the business, they tried to muscle the Americans or the westerners out. Force them out, buy them out at a low price and use violence if they had to to get rid of them. Canadians wanted adequate compensation if they were going to sell. Russians eventually took over the property, and I would guess two years later because I was in Ottawa at the time, the Russians flew a plane into Canada for some reason, and the Canadian government seized it and got their money out of that hostage, if you will, hostage with that plane for the Canadian investors. I thought it was great. Good for the Canadians, I said. You know, lots of violence, lots of unfair practices, but again, there was this drive by the west to get in there and get boots on the ground and get established because there were billions of dollars to be made.

Q: What about on the Russian side? Were they competent people or were almost competence type people trying to take over?

SLAGHT: I guess the majority of people we dealt with, certainly the majority of those whom we recommended to the Americans were honest businessmen looking for new ways to earn livings representing American firms, or the products and services of the American firms, but I'm sure there was an equal number of firms that were crooked.

The legislative branch was located in a tall, multi-story white building right across from the U.S.

Embassy compound. In fact, we could walk out on our balcony, off of our living room, and throw a stone and hit the grounds, maybe two stone throws, at the White House, so we had a bird's eye view, if you will, of the developments in 1993. Anyway, a group that included the vice president of Russia, Ruskoy, decided they didn't like Yeltsin's policies and they were going to put a stop to them and turn the country back into more communist-like. They holed up there and others entered, and they demanded this and that from the government which Yeltsin refused, and finally Yeltsin brought tanks in and lobbed from the bridge that's 100 yards from the building, lobbed missiles in the building, which caught fire. People that could get out got out and they surrendered. They were tried and convicted. The firing sent us into the underground there at the embassy. Underneath the playing field is a gymnasium in Moscow. We all had to go inside the gym. We slept there I think for two nights, maybe three. We had TV access, and CNN was on, and you could see the tanks shoot and then a bit later feel the thud of the tank shell exploding. Toward the end they all tried to get out. The whole White House area including the American compound was surrounded by Russian army troops. To get in to see us, you needed to be escorted. One of us had to go and tell the troops yes, this guy can come in. We had a visit from our pastor of our church and a group from our church in Virginia who was trying to establish a relationship with the Central Baptist Church in Moscow, and they came over during this thing. The pastor, now retired, I see him now and then since he's still active in the church, still talks about that event as if it were one of the highlights of his life. There were snipers. There are tall buildings around the compound, and there were snipers who shot at Americans going between buildings. One Marine was shot in the neck. We had a good friend who was our younger son's soccer coach who got caught in the waiting area where there had been Marines but had been withdrawn, and she had to scurry in under cover. There was more excitement than anybody wanted.

Q: I watched it from an odd position. I watched it on Russian TV...

SLAGHT: Where were you?

Q: In Bishkek in Turkestan. Everybody was shaking their heads. I was there on a USIA contract. During the time you were there when you left if '96

SLAGHT: '95

Q: In '95. What did you think of Russia from the commercial side?

SLAGHT: When we arrived, there was very little gasoline to be found. A guy on the back of this truck on the road would be selling it. That's the only way you could get it. Finally, the embassy would have a big truck come in, and the call would be made in the morning, gasoline's going to be here, bring your cars in. So, you'd have to go out and bring in your Gerry cans to be filled with gasoline. There was one what we would call a supermarket run by the Finnish. Many people would buy their produce and their meats from Stockman's Department Store in Helsinki and have their purchases shipped to them. My wife would pay the bill every month, and pretty soon, at some point they sent her a letter and said look, you have excess amount in the account. What do you want to do with this account? She said, well, just send me cheese. We got cheese. She had no idea -- this was going on without my knowledge, I confess -- we got a shipment of cheese

that was close to 50 pounds, 50 pounds of cheese, and we had to give the stuff away. We froze what we could and we put it in our freezer, and we'd have to give it away. She was buying more and paying beyond what the bill was. So we'd get eggs and milk and cheese and other things from Finland because it wasn't available locally. Toward when we left, there were department stores open and a few good restaurants. McDonald's was there, but there were no other western style restaurants in town when we arrived. When we left, there were several, and now I understand you don't lack for anything in Moscow for food or anything. It's come a long way. I have a lot of hope for Russia. Russian people are wonderful, wonderful people. I have a lot of respect for the suffering that they have done over the years and the ability to muddle through, to hang on desperately.

Q: They say Moscow's one thing, but you go 20 miles out and you're back in the 16th century.

SLAGHT: You're absolutely right. My wife's an artist, and we have a picture on our living room wall that she painted from a photo that I took an hour from Moscow. I'm not going to remember the village we passed through where, one hour from Moscow, where a woman in a town of, I would guess 50,000, she was drawing water from a well. Downtown. They had no indoor plumbing. Drawing water from a well. We know for a fact telephones in these towns were not very common. You get a call a guy that runs a little store, and the owner sends someone down to your house to tell you you got a call. Yet we visited military facilities, a military museum in one case, where they had the Sputniks and military technology of this kind and the other that was every bit as good as ours, on the military side. The people may not have had shoes, but they had a first class military establishment. First class. And a first class space program.

WILLIAM PRIMOSCH
Assistant to Coordinator for Assistance Programs for the Former Soviet
Union States (NIS)
Washington, DC (1993-1994)

Will Primosch was born and raised in Ohio and attended the University of Notre Dame and George Washington University. He served in the US Army and entered the Foreign Service in 1975. His assignments abroad included Belgrade, Bangkok and London. In 2001 Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Mr. Primosch.

PRIMOSCH: Yes, I looked around a little bit. I ended up working for Tom Simons, who was a former ambassador to Poland and then was a coordinator for our assistance programs for the former Soviet Union, that is, Russia, the Ukraine, and the other New Independent States (NIS). That proved to be interesting. I took several trips to Moscow and to other countries in the region. We had at that time a huge aid program for Russia and the NIS. I think that when the program started, \$800-900 million a year was going to Russia and all told almost \$2 billion a year for all the NIS, mainly for technical assistance, although there was some commodity assistance that we gave to certain countries. For example, Armenia and Georgia right after they became independent had no access to energy. The Russians had given them subsidized oil and gas as long as they were part of the Soviet Union. They couldn't pay for Russian energy at market

prices. They had no hard currency exports. The Russians cut them off. People there, particularly in Armenia, would have froze to death had the U.S. not provided everyone in Yerevan, the capital, with a space heater and kerosene oil to get through the winters. The people in Georgia received a lot of fuel assistance too as well as food assistance.

It was a real challenge to try to provide political direction to these programs, which were carried out mainly through the AID. I think the programs all had good intentions. But a lot of the assistance was, looking back, not very effective. Either the governments weren't ready for it or it was delivered in a way that didn't take into account the political realities.

Q: There was such turmoil there that it would have been almost impossible to have a well reasoned, rational program. There wasn't anything well reasoned or rational on the other side to absorb it.

PRIMOSCH: I think the aid programs generally had a sound rationale. There were some elements and some individuals who were capable of using the assistance. For those there was a lot of good that came out of it. One of the things that AID did very quickly, within two to three years after the Soviet Union fell apart and a new more private market-oriented government come in, was to privatize Russian state enterprises. AID moved very quickly and spent a few hundred million dollars within a year's time to provide technical assistance on privatization. They did it through a voucher system. Millions of vouchers were printed. The idea was to give all Russian citizens and workers a voucher that they could feel that when the enterprise was sold they would have a stake in it as a shareholder. As it turns out, the big Party bosses took over many of these companies and still run them. So while the privatization occurred quickly, you never really had a stockholder-based private enterprise develop. You certainly didn't have the free-market culture develop. Nonetheless, it helped to get Russia get over that hump quickly. So while not perfect, at least it laid the groundwork for the future. It was very effective in that sense.

Another notable example I remember was, in Moscow we visited a group of teachers who were going to the United States to participate in a curriculum development program at an American college. They had been recruited from all over Russia. They were going to a college someplace in New England for the summer to try to develop a civics curriculum for Russian schools, one based on more democratic principles and a more objective look at Russian history. That was a very good use of money. We talked with the teachers who were participating and they were all delighted to be part of the program. They seemed so sincere and had such a strong feeling and desire that they wanted to help Russia make that transition and they wanted to be a part of that. So, those were a couple of examples where I believe the aid programs made a difference.

Q: How did you find working with this dealing with the Bureau of European Affairs and the old Soviet structure within the State Department, the SOV group? They were having to reinvent their own representation.

PRIMOSCH: I didn't find that to be an issue. I knew some of them from my earlier assignments. I had worked in the European Bureau for many years. At that time, the new Russia team was part of what was called the Office of the Coordinator for Former Soviet Union. Jim Collins was the director. Later he went out to Moscow as the Ambassador. Tom Pickering was the ambassador to

Moscow at the time I was working in the aid coordination office.. I don't think that coordination with the Russian affairs office was a problem. The bigger issue had to do with trying to get a handle on AID. The AID and State Department people are very similar going into the system, but they have a very different culture at AID. I found AID to be very bureaucratic even by State Department standards. We had a lot of bureaucratic friction between our office in the State Department and AID trying to give the assistance programs overall political direction. It's such a cumbersome process to start a new AID program. To develop a technical assistance team, they have to put out bids. It's a very cumbersome paperwork process to get proposals. They have to be evaluated as well as the credentials of the experts. Then the contractor would send "experts" to the field, and some of them weren't all that qualified. A lot of the people assigned had no foreign experience at all. They were only experts in a particular area. So, I think to the extent that there was a friction and a clash, it was more with the State and the AID culture and their sense of not wanting to accept any kind of political direction or guidance. They really needed it because they didn't in many cases understand what they were getting into.

Q: Were there the equivalent of bull sessions or staff meetings? Here is a system we've been opposing for more than 30 years and it falls apart and instead of trying to stick it to them, we're trying to help. There must have been an awful lot of discussion among our own people, including you, as to what the hell was happening and what could be done.

PRIMOSCH: At the time, there was great expectation that both the Russian government and the Russian people and even Russian businesses really wanted to change and that they would readily receive our assistance and follow what we thought was a very practical and logical course for transforming and transitioning their government and economy. We underestimated the challenge at all levels even within the State Department and certainly within AID, which had overblown expectations of what they could achieve, how difficult it would be and how entrenched certain interests in the old economic systems were. The corruption element became very quickly embedded in the new system and prevented change.

Q: There were all sorts of missions and various universities and think tanks going out there as so-called experts. They talked a great game, but when coming up against it, it really wasn't very helpful, was it?

PRIMOSCH: The bottom line is, no, it wasn't. The changes didn't occur that we had proposed and that we were paying people to try to achieve. This is probably not unique to Russia. There are probably a lot of AID people who went to Africa 25-30 years ago who thought Africa would look a lot different today than it does now. There was a real lack of appreciation of the difficulties in promoting change in the former communist states. There was also a lack of expertise. Certainly AID didn't have any expertise in the former Soviet Union. Our State Department did, but technical assistance is not the kind of thing even we were doing years ago. Perhaps these programs had to be tried. But they should have been reassessed more quickly as to their effectiveness and readjusted.

Q: You were with Tom Simons from '93 to when?

PRIMOSCH: '93 to '94.

RICHARD M. MILES
Deputy Chief of Mission
Moscow (1993-1996)

Ambassador Miles was born in Arkansas in 1937. He earned an associate degree from Bakersfield College, Bachelor's degree from University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1966. His overseas posts include Oslo, Belgrade, Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia. Ambassador Miles was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Well then, you left there when? In 1990-what?

MILES: December of 1993. I planned to stay for the whole three years of a normal diplomatic tour, which would have put me out of there in 1995 but I was called in the fall of '93 by Deputy Secretary Talbott, who I have known forever. He was a young *Time* magazine correspondent in Belgrade when I was on my second assignment in the Foreign Service, so we have been friends for a very long time, and he said, "We're sending Tom Pickering, one of our super star ambassadors, to Moscow but Pickering has never even visited Russia before, let alone served there, and we need someone who has Russian and some experience with the Soviet system to go and be his deputy, because we're calling the present deputy, Jim Collins, back to Washington. We're setting up a new shop in the Department to deal with the former Soviet Union and it will be under the Secretary's office and I want Jim to run that, so we're a little desperate. We want you to go to Moscow."

Well, of course I didn't want to go to Moscow. It's a lot of fun being ambassador, even in a benighted place like Azerbaijan. In fact, I was having a hell of a time in Azerbaijan; I thoroughly enjoyed it and had a really good team, and I told Strobe I didn't really want to go and I then reeled off the names of four or five people that I thought would be Jim Dandy as deputy up there. Now Strobe is a very straight shooter; he isn't a manipulator. He's a very honest person, and by golly, he said okay, let me contact these people. And he did. He contacted every one of them, and either they were going to retire or they were ill or their wife was ill or they didn't want to go back to Moscow because of the kids, or, you know, there was always some reason why they couldn't do it. And so he leaned on me again and I gave him some more names; I really didn't want to go. And he tried those names, which was a shorter list, about three people I think, and none of them wanted to do it either. So he came back to me and I said, "Okay, let me go up and talk to Pickering and then I'll give you a definitive answer after that." I could have been ordered up there but I could also have resigned and actually I think he would have let me stay in Azerbaijan if that's what I really wanted to do, so the choice was mine.

I went up to see Pickering and we got along alright. We have absolute totally different personalities. Being around him is like being around a 2000 watt light bulb and being around me is probably like being around a 75 watt light bulb. I mean, there is just a big difference in our

energy levels and our intellect and our creative imagination and our contacts in Washington and so on. I mean, he is in a different league. He is in the Dick Holbrooke, Stu Eizenstat, Frank Wisner league and I am not. I mean, that's just the way it is.

Well anyhow, we got along alright and I said, "Okay, I'll do it, but I want to send you—that is Pickering—a written message in which I lay out some things that I want to be perfectly clear with you about and I'd rather do it in writing so we know what we're talking about." So I went back and I wrote what became known around the Embassy in Moscow, although it was a private communication between him and me, and it's worth recounting, I think. I sent him a written message saying, I will agree to come but I want you to understand that you and I have quite different personalities. And I have a couple of conditions. I want to be able to bring my secretary. At that point my secretary, Linda Price, had been with me for several years and DCMs don't get to bring their secretaries, as you know, only ambassadors do—but I want to bring my secretary. Second, I want to be able to live off compound. I hate the idea of these embassy compounds and the deputy's house was on the embassy compound. The security people kept a careful eye on the Russian guests, well, on all non-Embassy guests, actually. They almost inspected the contents of their pockets and everything before they could enter the compound. A guard had to escort each visitor from the compound gate to my townhouse and back out again. It was really awful, and I said I want to be able to live off the compound—we will have to find a decent apartment somewhere out in town. And third, I am not a workaholic. I don't intend to work Saturdays and Sundays unless there is a real crisis or a VIP visitor, and every once in a while I am going to disappear early because my wife and I like to do the opera and the ballet and these things start at 7:00 sharp in Moscow and you can't get in after the curtain goes up; they are really strict about that. So I'll be leaving at 6:15 every once in a while. And he wrote back saying that all this was acceptable and he understood perfectly. I mean, most people would not be as mature as Pickering and as wise as Pickering and would have said to Deputy Secretary Talbott, "Tell this arrogant little shit to go take a walk. I'll find my own deputy."

Well, I did all those things that I said I was going to do with the exception of finding a place off campus, and the reason for that was this. Sharon and I spent a lot of time looking. The General Services Office was totally hopeless in finding us an adequate place. They didn't have a clue what a deputy's place should look like so we did it ourselves. And we found a number of places that could have worked. There were some that were actually too luxurious and, you know, you would have been laughed out of the Foreign Service by taking it. But what would have been practical would have been to knock two or three nice apartments together, tear down some walls and so on. This can all be done rather rapidly actually, it's no big deal, but it would cost a tidy bit of money. And then you'd have that place for eternity; I mean, you could have that a hundred years or so, whatever. So it wasn't an impractical idea at all but the catch is that the rents in Moscow had begun to skyrocket. And just as we were about to decide on a place, the USAID Mission Chief in Moscow, a very decent fellow, had come under fire for having spent several tens of thousands of dollars on remodeling a place for himself and for paying a fairly large rent on it. Well, he had done exactly what I was getting ready to do and anyone who knows Moscow at that time would have felt that it was all perfectly justified. But to read about it in *The Washington Post*, and especially if you are a congressman reading about it in *The Washington Post*, the only word that would come to mind would be outrage and abuse of authority, waste of Government money, and so on, blah, blah, blah. And so the timing was just unfortunate and so

we never did move off the compound. We did a hell of a lot of entertaining in Moscow but we did it in the tiny deputy's house. I don't know if you've been in there or not.

Q: No, I haven't.

MILES: I mean, it's very small. And we did it but we could never have more than about 50 people for a cocktail party and you could never have more than 10 or so for a sit-down dinner. And sometimes in the summer we could expand out a little bit because it did have a tiny bit of ground to the side of it which at least enabled you to have an outdoor barbecue or whatever. Or if we were really desperate we could do a split-level cocktail party or a buffet dinner where you would have people on two different levels of the house. It had a finished basement and so you could use the first floor for a musical evening or drinks and use the floor below for dinner. Well, you can see this required a lot of juggling things about on the part of Sharon and the household staff, not to mention on the part of the guests. And so it just was a constant bother the whole time we were there. We just kept seeing opportunities that were wasted because we didn't have space enough to do it. Now Pickering and his wife had Spaso House, which is perfectly big enough for anything that an ambassador would want to do, and they did a lot of entertaining and they were good enough to pick up some of our suggestions for things that they might do. But it was always a disappointment to me that I wasn't able to do what I wanted to do and move into a decent sized place in Moscow and really cut a swath in that town the way Sharon and I had done in Leningrad.

I'd like to mention just one of the representational opportunities that we did seize to everyone's advantage. It shows what one can do in a place like Moscow. I had read Marie "Missie" Vassiltchikov's book, "Berlin Diaries: 1940-1945" and had enjoyed the book very much. Then I read in a Moscow newspaper that Missie's brother, Prince George Vassiltchikov, was in Moscow to promote the book's newly published Russian translation. Missie had lived and died in England so I phoned the British Embassy to ask whether or not they were doing anything in connection with this. "No," they said. Ditto from the publisher. So I told the publisher that I would like to have a small reception for George Vassiltchikov and I asked the publisher to come up with a guest list. Well, the result was a very nice event, virtually none of the guests had ever been at an American or any other foreign embassy event, and all this was received very nicely in Moscow cultural circles. And, as a bonus, George Vassiltchikov and I became good friends. I believe that he is the most witty and entertaining correspondent I have ever had. He and Ambassador Pickering even carried on a long correspondence. My daughter and I even visited him in London. A wonderful man.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MILES: Well, it was almost three years. Went in December of '93, right after the events at the Russian White House, you remember, with the tanks firing on the beleaguered parliamentary deputies in there and Yeltsin's rise to power and so on. So we arrived in December of '93 and there was still some evidence of the crisis which had occurred so recently. We could look out of our townhouse windows and see the smoke blackened floors of the parliament where fires had been started by the shelling and all. So, it was palpable; I mean, you could almost smell the gun smoke and smoke of burning papers in the air. And then we stayed until summer of 1996. So it

was almost a full three years.

Q: How would you describe the staff of the Embassy and how it operated?

MILES: Well, it was huge, of course. If you include the Consulates General in Vladivostok, Yekaterinburg and St. Petersburg, and you included the Foreign Service Nationals and the third country nationals and the American officers, you're talking about a thousand people. And so, for the State Department, that puts it into the realm of one of our larger embassies. Mexico City, Tokyo, Paris, London maybe; Cairo certainly. Before Iraq, Moscow would have been one of our five largest embassies. So managing it took some time and effort and that is largely what DCMs do, as you know—you are sort of a mayor or a city manager of a small town which is represented by all these people. And so you get into everything from labor disputes to, quite literally, dog poop on the sidewalks. It was just an incredible range of things. And, of course, there are foreign policy aspects to the job also.

Pickering liked to travel and so he was away a lot, in Russia, all over Russia, and he would travel abroad on occasion and he was back in America on occasion. I counted it up once and I was actually Chargé for about six months total and so that was a lot of fun. I have only two regrets about my foreign service career. One is that I didn't curtail a couple of people back to Washington—but only a couple. You know, you can always see that in hindsight. And the other regret, frankly, was that I was never able to be Ambassador to Russia. I would have loved to have been Ambassador to Russia. But being Chargé is certainly the next best thing and for a diplomat, especially for an American diplomat, there literally is no greater thrill than driving up to the Kremlin in the official car with the flag flying from the fender, and I was able to do that on occasion as Chargé and it was always very emotional for me. It's like when you are overseas and you hear the *Star Spangled Banner* play; it sends a special thrill down your spine, just something about the time and the place which is unique and very exciting. So, to be able to do that, to not only help Pickering run what I thought was a very good Mission at that time, but also to be Chargé for extended periods of time was a great thrill and one of the high points of my career.

Q: How did you deal with the Foreign Service Nationals? Because we've gone through the time when we have replaced almost all of them with Americans and all. What was the situation when you were there?

MILES: Well, when you say we replaced the Foreign Service Nationals, it was not voluntary. We had to replace them. As you remember in, I think it was October of '87, six months or so before I first went to Leningrad as consul general, we had thrown out a number of what we believed to be KGB and GRU spies from the United States and in retaliation, the Soviets—it was the Soviet government at that time—took away all our FSNs. These were the personnel who were supplied through UPDK [*Upravleniye po Obsluzhivaniyu Diplomaticheskogo Korpusa*], the official agency of the Foreign Ministry for dealing with diplomatic establishments, which provided all the local Embassy employees and also the maids and the private drivers and the nannies that many people hired. And so literally overnight, all of those FSNs were withdrawn. In some cases, of course, good riddance, but in most cases, not. On balance, these were very intelligent and capable employees.

All the FSNs had to report to their handlers in those days and we all understood that; our FSNs understood it and many of them just did it in a perfunctory way. Others were career officers of the KGB or the GRU, and they would try to learn what they could from your actions and behavior. Sometimes they would try to get to know you to discover your weaknesses or somebody else's weaknesses; in other words, they were regular espionage agents. Others just wanted to do their job and get their salary and develop their family life and so it was really, it was very sad for many of these people that they were forced to leave our service. I think it's almost always the case that our Foreign Service Nationals in the Soviet Union developed divided loyalties. In my experience, many of those that had worked for us for a while came to like the United States and its people and its ways as best as they understood them. Many of them had been able to go to America for training programs, they had gotten to know Americans on a more personal basis than almost any other Soviet citizen was allowed to.

Anyhow, all of a sudden we had to drive ourselves around, we had to go pick up our mail at the train station or the airport and then take our mail out, including diplomatic bags and things; we had to sweep up the floors and empty the trash and we had to feed ourselves in the cafeteria. And at home, we often had to find a new nanny or a new maid or whatever on a personal basis. I mean, it was pretty disruptive. And so everyone made do. Everyone basically pitched in on a schedule basis: you had a schedule worked out where this afternoon would be your time to go down and sweep the cafeteria floor or mop it or this would be your time to go out to the train station and pick up regular mail or non-classified mail and haul it back. And even the Ambassador, the DCM and the Consul General would pitch in from time to time to show that they were good guys. They really couldn't be bound to a schedule because of the kind of work they did but we would do it from time to time. And in Leningrad Sharon decided she would sign up for the regular schedule as a worker, She was a part-time employee of the Consular Section. So she also agreed that she would do her regular stint and so here she is, five feet tall, weighing about 100 pounds, and she would go out to the train station, including in the dead of winter, and haul in these enormous mail bags. I mean, you talk about mail you think well okay, big deal, you go out to the post office box and you pick up eight ounces of mail and haul it back; I am talking about hundreds of pounds of mail. I mean, it's not just mail that comes in, it's packages from J. C. Penny or Sears or whatever. It's heavy as hell and you have to haul it out of that mail car. It was incredible. Haul it out of the mail car; haul it down to the customs guys. Hopefully in the winter you could slide it along the snow and ice and then the customs officer would say, okay, along with it, and then you had to haul it down to the van, driven by another embassy officer who would help you schlep it into the van and take it back to the Embassy or the Consulate General. And in the Consulate General we knew when the mail was coming in and so everyone—

Q: This is tape seven, side one, with Dick Miles. You were saying when you knew that the mail was coming in?

MILES: Right. It came in once a week on a scheduled basis and so the word would be spread around by phone when the mail was actually ready to be distributed and everyone would then go down to the basement of the Consulate General and we would just take big bunches of mail out of these bags and there were pigeon holes, slots like an old fashioned post office box with a section name. You knew which section a person worked in and so you would put the mail in that

section. There was a nice atmosphere there, lots of joking about it, and if some guy, especially a bachelor, would get a bunch of Victoria's Secret catalogs, you can imagine the joking about that and so on. I think while the adversity was something of a burden—we could probably have better done without it, but it did bring people together.

Well anyhow, a few years later we were able to work it out with the Soviet or the Russian government—I forget the time, exactly—so that the FSNs were able to come back. And so when I mentioned earlier the 1000 employees of the U.S. foreign establishments in Russia in 1993, of that 1000, probably a good 800 or more were in fact Foreign Service Nationals. There were a few third-country nationals—for example, a British citizen or an Australian citizen married to someone else or whatever—and so they would work for us as well. But basically the local employees were the Russians who worked there and they performed quite competent work and they got a decent salary for it. There were always difficulties which we then had to deal with and we had, of course, our administrative section and the personnel people, but often it would percolate to the DCM level and occasionally to the level of the Ambassador and so this did take a good deal of time. Some problems were small but some were big and intractable. For example, the money situation in Russia was very volatile at that time. There was inflation, hyper-inflation even; there were still shortages and so people needed every little bit of cash which they could get. There was constant difficulty over whether the local employees got rubles or if dollars translated into rubles; what would be the formula. There was difficulty over off-shore savings accounts for retirement purposes; there were difficulties over whether they paid their taxes. In the new Russia, the old UPDK monopoly on personnel and services was quickly breaking down so what role did the embassy have in declaring who we did hire to the Russian authorities and reporting their earnings to the authorities. There was just one difficulty after another.

I remember one distinct problem that came up. There was a problem with the food in the cafeteria and we had to charge a little bit more than what it actually cost because we had to pay the cooks and the clean up people out of the “profits” of the cafeteria operation. Well, that meant that prices were actually probably a little bit higher than they would be in a cafeteria in the United States because we were buying a lot of our stuff from the military commissaries which charged a markup, and also you had to pay shipment costs from Germany to Moscow and so it meant that if the Moscow Embassy Commissary would buy, let's say, a pound of hamburger in the commissary in Frankfurt, Germany, for two dollars a pound, in Moscow the same exact pound of hamburger would cost you three dollars. And so we had to charge more for hamburgers and the other food in the cafeteria and this proved to be a burden for the FSNs and so we came up with a system of subsidies through chits. We would give the FSNs a chit which they could use in lieu of cash to help subsidize the cost of the meal.

Well, this all took working out and more time than any human being would care to spend on it unless you were an expert at these things. Anyhow, I knew it was part of the job, I didn't resent doing it, but it was certainly not something which I would have volunteered for particularly.

Q: How would you describe, during this '93 to '96 period, sort of the political atmosphere in Russia at the time?

MILES: It was a time of transition, of course, from the Gorbachev period to the Yeltsin period.

Gorbachev always had tried to conduct his reforms in the context of the Communist Party and Yeltsin basically spat on the Communist Party and wanted nothing more than to do away with it. Since every single person in the former Soviet Union had some form of an intimate experience with the communist system, that was one hell of a transition. People fought in the communist bureaucratic way. I say communist; I mean, I'm not trying to define classical communism or anything, I'm just trying to describe the way life was in the Soviet Union in, let's say, the period following the XX Party Congress to the '60s and '70s and '80s and on into the '90s, the early '90s. For many people, certainly for people in authority, your direction and your discipline was through the Party. You could be transferred, promoted or disciplined through the Party. You might ignore it and many people did ignore it, but it was part of everyone's life. People had to go to Party meetings; they had to accept Party discipline. You had to put in your time on certain projects—for example, special Saturdays called "*Leninsky subbotniks*", where you would go out on a certain Saturday and you would clean up the grounds around your building, plant trees or whatever, and so on. You had to participate in the various parades—May Day, November 7, etc. I mean, the communist system was certainly pervasive and if you lived in the Soviet Union in 1993, it had touched your life and that was true for every single man, woman, child and dog in Russia from the age of let us say six or seven up.

When you were a young person you became a member of the Pioneers; when you were a little older you became a member of the Komsomol [*Kommunisticheskiy soyuz molodezhi*], the Communist youth organization. Every child was in the Pioneers pretty much, not quite everybody was in the Komsomol, and then anyone who wanted any kind of a professional life or wanted to get ahead in some way would join the Communist Party. And for the military and the police, the KGB, the GRU and so on it was virtually 100 percent; for other professions it would depend on what you were doing and how ambitious you were in doing it, whether you joined the Party. But the Party and Party life pervaded everything. Now, of course, people knew that a transition was in progress. I met various people who had held the highest positions in the communist system, Politburo members, some of them. Yet I have never met a single person during that period—1993-1996—who really defended the communist system with the exception of some of the older people whose lives had been absolutely and totally disrupted by the collapse of the Soviet Union, people who had had a decent pension under the old system or who had had a place in society, a recognized place in society. The Soviet system, like all systems had its share of nepotism and favoritism, but in a certain sense it was a meritocracy. All of a sudden that was destroyed, absolutely and totally destroyed. And so I met any number of older people who were indeed nostalgic for the old days and, in fact, who could blame them? They had lost their place in life, they lost the respect which the society gave to them and which they basked in, of course, and they lost their savings and their modest pensions.

It's kind of an odd thing about the former Soviet Union but actually the percentage of homeowners or apartment owners in the former Soviet Union was probably higher than it was in the United States. An apartment or a small house was one of the very few substantive things that you could actually buy in the old Soviet system. Now in many cases you didn't buy it, because it belonged to your trade union or to your company and it was provided to you for life. You might pay fifteen or twenty dollars a month maintenance fee or something but hardly more than that and for that you would get a very small apartment but decent enough and one that you could live in. Well, all of a sudden that system was gone too and so in the case where people had actually

bought their apartment they were generally alright, but in cases where they didn't, their situation would depend on whether their trade union or their factory management, which was itself struggling with the transitional period, was astute enough or cared enough to take legal ownership of the building and sell the apartments back to the people that lived in them. Sometimes the organization that had nominally "owned" the building would have to perform a bureaucratic shell game and acquire some kind of legal title to that apartment or building. And in many, many cases speculators swarmed in who believed they had enough connections or a little bit of cash or out and out muscle, bribery and corruption, and they would buy the building out from under the people who lived in it. And so people who had lived in an apartment all their lives who were now retired maybe, unable to get a job now, found themselves basically out on the street. And this kind of thing still goes on, to tell you the truth, but at that time this was rampant and so you can imagine the effect on society. People's morale was—well, some people were excited by the new prospects, some people became extraordinarily wealthy during that period of time, other people though were devastated, absolutely devastated; it was an extremely mixed picture.

Of course, diplomats tend to deal with the more successful members of society, the people that are in power or who are running successful businesses. In the cultural sphere life was more difficult because the cultural managers and the artists and performers had a very hard time making the adjustment from a system of state subsidies to a system in which they had to somehow make their way on their own. Some of the Russians in the cultural sphere actually caught on to the new ways quite rapidly, much more so than I would have thought possible. Even in the last days of the Soviet Union, commercial sponsors would be accepted for musical performances or plays or whatever. At the beginning of a performance the announcer would come out and say we appreciate very much the sponsorship of the Lukoil Company or whatever and people would applaud that as a desirable and valued thing. But many, many times in those days in the early '90s, Sharon and I met with performing artists or cultural workers of one sort or the other who basically said they had no income and they were sort of squatting in their apartment hoping that the roof would not be sold out from over their heads. And they were doing their jobs or performing music or painting just because of their love for it and because they didn't have anything else to do, and hoping for some miracle that would occur and save them and their company, their stock company or their repertory company, and enable everything to go on in some semblance of the way it had gone on before. That is all changed now and many of the state subsidies have been reinstated. The business of corporate sponsorship has caught on big time and people understand now, where they didn't always understand in '92-'93, that in essence everything has to be paid for. And so people now expect to pay a higher price when they go to the Bolshoi or when they go to an ordinary musical concert. They expect to pay something for the ticket where before the ticket either cost virtually nothing, like a dollar or a dollar-and-a-half, or you were given your ticket by your trade union or whatever and so you didn't pay for culture in a sense. But now people understand that you have to do that.

And so in all these various ways people are making the adjustment, but it's still difficult in the year 2007 for a lot of people in the former Soviet Union. And in 1992 to 1993 it was damned difficult. And I'm quite sure that there were people who starved to death, whose children starved to death or who died prematurely because they couldn't get adequate medical care, they couldn't come up with the bribes to pay the doctors to look at them, or because the equipment at the

hospital was broken or the pharmaceutical delivery system had broken down. There were no pharmaceuticals to be had within the old system—there was no penicillin or no pain killers or whatever—only under the counter. And if you can just imagine a society that was basically turned pretty much inside out, almost like Germany or Japan after World War II, then that is what happened to the former Soviet Union. To paraphrase Dickens, it was not the best of times, but it was an exciting time for some and it really was the worst of times for ordinary Soviet citizens, for Russian citizens.

But it was exciting to be a diplomat there and to try to do that good which you could and to try to befriend people and encourage them, the good people, in these various spheres of life—everything from private enterprise people who were trying to make do in a market system which they didn't entirely understand to people who were still in state institutions, like the theater, who had lost their means of support and who had no idea how they were going to keep their institutions intact.

I'll give you one good example of the way in which the old and new systems sometimes clashed. It's a good example because it demonstrates both the good and the bad sides of the problem. In the late '80s and early '90s, the U.S. government had sold a considerable quantity of surplus grain to the Soviet Union and to Russia. And the way the Soviet and then the Russian governments had paid for it was to set up a trust fund into which the money would be paid by the Russian side, and the trust fund would then be drawn down by a Joint Commission chaired by the DCM of the American Embassy—that would be me—and by a high-ranking official of the Russian Ministry of Agriculture, and both sides would have representatives from the governmental institutions, in my case the Embassy Agricultural Attaché and in their case another official from the Ministry of Agriculture. There were also representatives of non-governmental organizations like Land of Lakes or the Winrock Foundation on our side; on their side, the Orthodox Church and there was another NGO on their side, I forget what it was exactly. And this commission then rented a small space for a secretariat staff, hired a few Russians to man it, and went into business. The staff would accept applications from entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector, and that could be anybody from a small farmer who just wanted to be able to plant seed potatoes to a businessman who wanted to start a brewery.

The Secretariat would do its examination of the proposed projects and would recommend action to the Commission. We would make loans of up to \$500,000—I don't know if I mentioned the amount of money we had at our disposal. It was \$40 million that we had accumulated in this fund—we would make loans of up to \$500,000 to an individual entrepreneur and the money would be paid back over a period of 10 years at a very low rate of interest. It would be paid back not to the trust fund, which was designed to go out of business, but rather it would go back to the local political authorities; this was to get their interest and keep them supportive. The repayment money could be used for yet another project like paving a road or digging a well or improving the conditions in a local orphanage or whatever. And the Commission approved that repayment project as well.

Well, I thought it was a wonderful program and it worked beautifully for about the first year that I was there and then there was a kind of a palace revolution on the Russian side. The former Russian co-chairman, a very decent fellow who had been a high-ranking official in the Ministry

of Agriculture, was ousted and a Stalinist type of individual was put in his place and it became quite clear that he wanted control over all the projects. He wanted all the projects to go first through the Ministry of Agriculture for its vetting and its approval and then for the documents to be brought to the Commission for rubber stamping. And he wanted to replace all of the Russian employees in the little secretariat that we had with his own protégés.

Well, that was unacceptable to me and to the American side and so many a battle was fought over these issues, I can assure you of that. And I once told Ambassador Pickering, I said, “You know, Ambassadors often wonder what their DCMs actually do. Let me tell you what I do in this case. I keep you away from all these difficulties on the Agricultural Commission.”

I fought that fight almost the entire time I was there. I felt the best thing to do with that dreadful fellow across the table from me was to get rid of this money as fast as possible and under the best conditions we could arrange, and so we began approving larger loans and more loans, even some marginal ones that we might not have done if we had had the old group in power. And when I left I think the trust fund was down to about \$800 or \$900 thousand and I told my successor when I briefed him, I said, “Look, let me just warn you about these guys on the other side of the table there when it comes to this bi-national agricultural commission. I mean, they will slash your throat in a minute and you won’t even know it until you shake your head. So my advice to you is to continue doing what I have been doing and just get rid of this money as fast as possible, declare victory and close the Commission down.” And that is what he did.

Q: I’m trying to think now, when you got there in ’93, where stood Yeltsin and where stood Gorbachev?

MILES: Gorbachev was out already and Yeltsin was in, although political events were still happening at about that time. It may have been necessary because the system needed some shock treatment and Yeltsin delivered that shock treatment. Earlier, Yeltsin had certainly dealt with Gorbachev in a brusque manner. I remember watching a political meeting on the TV down in Baku. Yeltsin had the floor and Gorbachev had yielded the floor, as I recall, to him and was still trying to make some point and Yeltsin was quite rude in dismissing him, almost like an errant pupil, something like that. I don’t recall exactly the timing of these things but it was quite clear that Yeltsin felt that he needed to humiliate Gorbachev publicly and to show that Gorbachev’s way was the old way and it was now over, and his leadership, and Yeltsin’s style of leadership was the new way. And that message got through, no question about it.

Q: How did we view Yeltsin? Because during the early Gorbachev period—we had shunned Yeltsin and, you know, played him up as a drunk and sort of a buffoon and all. When you got there, how were we—in the first place, how had he been viewed from Baku while you were there? You know, what were you getting on the feeling about Yeltsin, and then when you got there, how was he treated?

MILES: People in Azerbaijan were very much interested, of course, in the power struggle in Russia and in the future development of Russian society. But, unlike the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh or the situation with regard to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Russians had not played a significant role in Azerbaijani politics or developments. Maybe they were too distracted

and they had too much else on their plate. In the very early days, back in '89, '90, when the Soviet Union was beginning its decline, its collapse, some Russian military forces engaged in and around Nagorno Karabakh—sometimes on the part of the Armenian side, sometimes on the part of the Azeri side, and Russian troops and even commanders were in fact selling their vehicles, their weapons, their ammunition, their hand grenades to anybody who would buy them. I mean, they didn't care who it was, they weren't ideological about it. But other than that the Russians never really intervened in the Nagorno-Karabakh affair the way they did intervene in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. And they never demonstrated any significant military interest in Nagorno Karabakh after that. There were difficulties over the Gabala radar—the over-the-horizon radar station—up in the northern part of Azerbaijan. The Azeris wanted to exert their authority. They raised environmental issues. But the Russians just said, “This is important to us, we are going to keep it here, and we have soldiers to guard it. We are happy to talk to you about it but don't try to push us out. We're not going to be pushed out.” And both the nationalist government which fretted a lot about it and the Aliyev government understood that this was a sticking point for the Russians and so the Azeris never tried any military attack or anything like that on it. And later the Aliyev government was able to sign a 10 year lease for the station to legitimize the continued Russian use of the radar station. Russia just was not part of anybody's thinking in Azerbaijan at that time. Events in Moscow were interesting, of course, and the Azeris watched them on television and I watched them too. Russian television was shown in Azerbaijan and it was fascinating to watch.

Q: Alright. But you're now up in Moscow and you're sitting at the center of the American view of Russia. How would you describe how—from Pickering through the political section and yourself and all—how did we view Yeltsin?

MILES: I don't want to speak for Ambassador Pickering, but we did worry a bit about Yeltsin's drinking and perhaps sometimes erratic behavior. But we also saw him as a person with some democratic instincts, someone who wanted to cast out the past in a dramatic way, and someone who was not adverse to taking serious steps toward necessary reform of the society in the sense of shaking up the ministries, privatizing state properties, trying to deal with these problems of social disruption that I mentioned to you earlier. And Yeltsin was willing not just to talk to the United States but to work with the United States on matters of mutual interest. After all, we have so many common areas of interest—everything from arms control and reduction to environmental and health issues. You recall the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, when our Vice President and the Russian Prime Minister would meet twice a year, once in America and once in Russia, and would agree on work programs for their governments, including the various ministries and departments that were involved over the next six month period, and would review what had taken place in the previous six month period. They would hold joint meetings; the Vice President and the Prime Minister would sit at a podium and then the Russian ministers and the American secretaries would appear and explain what they have done, and what they have not done to carry out the work program which had been previously agreed. The Commission has been criticized and I know the Republicans didn't care much for it. I don't recall the history exactly but they probably wasted no time in dismantling it when they came into power, but I thought it was a very useful thing. It involved one hell of a lot of work on the part of the American cabinet secretaries and their departments that were involved, the Russian ministries, the embassies and the ambassadors themselves and people on their staff, but it sure produced a

lot of interaction on the part of the staffs of the Vice President and the Prime Minister, on the part of the ministers and the cabinet secretaries and their staffs and on down to reasonably low working levels because these programs spanned the whole range of our interaction with the Russians. The projects became quite involved and detailed and they were these six months meetings coming on like clockwork so the bureaucrats actually had to work to be able to show some success when questioned by their political leaders. OK, some of this was pure PR, but there was also a substantial work program, and I for one was sorry to see it end.

Q: Were we keeping an eye on two elements of the society: one, of sort of a Russian military and, two, the security apparatus?

MILES: Oh, yes. First of all we were getting to know these people in a way which had not really been possible earlier and, in addition, Pickering would entertain the highest levels of the two military establishments. We had cabinet secretaries—imagine the Secretary of Defense coming over meeting with his counterpart. On my own, at the DCM residence, I entertained the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and his counterpart. I have personally entertained the head of the Russian rocket forces, the guy who had his finger right next to the red launch button. And the other members of the country team were doing the same thing at their levels. The level of exchange in all sectors of our societies was just incredible. I believe the Ambassador and I entertained just about everyone in Russia who should have been entertained. We drew the line at Zhirinovsky, but, even there, we assigned an Embassy officer to stay in touch with him and his subordinates.

Now I'm not saying that everything was sweetness and light—I'm not saying that we always agreed with the Russians on everything. Not long after I arrived, one of our key people was declared persona non grata by the Russian government. Actually, I don't think he was formally declared PNG; I think they told us that they were going to do that unless he was voluntarily withdrawn, and we did voluntarily withdraw him. We had the so-called "chicken wars" while I was there; we had serious difficulties getting the Russian government to enforce their laws on intellectual property rights; we had problems over landing fees for U.S. Government aircraft; problems of religious freedom and so on and so on. All these things took time and energy to work out, but the important thing is that we had a dialog with the Russian government which enabled us to resolve these issues one by one.

Q: What caused that near PNG incident?

MILES: You know, I can't recall the incident. It may have been nothing more than our throwing out some Russian official from the United States; as I recall I think it was probably that, just the usual reciprocal action on the part of the Russians..

Not to change the subject, but while I was there we opened the FBI legal attaché office in the Embassy. The office is still a very going concern and deals with many issues, not least with the problem of organized crime. I was quite interested in that myself; my son Richard is a policeman and he had always spent a lot of time visiting with police establishments in the various countries where I have been. He had done that in Leningrad, he did it again in Moscow, and so I already knew some of the police officials and I think I was able to help with the introduction of these

FBI guys to their counterparts in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the various law enforcement organizations in Russian society. The Russian law enforcement structure was a little bit like ours: you had a lot of different organizations and a lot of people with various levels of responsibility, many of them overlapping. So it was something of a challenge to make sense of the Russian structure which had been virtually closed to us before, say, 1992. So we all spent a lot of time doing that and arranging visits back and forth, having seminars and workshops. We would have workshops on tax collection for their tax people and experts would come in from the Internal Revenue Service and conduct a workshop on that. I mean, we were involved in just about every form of human activity there is. But there were always diehards on the Russian side and there was some reserve on the part of U.S. intelligence and military people. There was some reserve, a lot of reserve I would say, on the part of the Russian military and intelligence people and, of course, there were some secrets that were not shared and there were some people that carried grudges from the past and never quite got over them. Every once in a while you would run into some pocket of resistance or whatever and you had to try to figure out whether this was a serious obstacle or not. Was this an obstacle you could simply go around? Is it something that you need to put aside for a while and try later. Never a dull moment.

Q: I was going to ask about this. One has heard about the, well, the expression was the Russian Mafia in New York and other places. From your perspective what was going on there?

MILES: Well, there was a lot of Russian organized crime activity conducted by Russian émigrés in the United States but with ties back to the motherland and so the FBI, working mostly with the New York City Police Department, set up a special task force on this and, if you can believe this, a Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs officer was seconded to the New York Police Department to work with them on these issues. That would make a good movie, wouldn't it? Again, the level of cooperation was incredible and so the two sides were able to wrap up some cases of financial skullduggery involving money laundering and whatnot; millions of dollars were involved. They were able to stop one scheme in which gas would be either purchased without paying taxes or stolen and then sold at a discount to taxi drivers and then the station would close and go out of business before they paid any taxes and before anyone could catch them. Then they would open another station somewhere and repeat the exercise. There were some cases of extortion, robbery, violence, even murder that were involved. We found the Russians quite interested in cooperating with us on these things.

I am trying to think of examples of cooperation from other spheres. On the nuclear safeguarding area, now remember this was '93, '94 by now and it probably has gone on beyond what I will describe, but in those days, when was that? Fourteen years ago already. I remember taking a congressional delegation for the first time to the formerly closed city of Arzamas-16, which is where Sakharov had lived before he was put in prison and where he had helped to develop the hydrogen bomb—a sort of a Soviet Oak Ridge or Los Alamos, if you will. And so we went out, there was no commercial airport there, there was only the government airport, so we, this delegation of about six or eight congressmen was to go. I went with them to the special military landing field near Moscow. We all had to show picture IDs to the KGB guard to get on the airplane, first to get on the base, then to get on the airplane. And then it was kind of funny, we flew to Arzamas-16, a non-stop flight, and as we landed another KGB guard checked our picture IDs as we got off the plane. I thought, well, it would have been a damn good trick to transfer

somebody while we were in the air. Anyhow, that was the security rule.

And then we went up to the facility itself, a bunch of rather nondescript brick buildings, low brick buildings with ivy growing on them, wood frame windows—all rather homey. It didn't look like the kind of a place where the Soviet nuclear weapons had been developed. We were shown their little museum where they had examples of the early Soviet regular nuclear and then hydrogen weapons. And then we were taken into various laboratories where they were dealing with nuclear grade weapons material. Then we were taken into the storage area where this nuclear grade material was stored when it was not being used or experimented with and we were shown moveable cameras at the door of the vault in which the material was being stored and also inside the vault, and were told that scientists in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, could, with their joy sticks, move those cameras around—they were running 24 hours a day—and would be able to determine who was going in and coming out and whether nuclear weapons material was replaced after having been taken out, whether it was at the same level in the container as when it had been taken out, and the Russian scientists had the same capability in Oak Ridge. This is not a secret but it's not known by most Americans, I think, and they would have been astounded in 1993, 1994 to hear about it and it has probably gone on further since then.

I'd like to recount a funny anecdote about that airplane by the way. We were just taxiing out to take off when the cabin began to fill with a kind of a white vapor, like fog, and you know, in that part of the world often the air conditioning in the airplanes doesn't work very well and you will get, especially on landing and take-off, you will get what looks like fog coming out of the openings. And so I blithely told the congressmen not to worry, that this often happened and so on and this was just normal. Of course, they were getting a little antsy. And the mist got thicker and thicker and then I was beginning to get a little antsy myself and I asked the Russian who was with us as the leader of the group, "What's going on? Is this a normal thing here?" And he said in good Russian style, "Oh yes, everything's fine. No problem." We continued to taxi out and then the plane stopped, the pilot turned the engines off and we were told, "Well we're going to have to get another airplane." So God knows what was happening with the heating and cooling system. I remember it was summer so it must have been the cooling system, but I'm glad we didn't go up in the air regardless of what the problem was.

Q: Did you ever run across Vladimir Putin in your time there?

MILES: Well, I first met him shortly after he came back from his KGB assignment in Germany. I enrolled my daughter Elizabeth at Leningrad University and he was the Deputy Director of the Internal Relations Section of the University. Then, a little later, I ran across him frequently in then-Leningrad as foreign economic adviser to the Mayor. I think I talked about that earlier. But in Moscow at that time, no, I didn't. I think he was brought to Moscow later. In the 1993-1996 period, he was still in Leningrad as I recall, in St. Petersburg, working in the city apparatus. Of course, in retrospect, I'm very sorry I didn't stay in touch with him but I don't think anyone in the world thought that he would become President of Russia. And he, as a former KGB-type, was not very forthcoming. He kept back a bit with the foreigners, you know, he was not a gregarious type. So no, we had very little to do with Mr. Putin at that time and I regret that because I had that nice entree from before and it probably would have been possible to have cultivated a relationship with him. But it was just one of those situations where you don't even

dream that something is going to happen and then it does.

Q: Did we see, in the time you were there, did we see the growth of a variety of parties in that type of democracy or not?

MILES: We saw it maybe more than was real. The democratic opposition, if you will, was riding reasonably high and people in the various parties, Gaydar and others—I forget the names of them all—Boris Nemtsov, a very appealing young politician from over in Nizhniy Novgorod, a big city, and others. Lebedyev, a former general, was very active politically and we certainly tried to stay in touch with all these people and either Pickering or I would see them or entertain them as often as we could. We also stayed in touch with the Communist Party people. I have a mental block here, I can't remember the name of the Communist Party leader—it was Zyuganov. I have entertained Zyuganov in my home and Pickering saw him even more often than I did.

Q: Wasn't he considered to be pretty radical?

MILES: No, no. He was relatively moderate, frankly. Probably you're thinking of Zhirinovskiy.

Q: Zhirinovskiy is the man I'm thinking of.

MILES: Zhirinovskiy was a rather radical and populist leader, demagogic, actually. I talked to Pickering about this and we agreed that it would probably be best to stay clear of Zhirinovskiy personally but that we would encourage—we would name an embassy officer who would be the liaison with Zhirinovskiy. We didn't forbid the embassy officers from including him in things from time to time. But we would maintain a little space between ourselves and Zhirinovskiy personally. And Zhirinovskiy understood that and we were able to pass messages from time to time through our liaison officer and receive messages back and that worked pretty well.

President Clinton came several times while I was there and on one occasion when he came we organized an event at Spaso House to which we invited all the major political opposition figures in to provide some serious face time with President Clinton. And I remember, before the President arrived, trying to carry on a conversation with General Lebedyev. I believe Lebedyev was the most taciturn individual I have ever met in my life. I'd say something in Russian, like, "Well, it's a nice day outside, isn't it, General?" His response to that would be—he would sort of pause and then he'd say, "Yes." Then I'd say, "Well, I heard you had some difficulties in one of your recent public appearances"—you know, wherever it was—and he would say, "Not really." End of sentence. Well, he was old school, career general and all, and probably didn't feel very comfortable talking to any American official and certainly not any American official who was not actually the Ambassador.

And I remember going over to Nizhniy Novgorod once. We had a problem with a slight misuse of U.S. government funds. We had provided some assistance to the Russian Government to build some small but nice houses for demobilized Russian military officers and we had heard that in the Nizhniy Novgorod area some of these houses were being given out to civilians by the city administration. Boris Nemtsov was then the governor of the Nizhniy Novgorod Oblast so I went over to talk him and I explained the problem. He had his subordinates and his accountants there

and they all denied that there was any problem with what they were doing. Sharon had accompanied me on that trip and I did a trick which I had learned from Larry Eagleburger when he was Ambassador to Yugoslavia. After listening to some of this bullshit for about 20 minutes, I said, “You know, Boris Efimovich, I wonder if I could speak to you alone. We don’t need interpreters, my Russian is pretty good—we don’t need interpreters. Let me just have a private conversation with you.” And he agreed. And so out went Sharon, out went the note takers, out went the chief accountant for the city, out went the guy in charge of the housing program, and I said to Nemtsov, “Look, let me be blunt. We know exactly what’s going on here. I don’t believe a word of what your people have just told you and you shouldn’t believe it either. And we’re not going to do anything about what you have already done but if it’s not stopped, that is the last house you will see us build in this oblast. We have a limited amount of money for this program. We’ll just build them somewhere else. And so I really urge you to stop it but I’m not going to make any public fuss about it, this is a private conversation that you and I are having right now.” And he said he understood and there would not be a problem in the future. And there wasn’t a problem in the future.

Q: How about, well, Chechnya and maybe anywhere else? The centrifugal forces within what was left of Russia. But let’s talk about Chechnya first and then—

MILES: Well, now that was a big problem and we were quite disconcerted by it and concerned about it. Washington wanted a lot of information; it wanted to know what was going on. And the Ambassador agreed that we would allow Embassy officers to go down to the region near Chechnya—they could go to Ingushetia, for example, because the leaders there were keeping a very close eye on what was going on and our officers could talk to the leaders who were there in Ingushetia, and they could go to Dagestan and do the same thing in Dagestan; these are neighboring provinces to Chechnya. And of course we had our reporting on Chechnya out of independent Georgia and independent Azerbaijan, but that didn’t amount to a whole lot at that time. But we didn’t allow the Embassy officers to go into Chechnya proper and we cautioned American would-be visitors, reporters and whatever, from going down into Chechnya because it was just a damned dangerous place. We were able to keep up to some degree by having a periodic debrief from an outstanding Foreign Service Officer named Philip Remler. Philip is actually in Moscow right now. He was the political officer in Baku when I was there. Anyhow, he had been seconded to the OSCE mission in Chechnya. And he would come up to Moscow periodically and would give me and the other officers that were interested in this a debrief on what he saw from the standpoint of the OSCE mission down there. Philip was a very good observer and a very brave officer, I must say, and he proved it on those occasions and on others as well. So that also enabled us to keep our hand in. The Department, I think, would have liked a little more but I felt, and the Ambassador agreed that it was just too damned dangerous to send people down there; the information was not worth a diplomat’s life.

I’ll give you a couple of examples to prove that point. We had a young fellow come through who didn’t speak Russian—

Q: This is a civilian?

MILES: Yes. Who had some press credentials from an obscure, I don’t know, *Ladies’ Garment*

Workers' Daily or something like that—just some press credentials that he had gotten somewhere. And he was going to go down to Chechnya, and of course he didn't speak Russian or Chechen. He was going to go first to Ingushetia, which was usually the jumping off place to go into Chechnya, and then he planned to go on in and talk to people and then come out.

Well, we said to him, you shouldn't go. I didn't talk to him personally—the consular people did and the public affairs people did, and they said, “You shouldn't go. We don't allow Embassy officers to go down there. They speak Russian and they often have had experience. We don't even allow defense attachés to go. It's dangerous and really we can't protect you if you get into trouble.” Well, he went down. He apparently was picked up a morning or two after he arrived in the capital of Ingushetia, at his hotel, was driven off by someone into Chechnya and disappeared. We never heard from him, you know—not a rag or a piece of bone left.

Then there was another journalist, who at least was a legitimate journalist and who spoke Russian. We gave her the same advice. She came through, I think she came through St. Petersburg, and the consulate people warned her, the same warning exactly. She went on down, went on into Chechnya and had her head blown off by a stray piece of shrapnel. In this case it was just a thing that happens in a wartime situation; I mean, it wasn't as though she was kidnapped or whatever, which is what we usually feared would happen, or taken away by a Russian patrol and shot because they didn't know what else to do with her. In this case she was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Blew her head off. Had to notify her family and all and tried to retrieve the body. Very tragic business.

And then, the last one was the famous case of Fred Cuny. He was an American with a considerable reputation in international humanitarian operations. He had been in some very dangerous situations in the past, exploring difficult situations and trying to figure out what kind of humanitarian assistance might be applied to that situation. And again, he was advised not to go but, in this case, he had resources behind him. There was not one, but several important American NGOs that he represented; he had consulted with some members of Congress before he went; I think he spoke Russian. And he went off, and all we know is that a couple of days into his trip into Chechnya he disappeared and was not found again alive. We realized after his western organizational contacts had lost touch with him, because, again, he was experienced, and he was going to be phoning back in and so forth with a satellite phone. I was Chargé then, the Ambassador was away, and I remember the staff meeting distinctly. The consular people thought, well, it's just the difficult conditions in the field, these satellite phones don't always work. He's so experienced, let's not worry about it too much. And I said, “Let's do worry about it too much. This area is so dicey and this man has some connections, people are going to be really interested in this. Let's treat this as though something has happened to him right now and let's begin making whatever inquiries we can, as though something has happened.”

And so we did that; from the first report of the lack of contact. And this inquiry quickly escalated because people began coming out to Russia from his organizations in America; there were editorials in the Western media about his disappearance; there were letters from members of Congress. In the end he was not found alive and months later, I think it was maybe even after I left, they did find remains. He had had, I forget, a hip replacement or a knee replacement or something of a unique nature and they found remains in which they were able to identify those

metal parts as having been part of his body. And so it's clear that he died as well.

So in other words, all three of these cases turned out very, very bad indeed.

Q: Were we concerned, you mentioned the two other places—

MILES: Ingushetia and Dagestan?

Q: Yes. Now there and elsewhere, in what was still Russia, were we sort of monitoring the, well, the centrifugal forces? What was happening?

MILES: Well, yes. We in Embassy Moscow were interested in what was happening and what the Russians at that time called the near abroad. They don't use that term so much anymore but at that time it meant basically all the states of the former Soviet Union. I'm not sure whether the Baltic States were included in that or not but we did monitor pretty closely the various things that were going on in the former republics and autonomous provinces of the former Soviet Union. And the situation was rather different in almost every one of them. In the Baltic States you had some difficulty with the treatment of the Russian minority and other things. And there were serious environmental problems left by the withdrawn Russian military forces and so forth.

In Central Asia there were problems of unstable governments. It was not the energy issue so much in those days, although there was a little bit of that; some of the American companies were interested in the energy resources in Kazakhstan for example, and of course they were always interested early on in the oil resources in Azerbaijan. To a degree Turkmenistan too but a little less; Kazakhstan was the big interest for them.

So yes, we did spend a bit of time reading carefully the cables from our embassies in those places and also talking to Russians in the government, in business, who themselves were interested in those areas, either just for commercial reasons or political reasons or even security reasons. There was a new commonwealth armed forces organization and the fellow who was in charge of it was General Samsonov, who had been the commander of the Leningrad Military District when I was Consul General there and so I went around to see him. I was the first diplomat, I think, to call on him. And it was very interesting because we didn't know what to make of this commonwealth armed forces thing: was it five feet tall, was it 10 feet tall? We just didn't know. And the defense attachés had never really been able to learn much about the organization. But because I knew him, I guess, I was able to get an appointment with him and so we went out into this, it was like a park-like area where they had taken over some buildings as their headquarters and I'll never forget it. First of all there was virtually no activity going on as far as the eye could see in this rather large space not too far from downtown Moscow; there were no military vehicles running back and forth; there were no troops moving around. And when we went into the building and walked down these hallways, it was quite clear that the place was dark and almost deserted and the officer would flick the corridor lights on as we went down the hallway. And so the General and I had a nice chat and he explained basically that he was in charge of a paper organization; that he himself did not know exactly what was going to become of it but he was going to do the best he could to try to coordinate things and see what could be done. And so we parted on good terms and I went back and the Defense Attaché also wrote his

report and we were able to say this is not something that the United States needs to worry about for the foreseeable future.

*Q: What about—I've just started reading this book called *Second Chance* by Zbigniew Brzezinski and he talks about Americans and others, Western Europeans, coming in after the Soviet Union broke up and all, coming in and making deals. I mean, these were sort of—they were people out for a quick buck, making deals with their Russian counterparts, and really it ended up with a bunch of Russians getting quite wealthy and a bunch of Westerners getting quite wealthy. Was this going on while you were there?*

MILES: Oh yes, very much. There hasn't been any research on this at all, but it could be that some of these Americans became quite wealthy or made some money at any rate; I wouldn't be at all surprised. But more often I'd say it was a case of the Russians taking advantage of naïve American lawyers and investors. I witnessed in some cases out-and-out charlatans and conmen—like carpetbaggers in the old South after the Civil War. People out for a quick buck, and there were quick bucks to be made, certainly. But also they were sometimes inveigled into investing money in factories which then turned out to have been emptied of their internal machinery and equipment, sold off for scrap or carried off to some other factory leaving the American investor with an empty shell of a building and so on. Environmental problems which were impossible to rectify but the person was already hooked in and now had legal liability for, you know, oil seepage or whatever, toxic waste and so on, and he had no idea it existed before he signed the papers.

On the other hand there were some legitimate businesses there. The American Chamber of Commerce got going at about that time and is now one of the largest in the world. American Express was very big then; credit cards were beginning to be developed and to spread and American Express did quite well, I think. Citibank was active in Russia. McDonalds, Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola—there were others as well. I knew many if not most of these people; I tried to entertain them when the Ambassador couldn't always do it and stay in touch with them. Many of them were interested in cultural and philanthropic activities, partly to help legitimize their efforts in Russia, at that time still in a transition from the communist period. Pure capitalism was frowned on and both the Russians and these American entrepreneurs felt the political and psychological need to justify their activities by saying that they were going to do something nice for society with the profits—I never saw a business proposal, for example, that didn't have something in there about “with the profits we are going to start an old people's home” or “we are going to dig some wells in this village” or some damned thing.

In fact, I used to counsel people about this. I said look, why don't you forget about this philanthropy right now and worry about making a profit and putting your business on a decent basis and worry a lot less about maternity hospitals and that kind of a thing. I understand it's a problem and I understand why you are doing this but don't distract yourself too much with this feel-good stuff. Of course, some of this social support was very valuable at that time. Some of these business people—both American and Russian—were helping to support the symphony orchestras, things of that sort, and Sharon and I were involved in some of those things too. We were able to help do some fundraisers. Junior Achievement got started about that time in Russia. Sharon was particularly active in helping get that program off the ground, especially later when

we went to Bulgaria. We got to know the fellow who was president of the Academy of Sciences, Evgeny Velikhov, who is a nuclear physicist, and his wife, quite active. We met them in Leningrad when I was Consul General there and we kept up the relationship when we went to Moscow and Yevgeny was one of the founders of the Junior Achievement program in Russia. He still is involved in Junior Achievement and it's actually now, I think, the largest one in the world. So that kind of thing was going on and it was all very worthwhile.

At that time we had three Consulates General: one in St. Petersburg, one in Yekaterinburg and one in Vladivostok. I tried to visit each one at least twice a year and sometimes more than that. It's a hell of a long way out to Vladivostok, by the way. It's a nine hour nonstop flight from Moscow, and when I first started doing it you had to stop and refuel and it was an 11 hour flight. But I had to see how they were doing out there and make sure they didn't feel neglected. And I always made the point to meet with the American business people in these cities and see how they were doing. In general, they were having a very hard time. In the business world in Russia at that time there was a lot of criminal and sometimes governmental thuggery going on. In European Russia we could usually work with the government officials to straighten things out. Not in the Russian Far East, however. It was just too far away and the local mafia was just incredibly brazen in their collusion with the authorities. I mean, basically the authorities would entice the American entrepreneurs in, let them bring in equipment, air conditioning, chillers, freezers, vehicles, computers—goods of all sorts; let them take over a warehouse, put on a new roof, plaster, paint; and then they would block the American investors from ownership of their property. It was notorious; it was really pretty outrageous. The Consul General in Vladivostok tried to help but had great difficulty getting any traction on these difficulties.

And I had some knock down drag out fights with some of these thugs in power out there myself but I lost more battles than I won. This was their turf. They were in charge and given the somewhat anarchic conditions in Russia at that time, there really wasn't very much anyone could do about it.

Q: What was the feeling while you were there about the Chinese?

MILES: No particular fear of the Chinese. In fact, there was some trade back and forth across the border; there was also some trade with Japan and there were lots and lots of cars with right-hand drives out there because the Japanese were exporting their used cars to the Russian Far East.

They were also doing business with South Korea and I never was able to find out much about their relationship with the North Koreans, and my guess is that any trade which existed at that time didn't amount to much.

Q: Well, there wasn't much to do.

MILES: Well, they could easily have sold their goods in Korea. At that time the North Koreans were suffering, as they are today, and that's a big market, but they would have had to settle accounts in barter in some way. Ginseng is grown out in that part of the world and that's a big export item from the Russian Far East, a very lucrative thing. It's mostly grown wild and I know that there is ginseng in North Korea, so you could have helped pay in that way but there was very

little of that. There was some Korean trading which took place in China itself but, at that time, I don't think the Russians were doing much in North Korea.

And in the rest of Russia you had the beginning of what they call the shuttle business. The traders were called "*chelnochniki*" [shuttle trader] from the word "*chelnok*", the shuttle that goes back and forth in a loom. Shuttle diplomacy in Russian is "*chelnochnaya diplomatiya*", for example, but the word was also applied to these mostly Chinese traders who would come up with big bags and backpacks and bundles on the train or the plane to the Russian cities and would sell cheap Chinese goods, anything from a thermos to pots and pans and then they would take back whatever they could take back from Russia, caviar or whatever, and sell it in China, and you also had Russian traders who were beginning to do that too.

Now, in terms of a larger business interest I know that there was some trade that was being conducted. I had a good friend who had become the Chinese Ambassador in Moscow. He and I had been young officers together in Moscow in 1976-1977 and we had, I would say, a good relationship at that time. We used to love to tease the KGB and the foreign ministry watchers because at diplomatic parties and other events we would go off into a corner and just talk to each other very rapidly back and forth. We spoke then in Russian; his English was not very good at that time and we exchanged information on what was going on, how we saw things, what might be happening in the immediate future. And it would just drive our Soviet watchers wild. He was the Chinese Ambassador during my second tour in Moscow and I used to see him fairly frequently. He was quite informative on trade patterns and current statistics.

Q: I'm just looking at the time. It's probably a good place to stop. Now, is there anything else we should talk about in Russia before we move on?

MILES: Well, there probably is. Let me think about that; I'll make a note of that.

Q: Okay.

MILES: When we come back next time I think one thing would be the military visits that we had because they were quite interesting and I have some good anecdotes. So at a minimum let me talk about some of those military-to-military visits and exchanges and then I'll scratch my head a little and think of others. There were some congressional visits that might be worthwhile and, yes, I think there probably is a little more.

Q: Good. When you talk about the military visits, if you would talk about what happened to the Far East Fleet. I've seen pictures of them, all those ships rusting there.

MILES: A pretty sad state of affairs.

Q: Okay. Today is the 21st of May, 2007. Dick, do you want to talk a bit—you were in Russia when to when now?

MILES: It was '93 to '96.

Q: And so you want to talk a bit about military-to-military.

MILES: Well, we had a really good military-to-military relationship going on. Some Russian military officers were being trained in American military schools and I don't recall if we had American military officers who were in Russian military schools but we did have some declared American officers who were studying in Russia full-time, living on the economy pretty much, to improve their Russian.

And then we had these visits, both ship visits and other visits, some of them rather spectacular. At one point, Ambassador Pickering, I think, was probably out of the country so I was Chargé and I attended the 50th anniversary of the ending of the war in the Pacific out at Vladivostok; you had mentioned the fleet out in the Russian Far East. And I had been to Vladivostok many times because of the Consulate General out there. I tried to get out there two to three times a year and, of course, I always tried to call on the fleet officers. And we did have some good programs involving the military out there.

For example our military was closing down a hospital somewhere in the Pacific Theater and they donated all the equipment, all the beds, all the medical machinery, bedpans, some surplus bandages and whatnot to the Russian military hospital in Vladivostok, which needed it desperately; got a lot of good publicity out of that, Russian television was there, the Oblast Governor was there and so on.

And then we did have this 50th anniversary of the ending of World War II in the Pacific event and they had invited representatives from the Chinese Navy and other navies to be present. I don't recall any Japanese being present; I don't know if they were invited or not. And in our case the U.S. Navy sent a destroyer, I believe, but they also found a one-star admiral who was stationed in Guam, I don't recall his name, who was right out of central casting. He was a big African-American fellow, must have been six feet five or whatever, and it was late summer so he was wearing his Navy whites and, my goodness, he really made an impact on the local population; they had never seen anything quite like that. I mean, he was spectacular.

I remember distinctly my wife Sharon and me waiting on the dock while the ship pulled in and the Russian Navy band was playing "Get Me to the Church on Time," which, after the sailors hit the beach, probably was an appropriate song. And so that was a lot of fun, a lot of coming and going and visiting back and forth. And the Chinese admiral gave the American admiral a magnificent, huge watch; it looked like one of these 18th-century pocket watches, big massive thing. I was drooling, I would love to have had it as a souvenir but the Admiral got it and he deserved it. He was about a hundred times more charismatic than I was.

And then of course there were the calls on the Russian commanders and then we were given a lunch, I believe it was, on board one of the big Russian ships that was there for the occasion. And I remember touring around, and I had spent two years at sea in the Marine Corps so I knew something about ships and what they should look like, and the Russian flagship was certainly ready for action, the sailors looked pretty good, the officers looked fine, but the ship itself was pretty dirty by our standards. It just had not been kept very clean. You would see rust marks and corrosion where on an American military ship you would simply never see that, it wouldn't

happen.

But I do remember going up on the bridge and I guess they just hadn't thought about it but they had still scotch-taped up on the bulkhead of the bridge silhouettes of the NATO warships for identification purposes—hopefully friendly identification in this case.

There was another memorable ship visit, this time in Murmansk, above the Arctic Circle. I went up to Murmansk several times. On this occasion, I went up for the 50th anniversary of the ending of World War II. It was to celebrate the allied convoys that had delivered supplies to the Soviet Union during the War. The Russians celebrate the end of the War in Europe on May 9, and it was an absolutely and totally miserable day up there; it's way above the Arctic Circle. And so Sharon and I were there and we knew how to dress for the weather, and all the diplomats had been told that there would be a place for them to stand during some patriotic speeches that were being held, and then the diplomats would be bussed up to a site on the cliff overlooking the bay in Murmansk, and the fleet was assembled there, and there would be more speeches and more wreath laying. And it was snowing pretty hard and the streets were slushy and all.

Well anyhow, to make a long story short, when we got to the first site I found that it would be politically awkward not to walk up with everybody else and I hadn't put my galoshes on or anything so I was in ordinary dress shoes. I did have a hat, thank God, and so I walked. I think it was about three miles; it was a very long walk pretty much uphill through the slush, through the snow coming down and, boy, I was a wreck when I got there. Cold wet and tired. And I had told Sharon, who was willing to walk and wanted to walk, that that would be absolutely insane, that she and the ladies should take the van and drive on up and we would see them there. But I walked, and so up we went and we did the honors up there on the top of the cliff. It was very moving actually, despite the weather. Everyone was there, the band played, the Soviet Northern Fleet was arrayed out on the water. Warm words were said about the American sailors both military and merchant seamen, who had given their lives bringing the cargoes through the German attacks. It was a memorable event.

I remember another occasion when a small Navy ship—I think it was a frigate but it might have been a destroyer, I frankly don't remember—was coming into, now this was a different occasion and they were coming into Murmansk to make a port call, a routine ship visit, and I was up there to greet them, along with a Russian Admiral who was on the dock with me. This was at the naval base in Severomorsk which we didn't usually get to visit. The ship was going to come to a full stop and then back into the berth and we could see that there was some confusion out on the water there. The Captain stopped the ship alright and nothing happened for a little while and then he came cautiously in, and it turns out that he had hit a large rock submerged out in the harbor and had thrown one of the propellers—happily it was a twin propeller ship so he was still able to maneuver. The Russian pilot, who was taken on board to bring the ship in, didn't have any harbor maps and had simply drawn the outline of the harbor and the port on the palm of his hand with a ballpoint pen and that was how the Captain was supposed to navigate in. Well, somehow on that very careful map on the palm of this pilot's hand, he had not put the submerged rock and so the Captain pranged his propeller on it. Now, this was not a funny matter. And it was especially awkward for the Captain of the American ship. In fact, the Russian Admiral standing next to me on the dock was so agitated while he watched what was happening, that he actually

said, “I can’t stand this anymore. I’m going to go wait in the car.” And he went back and sat in the car while the ship came on in. And then the Russians were pretty good about it; they sent divers down to inspect the propeller and eventually, I think, the captain asked them to take off what remained of it. There was a lot of talk about what to do and so on, and in the end, because it was a twin screw ship, they were able to limp out on just one screw. But it was very awkward and the poor Captain—I don’t remember his name and I’m glad I can’t remember it, he suffered enough. The Captain was a mustang—that is, he had come up through the ranks—and of course he was extremely proud to be an officer and to be the Captain who was bringing this ship in, the only ship on this visit into Severomorsk, a formerly prohibited harbor. Then to have that happen was pretty ignominious and it also, I imagine, put a damper on his career. I don’t know what happened to him afterward.

The Navy is rather 18th century about these things. There would be a board of inquiry and, of course, the primary fault lay with the pilot, but the sad fact of Navy life is that the Captain is responsible, almost no matter what. I felt very sorry for that man.

Q: That is one of those things that if you are the Captain you are responsible even though, obviously, if a pilot is doing it—

MILES: You have the con [command of the ship], so to speak, and there you are.

I remember, now, this has nothing to do with the Foreign Service, but I remember, I was up on the bridge of the aircraft carrier that I was on in the Marine Corps, the Captain had gone below and the Gunnery Officer was up there, having taken temporary command, and they were refueling at sea, which is a tricky maneuver. And somehow the Gunnery Officer misjudged the wave action or the speed of the ships or whatever and the refueling ship went down at the same time that the aircraft carrier went up. Now, that aircraft carrier weighed 40,000 tons so we are talking about a hell of a lot of mass, and as it went up the refueling ship washed in underneath the, as I recall, the overhanging port side elevator, and then came up under it and you can imagine what a mess that made of things. So we went into Yokosuka, Japan, for repairs which was nice for the crew because we got a lot of shore leave, but that definitely was the end of the Gunnery Officer’s career. And he was a very nice fellow, too; it was a pity, really. But if you are in charge, you know, there you are.

Q: Were you by any chance in Russia when they had the submarine Kursk accident?

MILES: No. No, that came after my time. I did see—you mentioned earlier the poor condition of the ships in the Far East Fleet, and, you know, they really were in pretty bad shape. Some were not capable of going to sea for any extended period of time but frankly they weren’t as bad as the Northern Fleet up in Severomorsk and Murmansk. That fleet was in very, very bad condition. First of all, weather conditions are much, much more severe in the far North. But second, they were making no effort whatsoever to control environmental damage, and so you had nuclear powered submarines that were just sunk in the water, beached on the—you know, halfway up on the beach and the rear half of the submarine sunk in the water, and God knows what the environmental impact was of that and the other abandoned ships that were there. The place was an enormous junkyard, in some cases involving nuclear materials, so really pretty awful. I’m

sure, at least I fervently hope, that the radioactive material had been removed from those ships, but I can't believe that these wrecks were environmentally safe. And, too, that place is bleak enough to begin with. It's so far north that trees don't grow; there are only shrubs and bushes up there so the place is pretty gray and grim generally, and to have these ships sunk in the harbor there, well, it's just pretty awful really.

Q: You left Russia when?

MILES: Summer of '96.

SHIRLEY E. RUEDY
Science and Technology Officer
Moscow (1995-1996)

Political Officer, External Affairs
Moscow (1996-1997)

Shirley Ruedy was born in Virginia and raised in Ohio. She was educated Ohio Wesleyan and Duke Universities and at several universities abroad. Before becoming a Foreign Service Officer in 1987, Mrs. Ruedy accompanied her USIA husband on assignments in Iran and Germany. As an FSO, she served as Political Officer in Bonn and Moscow as well as in the State Department in Washington, where she dealt primarily with Soviet Union and Regional European matters. Mrs. Ruedy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: What was in the offing?

RUEDY: I was going to Moscow to work in the EST (Science and Technology) office. It was not my first choice; I wanted to go work in the political section, but again the tandem couple issue was determinate since my husband was named DPAO (Deputy Public Affairs Officer) for Moscow. He was responsible for the various USIA facilities throughout Russia, so he did a lot of traveling. He had to check on these places. I'm an English major, but I said oh, OK, I'm up for anything; I'll go work in the Science and Technology office and they gave me trade craft training. The political parts of it really did interest me and that's what I did when I got in the job. My boss recognized that's where my strengths lie. I didn't know that much about physics as he did; he was a physicist. We had some very interesting, funny experiences working with the Russian scientists. We would go and visit some of the labs that had been used for pretty nefarious things. I remember one time, in particular, we were meeting with some graduate students and we had gone through a swinging door with a red skull and crossbones on it. We walked through there and I thought, hmmm, this is interesting. We were talking to these graduate students and they had this vial, a chemical, and they were passing it around and my boss said, don't touch that. He said I'll explain later. I was struck by the carelessness. These were just students, but I saw it in established scientists as well. To me it looked like carelessness, but to them I think it was a lot of disregard for individual human life. Science is the God and they were

willing to sacrifice in anything to this God. This was the impression I got after several experiences like this.

Q: Did you have any particular part of the action?

RUEDY: I was responsible for liaison with the International Technology and Science Center. This was an attempt to attract Russian scientists to peaceful projects, to turn their attention from making weapons and other things, to try to get them involved in peaceful applications for the kind of research they had been doing. I don't know how successful that really was. I know that there were lots of conferences and the people at ISTC would put out a call for projects. Scientists would send in various projects and some of them would get funded. It was not just a U.S. thing; it was also paid for by the EU. You met very interesting people through this work, but it was tough going because the mind set was going to be very difficult to change.

Q: Whose mindset?

RUEDY: The Russian scientists' mindset.

Q: Was it that they were not used to being in an international group or were they too very good at creating better armor or...?

RUEDY: That's what they'd been trained to do, that's what their work had been, that's what they were rewarded for, and there was a kind of rigidity. It was a difficulty in thinking outside the box. OK, so I'm an expert on this, what can I do to develop this in a different direction? Can I go into pharmaceuticals? There were some of them that were very sharp and caught on, but there were a lot of others. I think it was a generational thing; the younger scientists coming up are much more entrepreneurial.

Q: By the way, you were there from 1995 until?

RUEDY: 1995 to 1997.

Q: Were you to seeing a change in the impact of computers, the Internet, the whole thing which must've been relatively new. The Soviets had their specialized computers, but this openness of sharing must have been a new game for them.

RUEDY: It was. I remember being invited to MGU (the state university there in Moscow) to meet with some students in physics. I thought I was going to be shown around with lots of test tubes and machines and vials that I probably shouldn't be touching, but instead what I found was that this very entrepreneurial teacher had set up a whole roomful of computers. His students were not working on physics; they were working on setting up this computer lab. They had gotten onto the Internet, and they were fervent, they were working around the clock to suddenly tap into all these new sources of information. He, I believe, had the idea that he was going to make money off of this somehow. I think this was the whole idea. Some of them were very entrepreneurial and were trying to find ways to augment their meager incomes using their labs or whatever, for example, the setting up of this computer lab. I think it is pretty much complete

now, an attempt to link all of the universities by computer. I've been away from it for while, but it must be complete by now.

Q: Were you feeling the basic collapse of the economy at that time? The whole Soviet controlled system had broken down, everything was up for grabs, but there was really nothing to replace it.

RUEDY: There were so many people, especially the elderly. There were two groups I really felt for: the elderly whose pensions had simply disappeared with the new economy and the children whose parents couldn't support them and they just started living on the streets. There was an incredible number of children about nine, ten, eleven years old who lived on the streets simply because their parents couldn't take care of them. I have the privilege to be a member of the Protestant Chaplaincy and one of its major projects was a series of soup kitchens. The number of meals our church provided was staggering. We had some of those people come in and talk to us, people who used our soup kitchens. It was heartbreaking. There were, for example, older women who had been school teachers, and they were very, very correct and proper and educated and well spoken, but they didn't have enough to eat. They were surviving by coming to this soup kitchen. It was very tragic, and there didn't seem to be a whole lot of concern on the part of the Russian government about this. I also have to say the Russian Orthodox Church didn't seem to be stepping up to the plate either. By the time I left we were trying to engage some particular individual neighborhood Orthodox churches and trying to work with them to see what we can do together so that the soup kitchens wouldn't be just some American thing. I think slowly they were starting to come around, but that was not in their book, not something they automatically thought they were responsible for.

Q: How about other countries, particularly France and Germany? Were they getting into the science field and that sort of thing?

RUEDY: There was great concern about the Russian scientists. I think Germany, in particular, was using their very well thought out, very effective apprentice training program. They had for years offered people from all over the world the opportunity to come to Germany, learn German, and work to learn trades. I think we saw that quite a few of the 9/11 hijackers had ended up in Germany doing this very thing. They have attracted people from all over the world and what happens is eventually these people become the business leaders, scientific leaders, and speak German and they have connections with Germany in that way. I think that Germany was quite active. The European Union also had various programs for scientists; there was a lot of attention being paid. We did a lot of work with the Russian Academy of Sciences. I would say that the major European countries were very involved just like we were. They were very involved with the ISTC. People just realized that a) we had all of these scientists running around who needed money, and b) there were bodies in the world willing to pay them for their expertise in North Korea or Iran or Iraq and c) the Russian economy desperately needed new products, all of these things to improve the economy, and the research component was not there, we needed to get them oriented in a new direction.

Q: How did you find the non-governmental organizations' response to this particular issue?

RUEDY: The human rights organizations were very active, including the Helsinki Commission,

though, of course, that's not exactly an NGO. I worked for one year in the Science and Technology Office, and then I was offered a position in the political section in external affairs. My colleagues in internal affairs would have had more to do with the NGO's; that's an area where I don't have a lot of background.

Q: You did external affairs from '96 to '97?

RUEDY: Yes.

Q: What did that involve?

RUEDY: Again, I was the junior person so I got the Iraq account; I got basically the rogue country accounts, and the UN, Afghanistan. It was wonderful; I had just such an amazingly rich experience. It was just one year but it seems like a lot longer. One of my very first assignments was to accompany the Assistant Secretary for NEA (Near East Bureau) to a meeting with Foreign Minister Primakov. The occasion was we had just bombed Iraq; this was a discrete surgical bombing under President Clinton. It turns out the Russian equivalent of our Assistant Secretary had been in Baghdad at the time of the bombing and had not been officially told, according to him by our government, that they were going to do this. It was a bit frosty at that meeting. I could see that I was going to have a tough time; this was not going to be easy.

I found that once I started working with people at my level, the Russian diplomats were extremely well informed, fair minded, even idealistic about that part of the world. I had so many really good conversations with them. They were off in an annex, all of the offices that were dealing with countries I was dealing with were in an annex across the street from the main MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) building. I got so I knew the guards; I knew everybody there because I was there daily delivering one demarche or another. They teased me that they were going to give me an office because I spent so much time there. I found them really good colleagues. That was not what I expected at all. Even on Afghanistan where we didn't see eye-to-eye, I thought it was really, really important that we share some information. I got permission from Washington to start sharing information with them about what we thought, not our political analysis, but just basic information about where help was needed, with statistics, to demonstrate to them that we were concerned about the people of Afghanistan. We did not have these big geopolitical plans, but we were like the Russians in that we were concerned about stability, about what was going to happen to the people.

Q: The Taliban had not taken over the country completely?

RUEDY: They were in the process. I did a lot of reporting on what the Russians shared with me; I shared with them, they shared with me. These were younger diplomats; I always appreciated dealing with the younger diplomats. They really did have a different attitude and mind set; and they really did want to work with us. They did see that together we could solve some problems in Afghanistan. I look back on that with some professional satisfaction.

Q: Was there concern on their part about the Taliban?

RUEDY: Yes, there was. Some of the hardliners in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of course, blamed us for the Taliban too. That could be argued either way, I guess. I learned a lot about the history of Afghanistan in talking to the Russians. The Russians usually know their areas very well; they don't move their diplomats around as much as we do. These young diplomats spoke the languages, they'd been in country, they stuck with those countries and became real experts. I learned a lot from them. About that time Ambassador Pickering gave me some material about Afghanistan that had just been recently declassified. I learned a lot by reading this big thick notebook. I began to see the complexity and began to understand some of what the Russians were saying and accusing us of. The Russians, of course, had very dirty hands in Afghanistan and these younger diplomats recognized that.

Q: Were they concerned about this spread of Islamic fundamentalism, the underbelly of what we call the "stans"?

RUEDY: Yes, most definitely. It was interesting because some of the diplomats I worked with were from the more Muslim parts of the Soviet Union and may have been Muslims themselves. They had been educated in Soviet schools and so on; I think that's a very interesting thing to remember in considering the whole problem of Islam in the former Soviet Union is that at least for certain generations that share that Soviet education for good or for bad, but it is a kind of a glue that holds the thing together. The concern was there definitely, and I think we saw it with Putin, his concern about Chechnya and Dagestan. They really do believe there are certain Islamic groups that want to break off portions of Russia, and they're just not going to allow that to happen. This is a major issue. The Russian diplomats that I talked to very early on, even before it got in the press, were convinced that the trouble in Chechnya was stirred up by outsiders, by people from the Middle East. There was very quick identification with the United States after 9/11 that we both have people from the Middle East trying to destroy us. Of course, a lot of our human rights organizations were saying no, this Chechnya thing is definitely a legitimate desire for self-government, self-determination and the Russians are just grinding them down. The Russian government just doesn't see it that way.

Q: How about North Korea?

RUEDY: I didn't have North Korea, thank goodness. I've never dealt much with North Korea.

Q: You say you had U.N. affairs?

RUEDY: Yes, I had U.N. affairs.

Q: How were we viewing the role of Russia in the U.N. at that time?

RUEDY: Obviously, the Russians continue to be major players in the Security Council. I think both countries were trying to figure out ways to reform the UN so as to better reflect the new world situation we find ourselves in. There was a lot of consultation between the United States and Russia about the future of the UN. Obviously, when Israel is involved, or certain other hot button issues, we don't see eye-to-eye. It is my understanding that in our views of how to

proceed with reforming the U.N., the United States and Russia often were closer than we were with say France because we both had similar goals. That was very interesting to watch. The Russians were quite upset about what they perceived as the United States getting rid of Boutros-Gali and putting in someone the United States approved of in his place; they see Kofi Annan as an American plant; they blamed Madeleine Albright for that. That didn't go over very well; there was a lot of tension around that.

Q: Was terrorism a major concern of ours by this time?

RUEDY: The embassy was shot at. Someone – and I don't remember if they ever caught anyone – set up one of these RPG's in an alleyway right across from the embassy, shot across the street and hit two floors below where I was standing; the whole building shook. This was not too long after the Oklahoma City bombing so we didn't know if the building was going to collapse or what was going to happen. That shook everybody up. I don't know that we were that concerned about terrorism in Moscow or Russia itself because things were still pretty tightly controlled. At that time we had people from the embassy going down to Chechnya – there came a time when nobody was allowed to go there. When I was there people were still going there and reporting on the situation. So I guess it was just a little bit early; we were all shocked back here in Washington when we read about the bombings in the Metros and the schools and that sort of thing. That's not something we would have contemplated when I was there.

Q: How was morale at the embassy at this point?

RUEDY: Moscow's a tough place. We knew that before we went out. There was the compound which I think gave everybody a sense of security in a way, but it also felt very claustrophobic; actually, for people with families I think it was really tough. My husband and I took two teenagers over there and that was amazingly difficult.

Q: Where did they go to school?

RUEDY: They went to school right on the compound. It was an excellent school. Both my children did very well, they profited thereby. My daughter learned Russian and now she's a professional dealing with Russian affairs. I think it was just a matter of people being squeezed into a very small space, and seeing the boss or seeing the secretary that you had words with that day and then seeing them that night at the gym. It was very difficult to get away from work; of course, you were right there on call too so it was not unusual for people to go home for dinner and then back to do work at the embassy.

Q: Was the KGB security apparatus pretty well gone?

RUEDY: No, absolutely not. There was still a lot of that. My boss, for example, in the EST unit was followed for a few days when he first arrived. There was still a lot of that going on. When I got back to Washington, I got stung because there was this young officer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Russian Embassy who wanted to talk to me about CSCE/OSCE and so we had a couple of meetings. Eventually, I found out he was KGB; I had no idea and that was really a blow to my pride because I thought I could tell. This young man just seemed, we talked

about preparing a Thanksgiving turkey and it seemed very innocuous, but I got called in.

Q: Where was this going? Was this leading to recruiting you or?

RUEDY: I have no idea. I think he was probably young and enthusiastic and didn't know where he was going with it either. He was just doing something he could report.

Q: It sounds as though the KGB hadn't gotten the word.

RUEDY: Well, you know they installed that listening device in one of our conference rooms not that long ago, after Powell was Secretary. They were still very much looking out after us.

Q: I can't think of anything worse than having to listen to what went on in that room.

RUEDY: Well, people were saying this particular room was being used for bridal shower, baby showers, etc.

Q: I remember when we were in Belgrade where the phones were all bugged, my wife spent an inordinately long time on the telephone organizing an international Girl Scout meeting. I'm sure there were people from the secret police who knew all the ins and outs of organizing a Girl Scouts meeting.

RUEDY: They were still very much looking out after us.

Q: But you didn't feel that they were provocateurs at that time?

RUEDY: I didn't experience anything like that. There is a church that sits at one end of the compound and that has traditionally been considered a KGB listening post. It's a beautiful church with a lovely spire. My daughters, who were very adventurous, decided they were going to go visit this church; I didn't know anything about this, I was at work. The two of them, they both speak some Russian, went over and asked if they might see the inside of the church. They were met by a priest from the Orthodox Church, who seemed delighted to see them. He took them around, showed them around, let them ring the bells. So if that was still a KGB listening post, it was very well disguised. I was beside myself when I heard what they had done, but they said that the man had invited them back, had given them books, and had been a very good host.

Q: What about the openness of society, getting out and around?

RUEDY: That did not seem to be a big problem. People didn't hesitate to talk to us, especially if they found out we could speak a little Russian, and they seem to very eager to talk to us including people out in the countryside. We did a lot of weekend trips; I didn't sense that there was any concern. It was so different from when we were in East Germany where if we went to visit someone we would have to hide our car. I didn't sense any of that. People seemed to speak quite freely. Even the diplomats seemed to speak quite freely. I don't know what it's like now; I understand things are changing. My daughter leaves on Tuesday for a three-week trip so I'll be anxious to hear her impressions because she is in the human rights area.

RALPH H. RUEDY
Deputy Public Affairs Officer
Moscow (1995-1997)

Ralph Ruedy was born and raised in Iowa. Between receiving his bachelor's degree from Iowa State University and his master's from Duke University, he spent five years serving in the U.S. Navy in Vietnam. Mr. Ruedy joined USIA in 1974. His overseas posts include East Berlin, Dusseldorf, Bonn, and Moscow. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. You left there in '95 or when was it?

RUEDY: I left there in '94 and went into a year of Russian language training and then went to the American embassy in Moscow from '95-'97.

Q: OK we will pick that up then.

Today is the 10th of May 2005. Ralph how did you find Russian?

RUEDY: I found Russian difficult and I knew it would be. I'm not a particularly gifted linguist. I learned German the easy way from my grandfather and my parents growing up but Russian was something else again. I knew that I wasn't the gifted language student because I had struggled with Vietnamese before going to Vietnam in the Navy and then later had some training in Persian and Farsi as well before going to Iran, just a basic courtesy level but those experiences let me know that language came more easily to other people sometimes than it did to me.

Q: How old were you when you were taking this?

RUEDY: Oh my, I was in my fifties. I was in my mid-fifties.

Q: You are a little bit late, as you are supposed to learn it before you hit twenty.

RUEDY: That's absolutely right. But I came to the assignment in Russia more or less as serendipity because my wife is a Foreign Service officer as well and we were looking around for tandem assignments to go overseas. Tandem assignments are very difficult to find and they are generally available at larger embassies and of course Rome and Paris and London are a little bit more difficult to get. There was nothing available at any of those places but the personnel list in Moscow indicated two appropriate openings. We bid on them and off we went. I must admit I had no particular interest in studying Russian or in Russian history or things Russian. I had never served in that part of the world so I didn't really know what to expect. My wife had had some background. She had had some Russian language in college and also studied Russian literature and Russian history and found that all very interesting so I thought well I'll do my best and off we will go to Moscow and do Russian language. I found Russian language tough but you take the

Woody Hayes approach to language learning. You hit it each morning and a cloud of dust and three yards and you hope you get a first down and make it to the next step and that's what happened. I did my year of Russian language and it was tough but I came out of it with a 3-3 and I suppose there are 3-3s and there are 3-3s. In some cases one clears the high bar elegantly and in other cases one makes it to the top and the bar is jiggling and you wind up in the dust taking a deep breath and maybe I fell into the latter category.

Q: Well Ralph you went to Moscow, you were there again from when to when?

RUEDY: I was there from '95-'97. I got there in July approximately of '95 and left there in July of '97.

Q: What was your position?

RUEDY: I was deputy public affairs officer and we had a very large USIS operation, certainly the largest in the world. We had quite large programs thanks to the Freedom Support Act. By this time USIA funding and USIA leadership and USIA everything was pretty much in tatters. But, in that part of the world, thanks to the Freedom Support Act, we had very, very large programs, which relied on sort of clones of programs that USIA had been doing successfully for years. We had a very large program for example to bring graduate students to the United States to study law, business administration, economics and government.

Q: This is brand new because prior to that they had all gone over to study science.

RUEDY: That is correct, they had wanted to study science and selected only people that were absolutely reliable and all the rest of it. Here we basically did our own selection, we ran our own selection process working with a couple of really good NGOs (non-governmental organizations) Acter and IREX who had lots of experience in that part of the world. Anyway, we conducted these programs and they were frankly clones of the Fulbright graduate program, the same basic mechanisms, the same basic approach, the same basic selection criteria. We got some really, really good people, bright young people that would come to the States for a year and in many cases in that year earn a masters degree. They just did really well, spoke good English and all the rest of it.

Q: It must have been an exciting time, you had not been an old Soviet hand but I mean things had really just had been uncorked there. Could you describe kind of the working atmosphere?

RUEDY: It is absolutely true, uncorked is a good description because suddenly all kinds of things were possible. The Russians were friendly and interested though some of the Russian officials were a little bit standoffish and some of them tended to be kind of stuck in the bureaucratic mechanism of the past. I remember one go-around that we had with the ministry of culture. They had perceived that the cultural agreement that we had signed way back in Soviet days had expired and the cultural agreements were very, very detailed lists of what they would do and what we would do. The cultural agreements tended actually to circumscribe reciprocal cultural activities, so we didn't really want a cultural agreement but they insisted on it. It expired and they needed a new one, it was just the way it was done. So we worked out not a cultural

agreement but a statement of principles or something like that I think we called it. It basically called for just lots and lots of contact and the governments not getting in the way of that but encouraging it and working to facilitate it whenever possible, that is what we were trying to do.

Q: How about the people who were working for the embassy, the Russians, for your thing, how did you find that?

RUEDY: We had terrific Russian employees and I think that was the mainstay of our capacity in Russia. We had a good group of Foreign Service officers. It was still USIS at that point, a large USIS operation and I think we had 14, 15 officers, 15 Americans all together and probably 40 or 50 Russian employees. The Russian employees were outstanding; some of them had master's degrees and some had experience in the United States but not in all the cases. But, I think they also shared a commitment really to engagement with the West and engagement with the United States. They were interested in the U.S. and they felt as good Russians it was important for them to do this. So, they were outstanding, very energetic, great cooperation and that went from everybody from the senior cultural people to the drivers some of whom spoke a little bit of English, many of whom didn't but they were just all a joy to work with, they were just great folks to work with.

Q: You were working on the cultural side is that right?

RUEDY: I was working on both the press and the cultural side. The PAO who was Paul Smith my first year and Bob Gosende the second year. I was chief operating officer or something like that. So, I was the person that was making the trains run on time or trying to within that big organization. I perhaps put it into too glossy terms but I tried to get out as much as possible as well and participate in programs and have lots and lots of contact with Russians. Basically my job was to keep the operation running and to worry about things like budgets and country plans which we were still doing and mission program plans and pulling all that kind of stuff together and making sure that the mail from Washington got answered. I made sure that the reporting that we were supposed to be doing on our exchange programs and all that stuff was getting done so it was a good job, I enjoyed it.

Q: What about did you have much contact one way or the other with the Russian universities?

RUEDY: Yes, yes we did. That was a big area that we were interested in and concerned about and most of that went to the cultural attaché. Rosemary DiCarlo was cultural attaché and she is an old Soviet hand, really outstanding, excellent Russian, had a PhD. in Russian literature or Russian art, really a strong background. Some of the people in the section in USIS did. Paul Smith who was my boss as PAO had excellent Russian, which he learned in the army and later on, had served in exhibits in the old Soviet Union, traveling exhibits and all that stuff so he really knew the territory. As I say, great people to work with and learn from. I felt a little bit of an outsider to that Soviet club but I found the assignment tremendously, tremendously rewarding. I had talked about how I looked at going to Russia and Russian language with a little bit of trepidation, who needs this at this point in my career but just getting over there the culture was so immensely rich and Russian art and Russian literature and Russian history and religion and everything else.

Q: In going to the universities, did you get the feeling that they were sort of restructuring themselves? I mean it had been the Soviet system and then all of a sudden things were opening up and things were based on a Marxist course. I can't think of anybody who would be less desired than a professor of Marxist theory or something like that.

RUEDY: I think some of the professors of Marxist theory were left out in the cold. Others in economics or people in other fields were looking around and seeing new possibilities and new opportunities. The younger ones I think shared in that excitement and the dynamism. There was a massive restructuring. I think the Russians, were just really excellent at muddling through. They would improvise, they would kind of figure out a way and they would make it work. I grew tremendously admiring of the way the Russians were able to cope, were able to do things and that certainly was called upon in the situation that existed in '95-'97. Universities had been teaching organizations with a heavily Marxist/Leninist outlook. Obviously they were teaching students to be good Marxist/Leninists. Serious research was conducted not by university professors but by people in the academy of sciences or the academy of arts, that is where the art or where the science or where the research got done. These organizations were massively funded by the old Soviet government as well. That funding was drying up so you had these old institutes and these wonderful 19th century buildings in Moscow, which were desperately improvising to keep body and soul together. A couple of the institutes I remember had rented space to American companies that were coming over. IBM (International Business Machines) and others would need space so they would rent office space in these prestigious old institute buildings and I had the impression of sort of the southern plantation or whatever now no longer prospering, renting out rooms in order to produce some cash flow to keep the place going.

Q: Tara has gone bed and breakfast.

RUEDY: Yes that's right, exactly. That applied especially in the arts. My daughter took trumpet lessons there from a guy that we got to know pretty well who was a world-class trumpet teacher. He was basically trying to keep his faculty and keep his organization going and the way he did that was to teach students who could pay him in marks or in dollars and then he also had pretty good German. He spoke no English but he had pretty good German so we communicated mostly in German. He then had all kinds of connections in Germany and basically would spend maybe half the year in Germany performing or doing stuff and I think earning enough money to keep the institute at the organization that he was attached to, going. He had a couple of really good students and the good students would find jobs in Germany or even in the United States, in one case, and you know one thing or another. But people were tremendously resourceful about doing stuff.

Q: Was it apparent that there were people who were being left out, one thinks of the pensioners, army personnel and all of that?

RUEDY: Very much so. We saw the pensioners, these little old ladies who would knit stuff and sell it in the subway or out on the streets when the temperature was ten or fifteen below zero. I remember one memorable sight. People were always selling stuff. I remember walking past one guy who was selling, what, three frozen fish and four beets he had laid out in front of him and

that's what he was trying to sell. You had the feeling of tremendous want and need and real struggle on the part of a lot of people as well and your heart would go out to those people.

I worked with the Protestant Chaplaincy, my whole family did. The Protestant Chaplaincy had a wonderful program, soup kitchens basically, of providing a hot meal every day I think at a number of locations around Moscow. The people that came in were usually older people, pensioners who just didn't have any money and we would dish out a nice bowl of soup to them. It was a clean well lighted place where they could come and eat and they came by the hundreds. Some of these were old army veterans that were wearing their medals and stuff and you thought, man, these people have been there and done that and you had tremendous admiration for them but here they were kind of left high and dry when the world had changed, everything had changed. I had that strong feeling a lot. You would hear stories from people. I remember a college professor that I got to know. She told me that she had warned her elderly mother that the ruble is collapsing, take your money out of the bank account and buy stuff, buy stuff because it's not going to be worth anything. She had a pretty good savings, I don't recall the amount, but she said my mother this is just the way she was, she had the money in the account and that it earned three and four percent and that's the way it had always been and she couldn't get her mind wrapped around the idea that it wouldn't always be that way. So basically the money that she had sold in her old age within a period of weeks, months, went to where it wouldn't pay for a hamburger at the new McDonalds.

Q: Was there an effort on our part as we were doing this, this is a very difficult time obviously for the Russians to both be helpful and not to in a way rub their nose in their problems and this. Sort of avoid triumphantism?

RUEDY: Absolutely, and from the public affairs standpoint, from the public diplomacy standpoint we were acutely aware of that. We were acutely aware that this was not the time for crowing or it wasn't a time for humiliation or whatever. It was a time for a new start and I don't know, there are different theories on who won the Cold War and why. But it also, I think, represents a huge victory on the part of a new generation of Russian people and I think lots of younger knew that the old system was not working. The old system was not working and they probably did as much to get rid of it as anybody. I don't know, you can give lots of credit to Reaganomics and missile business and so on but I think lots of young Russians just realized that it had to change.

Q: Well basically the system itself collapsed so it was in a way, it wasn't the outside pressures as much as just the system ran out of steam.

RUEDY: I agree with you. A good friend of mine, an American who has done a lot of Russian watching said that he felt that basically the old system had continued to gain legitimacy for much longer than it could have or should have or earned that legitimacy by claiming the legacy of the victory of World War II. The Great Patriotic War had been such an absolutely draining and emotionally overwhelming experience for Russia. With 27 million dead all the rest...you would see that in the last few days with Putin still reviewing the troops on Red Square.

Q: The 60th anniversary.

RUEDY: The 60th anniversary victory...

Q: It's been all over our TV with President Bush and all the world leaders at Red Square.

RUEDY: Yeah, but this guy felt that the old Soviet system had gained legitimacy or continued to have a hold on the Russian people because of the searing experience of World War II which they had won. Then when that World War II generation, the people who had been through that and had been branded with this patriotism of the great patriotic war, when that generation was replaced by a new generation who had that from the history books but not from personal experience, this generation was willing to look at the Soviet system and say the hell with it, this system is not working, this system is not doing anything. It's not producing for me and my family and it's not producing anything for my country.

Q: Did you get any...sort of the public affairs side, there must have been quite a revolution going on there especially about the media, the international, I mean all of that?

RUEDY: Oh yeah. That was going great guns and new newspapers were being founded and all kinds of stuff was going on. It was a period when things were pretty, well really open. It was the period too when this was sort of below my radar screen one had a sense that it was going on but this was a time when resources were being sold off, privatization, it was a period when fortunes were being made overnight.

Q: The robber barons and the Russian mafia as it was called.

RUEDY: The robber barons. When a guy who was really, really fast on his feet and really in touch with things could wind up controlling half the world's tin supply if you knew what you were doing and if you were willing to do whatever you needed to do to get there. It was an amazing period, an amazing era and I think I don't know, freedom of the press, freedom of speech all that stuff, I mean in the abstract, yeah, absolutely important I have no doubt about that.

A lot of media stuff was being done also to provide mouthpieces. I think there was also a kind of overhang of Marxist era, how you did things under the Marxist system because agitprop and making people aware. I mean this is a big thing for a doctrinaire Marxist and control of the media and shaping public opinion this is important. I think some of the people who made fortunes very quickly also realized that in order to hold onto those fortunes they had to make their voices heard. They had to, not propaganda in a negative sense, but they couldn't just stand by and sit on their money. They had to be engaged, they had to be involved and they had to help create political conditions that would nurture the kinds of things that they were involved in, put it that way. So people that were organizing free media, I mean well it's never quite as idealistic I suppose as one projects. These weren't John Peter Zenger types who were interested in free speech in the abstract. These were people with very definite political opinions that they wanted to put out there. I don't know, maybe part of the read on Putin is an attempt to roll back some of that and overreacting to it. I don't approve of a lot of what Putin's been doing in the last year or two years, but I think when Putin came to power he maybe had a sense of rolling back some of

what he saw as the power that had accumulated in private hands rather than in the government hands.

I was there for the big election, in '96 I think it was, when there was much concern about the communists coming back and Yeltsin being tossed out or support for him being much reduced because of the economic conditions we've talked about. There was general disgust and distrust of the privatization process and a feeling among many people that things had gone fundamentally off the rails so there was real concern that the communists would come back. I think in the mythology that Putin and others maybe bought into it was the media and the media portrayal of Yeltsin during that very pivotal election campaign that really produced their mindset that the media won it for Yeltsin. The media are the folks that kept the communists from coming back and out of that grew maybe an exaggerated sense of the role that the media played in shaping public opinion and voter opinion in the new Russia. There did, I think, emerge this myth that it was the way the media strongly backed the Yeltsin camp and the "liberals" or "reformers" or "free market economic types" that kept the communists from making a comeback in that crucial election.

Q: Did you sense that the new cliquy informed people were getting their news from CNN (Cable News Network) and from BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and just other news sources and the Internet? Was the new generation coming in that was well plugged into the world net as they call it?

RUEDY: Yes, yeah, Russians are very smart and you had one hundred percent literacy. One of the things that the communists obviously did was to have this excellent educational system that reached down to everybody. Young people were very literate and very plugged in and very internationally minded. I'm a real novice coming into this but the old westernizer versus the Russophile thing that the Russian history 101 sort of starts with I think you felt that yeah this was very true. On the one hand the great sense of reaching out and being international and reaching out to the international community and being Europeans and being part of the world. On the other hand a sense of Russia's special place and Russia as a special mission, Russia with a special soul, Russia with a special mentality, something that made Russians special. I think there was that kind of thing going on even among young people who were defining the new Russianness, what it meant to be Russian in the post-Soviet period. They were plugged in internationally and at the same time I think they saw themselves as wanting to find, wanting to forge a separate, unique Russian way and again I think that's what is going on now with Russia today.

Q: With Putin.

RUEDY: With Putin and with what is happening in Russia today.

Q: Well, you know one of the things about the Soviet Union and some of the other eastern European countries, particularly the Soviet Union is that all the news is about Moscow or St. Petersburg or all of that but you go 20 miles out of the Moscow limits and you are back in the 14th century where women are wearing yolks to carry their water. Did you get out, I mean, I'm not talking about the other cities but out in the countryside? What was happening there?

RUEDY: I didn't get out as much as I wanted to. One of the big emphases we made in public diplomacy in USIS was to expand from Moscow and St. Petersburg. We made particular efforts to do stuff outside of the two major cities where there had been some western contact. We established American corners, little mini-libraries. This was not a kind of thing that Washington in those days at USIA was in favor of. We had given up the outreach libraries, but in Russia, that is what you really needed. So we established these little American corners where there was a computer connection and that was major and also a small collection of books and things like that. Every once in a while we would try to get out and do a little program there, do a little speaker or a film or something like that. I forget how many American corners we established but we tried to, I think we had about a dozen or so. We had put a branch public affairs officer out in Vladivostok before I got there. I made it out to Vladivostok a couple of times, up to Khabarovsk and places out there a little bit in the Russian far east. One thing that the PAO and I felt strongly about was the importance of putting a branch public affairs officer in Ekaterinburg as well. We had had a small consulate there but no public affairs...

Q: Sverdlovsk.

RUEDY: Sverdlovsk, in the Urals. So anyway, we wanted to put a branch public affairs officer at the very small consulate in Ekaterinburg. Washington fought us tooth and nail on that because this is a period of downsizing and USIA is getting more budget cuts and so on. But we finally got a BPAO out there. I think we had to give up a position in Moscow and give up two positions in St. Petersburg but we did get a BPAO out in Ekaterinburg. The people that we had as BPAOs in all of the cities were excellent, fluent Russian speakers and they got out and about a lot. So we were doing the kind of outreach to the Russian hinterland that we needed to do. I got out there as much as I could but in general we encouraged the staff to travel. We even set more or less arbitrarily limits that of the people that go on Muskie grants this year only x-percentage can be from Moscow and St. Petersburg. You got to get people from the provincial universities and you've got to get people from here, there and everywhere. We were as I say pretty successful doing that.

Q: What was your impression of places like Khaba...I just can't pronounce it.

RUEDY: Khabarovsk.

Q: Khabarovsk and of Vladivostok when you went out there?

RUEDY: Conditions out there were a lot worse than in Moscow. A lot was going on in Moscow and St. Petersburg but those other places were struggling. We were working pretty closely with AID and AID had a pretty good program where they would identify areas where the local administration was particularly amenable to change and reform and doing things. Instead of putting a little bit here and a little bit there across this vast Russian region you would pick out particular cities or particular regions that showed promise. The idea was that you would get something going there and that would create a spark and that worked I think in places like Saratov and Nizhny Novgorod and Novgorod near St. Petersburg was another site that was picked out for that. Those things worked and you know you sensed that stuff was happening.

Other places where the provincial authority, the local authority was backward leaning or corrupt or just not with it very much things just weren't happening. That applied certainly in Vladivostok. There was always talk about Vladivostok becoming this great place on the Pacific, and you got out there and you thought this is not doing too well. Khabarovsk on the other hand seemed to be doing better, interesting. Some of those places had been closed cities and no westerner had gotten into places like Nizhny Novgorod because you were right on the Volga. I think they were building submarines in Nizhny Novgorod somebody told me and certainly Vladivostok, the big Pacific port, was another place that was closed to westerners.

Q: I've seen pictures showing the fleet just rusting away. In a way it was very sad, I've always admired Russian naval architecture.

RUEDY: For me it was interesting because in Vladivostok out there just on the hill below the consulate were a couple of Russian cruisers, Russian destroyers that were just sitting there. They hadn't gotten underway in years and they probably couldn't get them underway now. These were the kinds of ships when I was an Ensign in the United States Navy serving on board my destroyer in the Mediterranean guarding...on the screen around the carrier we would be looking through our binoculars at those guys looking with their binoculars at us. They were at that time making a big effort to mount a naval presence in the Mediterranean and the Pacific and everywhere. They were there and now they were tied up along the rusty pier in Vladivostok and like I say I don't think you could get up steam in those ships any more.

Q: What about Americans in Russia, exchange professors, not tourists but others who were coming with NGOs and all that. What was your impression of their impact?

RUEDY: Generally speaking very, very positive. We had a number of people who were working with NGOs that were helping to administer our exchange programs. They call it American Councils because they continue to be active in other countries of the former Soviet Union. Of course if you are a teacher of Russian in Ukraine or a teacher of Russian in Kazakhstan that doesn't win you many points so they had kind of reinvented themselves and done that very successfully. But Actor had a lot of young people in different locations across Russia. They were helping us open our American corners and recruiting for our Muskie program and youth exchange programs. IREX had people out in the field. The American Peace Corps was active. We had a number of Peace Corps volunteers and others, academic types. There were a couple of universities that were trying to launch university partnerships with different Russian universities. I was in general impressed with the effort that they were making and also the success that they were having and the reception that they got among the Russians. I was surprised there wasn't more of a residue of suspicion among the Russians but the Russians were pretty open to it.

Q: I've always felt that the Russians and the Americans really have quite dissimilar but at the same time kind of similar histories. As types they seem to get along pretty well wouldn't you say?

RUEDY: I've often thought of that: that maybe both the Russians and the Americans define ourselves in terms of the great centers of European culture, but not really. We feel that we have a separate, unique identity and a unique dynamism and an energy and a soul or whatever that these Europeans don't have any more.

Q: Europe is all cramped together you know.

RUEDY: That is right.

Q: We've got this big open space to keep moving.

RUEDY: Exactly and the Russians have the same mentality. I think at the same time the Russians, who were they, the Narodniki or whatever were talking about our unique separate...

Q: These were the people during the beginning of the 20th century who went out to the people.

RUEDY: At the same time they were making a plea for own separate Russian identity and literature and culture. You had guys like Ralph Waldo Emerson saying that here in the Untied States we have to create an American literature, which is separate from European literature. We are a worthy culture on our own and we have an American music to find our way to and an American way of doing things. So there is that identity and the Russians would often cite that.

Q: Did you see much impact with George Soros and his organization?

RUEDY: I did yes. Soros was doing good things and we would work with them. I don't have enough knowledge to really speak to that with authority but the Open Society Institute was doing some good things and we were certainly trying to accomplish the same things. I did have the impression sometimes and I can't really cite any specifics here that the attention span was a little shorter than what needed to be done. The Open Society Institute would get very interested in this that or the other and pump money into it for a year or two but then pull back from it a little bit and I think that it required a commitment for the long haul, let's put it that way. But no they were doing good things, as were other organizations that were there. Even now through the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy, these were the people who sponsored the soup kitchens, I got to know a number of Canadian Mennonites who were working with the Mennonite communities in Siberia and they were doing good work too. It was not proselytizing or whatever but it was economic development. It was establishing agriculture, new basis for agriculture, agriculture prosperity and stuff like that. So there were lots of people doing good things.

Q: Well, one of its difficult nuts to crack in Russia would be the agriculture side. They destroyed the peasantry, had these collective farms which we sort of collectivized our agriculture all over the world too but these ones were not efficient producers and the transportation system stinks and you know the delivery system...did you get involved in this at all?

RUEDY: No, not really. I was interested in it because I grew up in Iowa in a little agricultural town. I remember talking to a bunch of people, economists and others that were involved in agriculture or people who are now English teachers or English professors who had grown up on a collective farm or their dad was the chief of the collective farm. But no, I agree with you that agriculture was an area that was pretty much of a disaster and required major restructuring. I don't really have much of a sense of how successful they were at going about that. We did bring some people over in agricultural economics but I can't really speak with very much knowledge

about that.

Q: You mentioned it was a Protestant Chaplaincy and all. I was wondering whether there was a...problem is maybe not the right word but we have all these Christian groups and often very naïve and to my mind rather primitive types of not quite snake handlers but, I mean whatever you want to call to the far right or the far left of the Protestant religious spectrum, very fundamentalists and all that. Did you see any impact?

RUEDY: I didn't see much impact. I didn't have any contact with any of them. There were a few that passed through the Protestant Chaplaincy and you would get to meet them and chat. The Protestant Chaplaincy was interesting because it was non-denominational. The people running it were Presbyterians basically but they were retired and doing this for a couple of years. A lot of the people who came were Africans, African students actually who had come to Russia on scholarship back in the old Soviet days and they were going to study Marxism and go back to Ethiopia or wherever but were then kind of left high and dry. So there were some interesting cases along that line. Lots of third world types in general that would come to worship so their services were interesting, you got to meet some interesting people.

Q: Did you ever find yourself who were doing commands against the Russian Orthodox Church, which tends to be pretty conservative?

RUEDY: I didn't come up against it. I knew that the Russian Orthodox Church was not happy with proselytizing by American groups. Not many people who were involved with the Chaplaincy were Russians. Only a very few that were Russians. We had some interesting contacts actually with some people from the Russian Orthodox Church both informal and formal.

I remember once before Easter my daughter who speaks pretty good Russian and her sister were over at the Russian Orthodox Church that was directly across from the embassy compound in Moscow. During the whole Soviet period it was affectionately referred to as our Radiant Lady of Perpetual Watchfulness or something like that because it had been taken over by the KGB (State Security Committee). With the steeple there was an excellent capacity for listening in on what was going on at the embassy. The radiation stuff wasn't going on anymore but there was some speculation that that is where it was coming from or at least where some of it came from. But anyway, my daughter and her sister were over there before Easter and got into a conversation with a couple of the young priests and they gave them a guided tour of the church and said, "Here we are rebuilding, this all used to be electronics and stuff like that." They were very friendly and very forthcoming and in a number of other cases I would just wander into a church and get into a conversation with a Russian Orthodox clergy and they would be very friendly, approachable and have questions and I would have questions and we would have a good exchange to the extent that my language permitted.

Q: How about while you were there the security situation, one the old KGB residue, were they messing around and then just plain the security with criminality, was that a problem?

RUEDY: Embassy visitors were warned about it and one group that we were warned about particularly were what we called "street urchins," These were gypsy kids and groups of ten or

fifteen or twenty of them would hit sometimes a westerner and it would all happen very quickly. The people would be stripped of purse and billfold and everything. One place where one felt particularly vulnerable were these long “perihouts”, I think they were called, long passageways under these big wide Moscow streets because when you got into those there was no way out. You had the exit behind you and the exit way, way in front of you and in between you were in the middle of this long tunnel so there you were kind of vulnerable. I know some people who got hit by the street urchins and got roughed up a little bit and had their valuables stolen. There were a couple of occasions when I thought they were kind of looking to me and I would walk next to a wall. I had one of these umbrellas where you pushed the button and the umbrella thing comes out and I remember a couple of occasions when I thought they were kind of scouting me up and I pushed the button and my umbrella would come out and it would look a lot like a club. So yeah there were these instances with petty crime.

Also not only the purse snatching but the mafia types were around. Once there was an explosion at a little kiosk not far from the embassy. The word was that they had not paid protection money and had been taken care of. While I was there we did have an attack on the embassy. The RPG (rocket propelled grenade) was fired against the side of the embassy and made a hole about a foot and a half across, something like that in the facade of the embassy building. The round went through and hit a Xerox copying machine on the other side or a safe. Anyway that kind of absorbed the shock so people in the room were not injured. I was talking on the phone at the time and I remember hearing this ‘whomp’ and I thought this is not ordinary. I quickly wrapped up the phone conversation and then did exactly the wrong thing, went to the window to look out.

Q: Oh yeah. But were you harassed at all by the security people or that...?

RUEDY: No, no I don’t recall a single instance where I was harassed by the security people. The omnipresence of security and guards and police and the feeling of being watched that I experienced in East Berlin all over the place I did not have in Russia at the time. Some of the old Soviet types remembered that that was the case always in the old Soviet Union, that you were always watched, that you were always followed, there was always someone there. I just didn’t have that feeling.

Q: Did Strobe Talbott play any role in what you were up to?

RUEDY: He did on the very high upper level; he was not somebody who was aware of me or what I was doing or anything like that. But they had established here in Washington a separate, I forget the exact timing of all of that, but the separate office that was responsible directly to the Secretary of State for Russia and the Newly Independent States (NIS) and that functioned de facto as a geographic bureau. I think they were involved early on in the Freedom Support Act in getting money for the kinds of things that we were doing in Russia. So, on the macro level, yeah, we did have one or was it two presidential visits while I was there as well. So it was a good deal of excitement in that regard also. But no I got involved more in that later on, by that time Talbott was deputy secretary. When I came back to Washington after my Moscow assignment, first of all I did a year at the senior seminar at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) which was tremendous and then I went into the rapidly imploding USIA and was involved there in East European and NIS affairs. Then we reorganized the office and split it up getting ready to merge into the State

Department. In their structure they had a de facto bureau for NIS affairs which was headed by Steve Sestanovich. This had been opened I think by Strobe Talbott and then Sestanovich inherited it when Talbott went to be deputy secretary.

But in Moscow our programs certainly benefited tremendously from the interest and the funding support that we were getting from the Washington side. That was really emphasizing engagement with Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union at a time when, as I say, USIA was basically imploding. People were doing the best they could and these were sharp, smart, very professional people but they just didn't have the funding to do things with the Fulbright program for example, the international visitors program like we should have been doing in Russia or the American corner or anything else. Basically we were scratching wherever we could and most of that seemed to be from the Freedom Support Act funding which at the time initially came through AID. We had a good relationship there with AID people. I think the relationship that we had with AID and USIS in Moscow was closer, better than the relationship that exists I think in other countries where AID is active and just from anecdotal stories that I've heard from USIS colleagues.

Q: Did you find that your office was playing any sort of a consulting or supporting role for the Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and the various Stans and the Baltic states?

RUEDY: Not really, no. I think these were separate countries, separate independent countries and I think we honored that in the abstract and in the concrete. They had separate embassies and separate PAOs and separate operations that were being supported by the same NGOs and things like that that were supporting us. Ours was a country program and we knew of colleagues working in Ukraine and working in Kazakhstan and the Baltics and the other places but our program was for Russia. We really didn't get into acting as a central control or something like that for programs that were going on in other NIS countries. They reported separately to Washington.

Q: Well, did the fighting in Chechnya play any role in or was it a problem, what was going on?

RUEDY: It was certainly there and festering and we didn't do anything. In fact, we were wanting to do more in the Caucasus but it was too dangerous, too tough. We did have a few exchange participants elsewhere in the region but yeah the fighting was going on. The first Chechnyan war, there was still a OSCU representation in Chechnya that was trying to do some stuff but no that was a difficult period that was just beginning. We didn't in Moscow feel a threat of Chechnyan terrorism or anything like that. It hadn't started, but certainly we were aware of the war and the difficulties that the Russian government was having in Chechnya. At the time I think there was also a feeling that if Chechnya gained autonomy, too much autonomy then there might be other regions of Russia that would be interested in breaking away as well or looking for more autonomy. There was I think concern about whether the center will hold or whether the Russian Federation was subject to further breakup. There was a tentativeness about the Russian Federation generally and the component parts.

Q: Was there anything in the USIA point of view over disputed territories for the Ukraine particularly around Sebastopol and that area?

RUEDY: No, not really. I think there the party line, the official government line was that the two parties just didn't work, didn't agree, but it didn't as I recall produce any tension or impact on politics, flurries of back papers and official texts and stuff like that for information section, press section, it just didn't.

Q: You didn't find yourself with any program that sort of inadvertently finds itself in the middle of any dispute or anything?

RUEDY: No, I don't recall that, I don't recall any problem like that.

Q: Well then after, gee whiz I think it was a very interesting time for you.

RUEDY: It was and in retrospect I'm almost sorry that we didn't try to stay for a third year. One had to declare pretty early on in the two years to extend for a third year. It seemed to fit with our children's school schedule as well because our daughter graduated from high school at the Anglo-American school in Moscow and she was off to college when we came back to the States. Our son who is three years younger we felt he would be able to do three years in an American high school in Fairfax County so it would be logical for their schooling to break in two years rather than for a third year.

MICHAEL A. BOORSTEIN
Deputy Director, Moscow Embassy Building Control Office
Washington, DC (1996-1998)

Mr. Boorstein was born in Washington, DC and was raised in that area. He was educated at Beloit College, the University of Colorado, Harvard University and the University of Turku in Finland. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, Mr. Boorstein specialized in administration and personnel, serving in Palermo, Rome, Ottawa, Warsaw Curacao, Moscow and Beijing. In addition, Mr. Boorstein played a major role in the planning and construction of US embassies in Moscow and Beijing and in the renovation of consulates and embassies throughout the globe. He spoke six foreign languages. Mr. Boorstein was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Why don't we pick this up the next time in '96?

BOORSTEIN: Right, when I left.

Q: Where did you go?

BOORSTEIN: I was assigned as the deputy director of the Moscow Embassy Building Control Office (MEBCO), which was managing the reconstruction of the embassy in Moscow.

Q: OK, today is the 12th of June 2006. Mike, I want to talk about...give us the background of this Moscow building project and then where you came in and what you were doing.

BOORSTEIN: OK, this is something that I've often felt the Office of the Historian should take it upon themselves to do a special history of how we came to have a secure embassy in Moscow because so much is a reflection of the history of U.S.-Soviet relations. It also is a bit of a microcosm of internal American politics and the interplay among the intelligence community, the Congress and the State Department, but that's another broader topic.

But almost as soon as the U.S. established diplomatic relations with the Soviet regime in the 1930s, there was a sense that we did not have proper facilities to conduct our business. There was an expectation, of course, that everything, every conversation was monitored, there was just no place to have a secure conversation and as the technology developed and we were able to have secure conversations there was still a feeling that even having a secure room within an insecure building was a point of vulnerability. Efforts started, as best as I can recall, in it in some earlier investigations I did into this, in the 1950s, to find a better place.

Now the location of the embassy at the time the construction started of the first phase of the project in 1979 was a building that I believe we occupied in the early 1950s. This was an office building that was built, I believe, in large measure by German prisoners of war that were kept on after 1945. This was a very fine location right along the ring road not too far from the Kremlin and it was a whole complex that had probably at the time it was build all of the American diplomats and staff support people lived on the compound because you had two housing wings, which were known as the south and the north wing, and in the middle, the central wing, was where the office building was but it also had when I arrive in 1978 on assignment, it had the Marine House, it had the defense attaché, the DCM's residence was probably I think that was more in the north wing but a good percentage of the housing even through the '70s and the early '80s was housed on that compound. Of course, you had the office buildings. The ambassadors office was on the tenth floor, the defense attaches office was above it, the communications unit was also on the same floor as the ambassador and then you had the 9th, the eighth and the seventh floor all had the political, economic and science sections and then the sections that dealt with the public and the administrative sections were all on the ground floor. The foreign commercial service was right around the corner but general services had its own compound, the doctor was there, the commissary was there, it was all a self-contained little city. I venture to say that in the '70s when the project was being designed there were maybe 150 Americans, now there are probably 600 Americans in Moscow.

Efforts were made, like I said, into the '50s and the '60s to identify new land. At the same time, the Soviet Union recognized that their embassy on 16th Street was inadequate so things developed where there was a reciprocal requirement for each country to have a new embassy. Well that really was a huge advantage and the two sides started to have talks in the '60s. I can't pinpoint the year but I believe the initial agreement that identified each property that was going to be provided by each country to the other was signed in 1969 and that gave the Soviet Union the Mt. Alto site, which had a lot of criticism because it was very high up, I believe it was a former veterans hospital that was surplus by the government and the land we got was behind the existing embassy to the West and it was a low area but it was a fairly good sized lot and we

wanted to build not only a new chancery office building but we wanted to have housing, mainly garden apartments, representational townhouses, we wanted to have a marine house and we wanted to build the American school. The Anglo-American School at the time was located elsewhere in the city and it was a very small school maybe it had 100-120 kids. So it was deemed adequate enough to build and plan for a school that might have 300 kids to allow for growth, so all on that same compound, the housing of about 125 families, which would have housed the bulk of the people that was anticipated.

Well, from 1969 to 1972, I believe it was there were negotiations on an agreement on conditions of construction, which was a document that would set in place the reciprocal regime for giving each country what it needed to build its embassy. So, if we were going to bring in materials and consider containers or big crates to be diplomatic pouches then the Soviets wanted the same privilege for anything that they would bring in. There were certain things that were spelled out in terms of the status of the workers, the inviolability of the sites and the records, the whole regime for who was going to inspect it and to what degree were they going to inspect or was there going to be no inspection of all of certain parts. It was all very detailed. It was hammered out for three years and there was a bit of an impasse and I believe it got to the point that when Kissinger was the national security advisor there was to be a summit with Nixon and Brezhnev and Kissinger let the word be know that to the State Department find a way to get this agreement done. Kissinger didn't want this to be an irritant in the relationship against the backdrop of Nixon's summit, I forget whether it was in Moscow or in Washington or wherever. So as a result, the agreement was signed.

In retrospect, when the first project failed because of a security compromise, it was felt that the haste in which it was finalized played into the Soviets hands because the deal was that a Soviet construction company was to do the site preparation, the excavation and the building of the frame of the office building. We didn't really care about the housing, but the frame of the building, even though we were allowed to have inspectors at the cement plant that made these molds for the framework for the beams, the cement pillars and whatever that went into the structure of the building.

So, it took a while between 1972 and when money was appropriated and the design was done. The U.S. chose Skidmore, Owens and Merrill to be the design firm and groundbreaking was held in October of 1979. The senior U.S. government representative at the groundbreaking was Daniel Boorstin, the Librarian of Congress at the time. (Throughout my adult life, I have been asked innumerable times if I am related to him, given the close spelling of our names. The truth of the matter is that we are not.) There was a big ceremony, the ambassador was Malcolm Toon, it was right before he left and Thomas J. Watson arrived a few weeks later. I remember the big tent, I was there as I was on assignment in Moscow so it was like I came back.

So construction progressed and it wasn't until 1985 when, in a routine test of one of the pillars by a super x-ray machine, that it was discovered that there were devices that had been implanted, and then a further inspection revealed that there were devices implanted in virtually every pillar, and it created a grid like an electrical grid, a passive electrical grid that would allow them to listen in. It was so unsophisticated that it caught everybody by surprise and, in effect, they did it to us even though we had inspectors. So the project was shut down and in the meantime, they

had proceeded to build their embassy on Mt. Alto. Evidence came out years later that our own intelligence services, the FBI, I believe, did some things in terms of tunneling and whatever so we weren't exactly pure as the driven snow either. But that was the Cold War.

After 1985, the project stopped in terms of building the chancery. The housing, the school, the marine house were all completed, I would like to say maybe about 1989-1990 and people moved into it but the nine story office building sat there like an abandoned hulk. It had been bricked in and the cement work was there and there were arguments what to do, what to do and finger pointing all over the place. The State Department you know, the CIA was accused of having demonstrated a great deal of hubris that they said, "Oh we don't care what they do to us, we can always overcome it." Well they were wrong. Congress wanted to know how much was it going to cost to fix it, how was it going to be fixed. So all of these different studies and commissions were done.

In 1989, the Department decided that the office of foreign buildings operations, which had managed the first Moscow project, had essentially failed and that they could not be trusted to manage any effort to create secure space in Moscow. So they created, this is when Ivan Selin was the under secretary for management and what was created was a special office that reported directly to the undersecretary for management and that was the Moscow embassy buildings control office or MEBCO. To head MEBCO the Department brought in a retired Navy captain named Carl Cristenson who had a career in the facility service of the Navy, in other words supervising Seabees, building hospitals, renovating bases, and he was an old salt in every sense of the word. He didn't care about the politics of the State Department; he was just there to build a building. So from 1989 to about 1992, he was part of the wrangling and the studies of what do we do with it? Do we tear the building down to the ground? Do we leave it there and make it unclassified and build a classified annex behind it? There was one proposal to move the building, to sell it to Archer, Daniels, Midland, you know the big grain commodities company, to use as a business center, and they were going to jack it up, put it on rollers and transport it to some other part of the city. Well that was kind of absurd, so that never happened. At the end of the day, there was a compromise not to tear down the entire building but to rebuild it, renovate it, deconstruct it down to a certain point so that the point that you built it up from was new construction and would be totally under our control.

Well, in the meantime, the Soviet embassy in Washington was done and then the Soviet Union fell, the Russian Federal was formed, and so we negotiated, after a decision was made, which was called Operation Top Hat, was made to do this, that money was appropriated, I think \$240 million was the budgeted amount and we then negotiated a new Conditions of Construction Agreement with the Russian Federation. The only lever we had was that in order for us to get what we wanted, we had to allow the Russians to move in to their chancery because it was all done. Their housing was done and operated, their school was up and running but they were not occupying their chancery.

So we let go of our last piece of leverage in order for them to agree to give us what we wanted and our security regime was based on the following pillars. That we were only going to use top-secret cleared American workers to rebuild that office building. We were going to import via secure means every nut and bolt and brick with the exception of maybe premixed cement below

a certain floor, sand, gravel and water. Everything else was sent over in sealed and trapped containers in a highly classified technical regime to be able to know if they had been tampered with. As a result of all of this and that the containers were to be considered by the Russian authorities as diplomatic pouches, so we didn't have to tell them what was in them, we didn't have to open them up in their presence and we still had them cleared through customs, but it was a pro forma thing where we had our diplomatic couriers present when these things were trucked in under escort from Finland, but they were never out of our control. After they were cleared by customs, they were delivered to our secure warehouse, which was totally under U.S. control and then broken into and basically decertified by people who were technically competent and high enough security clearance that nothing was tampered with. To the best of my knowledge, none of the roughly 1,500 containers that were shipped over during the life of the project were ever tampered with.

So on the basis of that the Russians agreed to all those conditions and we signed the Conditions of Construction Agreement in 1992, I believe. Then the project was let out to bid and a joint venture company, Zachary, Parsons and Sundt (ZPS) were the three companies. The H.B. Zachary Company out of San Antonio was the prime contractor. They had done a lot of work overseas with DOD. They had built the landing strip at Diego Garcia; they had done a lot of work in Iran during the years of the Shah. They were very, very well equipped to do that kind of work. So a whole mechanism was set up in Washington. The office where I was the deputy director had about 35 people in it and these were construction people, architects, engineers and an ever increasing number of security people because not only did we have to have, we had to have a counter intelligence program in place in Moscow to brief the workers about what they could and couldn't do in terms of...they were allowed to date Russian women because the whole non-frat policy had been lifted by 1995-'96 in China as well as in Russian and a lot of the rest of Eastern Europe with the exception of, I think, Cuba was the only place left where we still had a non-frat policy. But still if they had a Russian girlfriend they...

Q: Non-frat meaning?

BOORSTEIN: Non-fraternization that it was against government policy for diplomats, support staff or whatever to have basically dating, social and sexual relations with Soviet or Russian citizens. Well that changed but if you were going to have that kind of relationship you had to report it, you couldn't just do it and that applied to the embassy staff as well so there was an equal kind of treatment. You had to have in place very, very strong, physical and technical security regime. You had to have a state of the art fence, you had to have alarms and so we had people back here who helping to develop that and making sure that it was implemented and tested while the project was underway. We also had what are called industrial security officers who were responsible for the integrity of our record keeping, making sure that if we received and sent out drawings that they were done securely, even domestically they would inspect the facilities where materials were being made, assembled and trucked to the warehouse in Texas, where they were put into the containers, that those offices were run properly and that there were no Chinese nationals working in the factory or things of this nature. So the oversight was just enormous. It was, in effect, a zero tolerance for security failure, given what had happened before.

So the approach that Congress finally agreed to was the right approach, it was cost effective and

secure, was to take the existing, I believe it was an eight-story building, and deconstruct it down to the sixth floor slab. In other words, destroy the top three floors. On top of that put a separate four story, a separate I mean in that it was resting on the sixth floor but in a way that there was a separation between the top floors and the bottom floors structurally. Again, there was a security classification involved in just how that was done. But in effect, a steel superstructure four-story building that was isolated from the rest of the building was the premise under which the building was built. That portion of the building was to contain the secure operations even though the bottom six floors, five floors and the fifth floor was a transition floor, even though those would be occupied by Russian nationals from the day it opened, the whole building was rebuilt as if it were all going to be secure so that we didn't allow any potential compromise on the lower floors to somehow have the potential to compromise the upper floors. It was a double, triple, quadruple level of security and it was done that way because the whole building had to be built in a classified manner.

No Russian nationals were allowed on to the site except for debris removal. Trucks were allowed to come on to a certain point on the compound when there was debris to be, you know, from deconstructing the top floors and from other things that they had to do to prepare the bottom floors, there was all kinds of debris. So the debris was removed, but with careful escorting that went on. There were guards twenty-four hours a day; there was a whole regime. The first time I went to Moscow they had the beginning of palm print recognition so you put in your palm and your palm was there and then you put in a pin number. A palm and pin number got you into the compound.

Q: A pin number is a personal...

BOORSTEIN: Personal identification. Right. So that eventually gave way to a more of a standard sliding kind of an ID card and the personal identification number.

So that was the regime that the office where I was the deputy was managing from Washington. In twenty-four months where I was the deputy director I made nine trips to Moscow and about half of them included a stop at our logistics base in Helsinki. We had a resident, actually a retired Foreign Service officer named Carl Clement, was the resident MEBCO officer. He was attached to the embassy in Helsinki and his job was to be the liaison with the port of Helsinki with the trucking firm, with the Finnish customs people and any logistical issues, which arose. Carl was a unique individual in that he was born in Finland and at a young age after the Second World War immigrated to the States with his family and became an American citizen, was educated in the U.S. and joined the Foreign Service. He was bilingual, so that was just a very unique ability that we were able to tap into. He was there for four or five years.

We also had a staff in Moscow that was the project director, the deputy, security director, probably about 15 people and most of these people came from diplomatic security, they came from the foreign buildings office even though they weren't managing the project they still were the source of the experts of the architects and the engineers. So the project director, a gentleman named John Sligh, was a career foreign buildings officer, he is an architect by training. His deputy, P.K. Bagchi, was an engineer by training and security director, well there were several security directors, Bernie Indal was the one there for the longest period of time, then he left the

Foreign Service, retired and Tim Dixon replaced him. So there was the technical security officer, there was a specialist in counter-intelligence; all kinds of disciplines had their own specialists there.

It was really quite a finally well-oiled machine and it worked well. There were some glitches that it required some investigation to make sure that indeed things were shipped in a secure matter. There was a question about the origin of some materials that caused a major, major headache in one point in the project. I think that those topics remain classified in nature but at the end of the day the Department of State was confident enough and the intelligence community was confident enough to certify to the Congress, well it was up to the director of central intelligence at the end of the project to certify to Congress that the facility was secure.

So, basically it was my job to advise the director of MEBCO on the internal workings of the State Department bureaucracy on how you handle issues, how you handle crises, how you got things done and whether he liked it or not, it was a reality he had to accept. I also was given responsibility for handling a specially put-together office of the inspector general's security team, an oversight team that had people from the intelligence community, diplomatic security and the inspection corps who would travel to Moscow on a quarterly basis and spend a week or two there. So every time they went to Moscow I went with them. They when they made one particular trip to the main contractors headquarters in San Antonio, Texas, and to the consolidated receiving point in Houston by the port, I went with them. It was an idea that I could help minimize any perceived or real crisis that they identified and helped to manage it. Really there was nothing that arose that reached a crisis proportion but I was there as insurance.

Occasionally there were meetings with the senior management of the joint venture and senior State Department officials in the field and I would go on those trips. The times I went to Helsinki, the first time I traveled to Helsinki was with the director we took a week's trip and we flew together to Moscow and then we went to Helsinki to look at the situation there. He basically wanted to introduce me to the project because at that point he had already been running it for seven years. I was the second deputy and it was a two-year assignment. I was replaced by a third deputy who held it for two years until the project was finished. So I was right there in the middle, I was there at the start up so it was perhaps the most critical period of time and certainly the most active.

The second trip that I took to Helsinki in November of 1996 was to be part of the first official convoy of containers that were being taken overland from Helsinki to Moscow and that was a big deal because we had made one or two test runs with one or two containers but this was the first ten-container convoy. So the ten containers arrived by ship, they were shipped out of the port of Houston and they were shipped to Rotterdam without any physical escort, but again they were protected technically and Rotterdam is considered one of the largest ports in the world. Their whole system of transferring containers from one vessel to another is all automated. There are no human beings involved in these riderless tractors that take containers from one point to another in the yard, so it was felt that our containers, ten at a time, would be totally lost among the thousands that would be in the yard. So we were comfortable enough that we didn't need any presence there.

So then they were transferred to a Baltic feeder, I believe it was the Maersk Line. The Maersk Line then took these containers; the first port of call was Helsinki so again with no escorts. They were off loaded in Helsinki in a special part of the port, which we had negotiated with the Finnish authorities with lighting and alarms and whatever and then within a certain number of days the contractor would agree to then transport them via one container per tractor-trailer in a ten-container convoy to Moscow. At that point we had escorts from the U.S. diplomatic courier service.

For a ten-container convoy there were probably four to six couriers. They had their own little Winnebago because it was a two-day trip and they would have to sleep in it overnight. The drivers would sleep, these were Finnish drivers, they were a sub-contractor to the joint venture and they would, of course, sleep in their cabs. So I with our security officer from Washington went with the convoy to the Finnish border and because it was the first time we had done this our representative had set up this whole regime of meetings and protocol and the deputy project director flew up from Moscow and met us on the Russian side, the nearest city was Vyborg which used to be part of Finland until the Second World War. In the winter war with Finland they lost that whole area north of Leningrad.

So we had a woman who was a trilingual interpreter, Russian, Finnish and English and she presided over our meetings first with the Finnish customs authorities and then with the Russian custom authorities and it involved tea, cookies and vodka at 11 o'clock in the morning. It was a dull, dismal, dreary, rainy, drizzly kind of a day in the middle of November and very little daylight already in that part of Finland. But you know we did it and the security officer actually rode in the convoy all the way to Moscow. I went back to Helsinki and the next day I flew home.

Q: I would think that the Finns must have watched this with a great deal of amusement, the ones who were doing this.

BOORSTEIN: Well, you know I don't know if it was so much amusement. The Finns are incredibly pragmatic people; they are probably one of the...if not the only country that borders the Soviet Union that did not become a satellite of the Soviet Union after the Second World War. So they recognized that they had to maintain their neutrality but they are also very entrepreneurial people and they just made it work. They were very interested in earning money and being efficient and effective. Whether they were amused or not frankly they never shared that. They are rather taciturn individuals and don't show too much of their emotions unlike the Italians, for example, but I enjoyed working with them immensely. I enjoyed it in particular because in my university years I spent a semester of studying in Finland so it was nice to spend some more time there later on in my life. I made a number of friends and people that I am still in touch with to this day but it all worked quite well and we really never had any issues with the Finns and they were cooperative.

Q: The Russians how did you find them?

BOORSTEIN: Well, again you found all kinds of different officials. This was a little bit of the boondocks even though it was their busiest customs border crossing by land, I believe, anywhere. You found that they wanted to make sure the paper work was just so and the stamp

was just where it belonged, whatever. The fax machine was a great boom and they were all into the fax era, in 1996, this was before email, of course, at least in that part of the world. But I don't recall that there was ever an incident where they held up a shipment at all but they demanded the paperwork.

Q: In your career you've worn two major hats, one's the Russian one and other is the Chinese one. Were we looking while you were doing this at the future for China for our embassy there, I mean was this considered a unique experience or was this the wave of the future in difficult places?

BOORSTEIN: Well it certainly was the wave of the future. We were not at a point in the early to mid-1990s where we were starting to plan for the embassy in Beijing. I will come to that later because that was something that I was also in charge of, I was the logical choice to do it. It was certainly felt that certainly once the project was finished successfully that this was a good model, in terms of lessons learned, in terms of the key provisions of secure shipment of your materials, top secret cleared American workers, take advantage of reciprocity as the keystone, the pillars if you will, of successful projects. But there was no specific discussion at the time, we were focused on the Moscow project and it just came along about three years later when that project was winding down and we felt increasing pressure to improve our situation for our people in Beijing that some of the transferability occurred and I was part of that effort.

Q: Well tell me, my experience having dealt with contract employees in various parts of the world including Saigon, I mean the guys who pour cement and put up things are pretty rough guys and they like their women and they like their liquor. I would think this, did you put saltpeter in their vodka or what did you do to keep these guys from compromise?

BOORSTEIN: Well, like I said we did not have a non-fraternization policy, we allowed these people to have social, sexual relations with Russian women or with Bulgarian women or with whatever women they happened to find in Moscow. Believe you me, they did, all over the place and we built a camp on embassy property where these workers were housed and that camp was off limits to women. So whatever liaisons they had were done elsewhere whether they took these women to hotels or they took them back to their apartments, I mean to the women's apartment, whatever. I'm sure both things occurred but again there was a requirement that they needed to report that they were having a relationship with Tatiana, Galena or whomever. If the relationship got to the point that they wanted to marry, they were not allowed to marry the women while they were on the project and if they couldn't wait they had to resign.

There were cases where, isolated cases, where people went out and they weren't staying in the camp, they were cohabitating with the Russian women, not reporting it at night and those people were disciplined and perhaps they were warned once but if they continued to do it they were shipped home. Of course you realize that if these people got into problems, got into trouble, they were there less than a year it had enormous tax consequences for them. They had to be on the job for over a year in order to get the tax-free benefit, so that was an enormous incentive for them to behave in a way.

Yes, there were problems with gambling; there were problems with getting drunk and breaking

stuff up in bars so yeah even though these people did have top secret clearances with even an added almost a notch above almost like what we call as SCI clearance level.. So there you explore the individual's financial background to make sure there are no outstanding gambling debts, unpaid alimony or this that and the other thing.

But it took a lot of in-briefing before they even left the United States and there were counter intelligence briefings when they got to the post, basically there was an effort to scare the bejesus out of these people about what would happen to them if they didn't report anything where they should of and it wasn't only having relationships. If all of a sudden they found they were in a bar one night and some guy would come and strike up a conversation who spoke fluent English, who would steer the conversation around "what are you doing here, where are you working, what are..." "Oh you're a welder? Well really what floor are you working on in the embassy?" Then all of a sudden the red light goes on and basically the worker had to be counseled to say, "I'm working on the project, that's really all I need to tell you" and that's it and then to try and get information on the person who was asking them to feed that information back into the database.

The Russian services were trying like crazy to compromise the project, that's just what they are there to do. To the best of our knowledge they did not succeed. So it required enormous resources on the part of the government and the contractor working together to control this in a manner that allowed these guys to have social outlets, girlfriends, etc. and yet maintain the integrity of the project.

Q: When you did this from '90...

BOORSTEIN: '96 to '98, two years.

JANE MILLER FLOYD
Consul General (1996-1998)
Vladivostok, Russia

Jane Miller Floyd was born in Washington in 1954. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Washington. She joined the Foreign Service in 1980. Her career included positions in the Former Soviet Union and Moscow. Mrs. Floyd was interviewed on December 6, 2004 by Charles S. Kennedy

Q: Where did you go?

FLOYD: Vladivostok.

Q: Oh my God. You went to Vladivostok and you were there from what, 96 to when?

FLOYD: 98. It was a direct transfer.

Q: What do we have in Vladivostok?

FLOYD: A consulate general.

Q: You know, I talked to somebody at an oral history I did who was in Vladivostok during World War II.

FLOYD: Lend lease? Big lend lease port.

Q: It was very difficult. We were sending all that stuff in and his whole group, they were followed everywhere and kept under very tight wrap. How did you find things when you went there?

FLOYD: The American presence was the least of their concerns. They were in the midst, and remain embroiled in, silly, silly political infighting between the mayor and the governor in that area. Every single element within our consular district, which was two-thirds the size of the United States, was desperately trying to get Moscow's assistance economically because they were such artificial entities economically.

The consulate was pretty much the end of the earth, but we managed to bring in people who enjoy that and we had, I think, a really good group of folks. It meant that we reached out for a lot of support from distant or perhaps non-traditional partners. We were very close with our NGOs. Many of them were operating on USAID contracts but we brought them into the country team essentially. Excellent relations with the U.S. 7th fleet. [the U.S. Pacific Fleet] was a huge supporter for us. It created delightful bureaucratic disconnects within the U.S. government because, of course, the consulate reported to the embassy in Moscow which was part of the European Bureau, yet our primary partner was out of the Pacific, so that we got to straddle those two worlds.

Q: Now what was your job?

FLOYD: I was the consul general?

Q: What did you have under you?

FLOYD: A political officer, admin officer, GSO, consular setup. We activated a Marine detachment because we had some cousins. But we were technically an unclassified post. Had a Department of Agriculture FSN and a very busy USIA press and culture section.

Q: What was the political situation? Essentially you were dealing with Siberia, weren't you?

FLOYD: No. Siberia was not in our consular district. Siberia ends at Chita and Chita was part of Moscow's consular district. We had the Russian Far East. Yakutsk you can debate, but that would be closest thing to Siberia. We were in Siberia when we were in Ulan Ude, but the Pacific coast of Russia is not Siberia.

Q: Well then what was the political situation there?

FLOYD: Somewhere between desperate and on the verge of collapse.

Q: Was Vladivostok the center?

FLOYD: Oh no. Khabarovsk, which was about 500 miles north, was another major center. In fact, the U.S. went through lots of discussion as to where the consulate should be. In fact, your interviewees' previous existence in Vladivostok was one of the elements that pushed the consulate to Vladivostok. Khabarovsk had been an open city during the Soviet era and so there was more familiarity with an international operation. There were better airline connections. There were other consulates. The Chinese Consulate had been there throughout that time. There were some valid reasons for looking at Khabarovsk and it was where I made a trip to probably once a month. We had established a Russian-American business center in Khabarovsk, which did an awful lot of representational work for us and served as sort of a focal point for a lot of our issues. The other major city that we dealt a lot with was Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on the island of Sakhalin and that was because of the involvement of American gas and oil companies with the development of energy resources.

Q: On the political side, were we following this closely?

FLOYD: We were following it as an interesting information point in Russia's overall development. How were they developing local government? Exceedingly poorly. How was the rule of law? Tax systems? Human rights? Labor situation? Investment environment for American companies? You could use your local vignettes to constantly hammer home the point that Moscow was a totally unique and inconsistent example of what was happening in Russia. The absence of functioning governance meant that the mafia rules.

Q: I would think that this would be an extremely unfertile ground for American investment.

FLOYD: It was very interesting to see who did invest. And that was primarily folks in export industries and folks whose investment was mobile. Meaning that they would provide fishing trawlers with the provision that those trawlers never entered a Russian port. Because on those occasions when Americans invested in capital goods in the Russian Far East, all too often within about six months their Russian partners had figured out a way to write them out of the business and confiscate, essentially, that capital investment. The tax structure was insane and because foreign companies were used to, or excepted that paying taxes was part of being a corporate citizen, they were extorted for absolutely insane amounts.

Q: What would you tell, I mean, I come in as a business person. Normally you try to have a certain amount of loyalty to where you are, but . . .

FLOYD: We told businessmen to be very, very careful. To go in with their eyes wide open. To go in with either a very short term or a very long term perspective. It was not a normal investment environment. But many people were driven by adventure, by ethnic ties, by huge dollar signs in their eyes.

What business development did take place was primarily under the auspices of something called

the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, which was an informal set-up chaired by Vice President Gore and Mr. Chernomyrdin to encourage economic activities. It had a subsection which was called – huge long name – U.S. West Coast-Russian Far East Working Group, that brought together the governors of Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California with their counterparts along the Russian Far East to talk about customs regulations, to talk about port fees, to talk about business exchanges. It was another one of those gab fests, but having seen the success of things like OSCE, I thought it was a marvelous idea.

And because the governors on a reciprocal basis hosted these biannual meetings, it meant that the governor of Alaska got to Yakutsk, and the governor of Magadan got to Portland. I'm a big fan of cultural exchange and information exchange. I think over the long run that will help.

Q: You mentioned NGOs. What were the NGOs doing?

FLOYD: The vast majority of them were either into business education or a lot of them were dealing with nascent Russian NGOs, we called it civil society. Women's groups, students' groups, labor groups. Tried to help them get set up and function as a vital voice in any civil society.

Q: Was anything happening?

FLOYD: A huge amount in my opinion. It is amazing what one ten-thousand dollar computer desktop publishing grant can do to spread information.

Q: Were you seeing in the time you were there the development of a skeleton civil society?

FLOYD: Yes. They had elections. They had campaigns. There was some sense that you had to respond to a domestic constituency. But it was still at a very low level. There was still no overarching structure that supported governance. It was unclear what the relationship was with Moscow. It was unclear what the cities' relationships were with the governors. It was unclear what the university's relationship was with the mayor. It was all old boys. It was all behind the scenes networks. And that affected tax collection and road repairs. We told everybody who asked that the greatest security concern in Vladivostok is driving. The mayor and the governor control different switches on the electrical grid and at different times they would turn them off and you would have no power, including power to the street and traffic lights.

Q: With all this, were the NGOs going out and essentially saying "We got to do it better." Was there a new generation coming up and saying "Screw all this nonsense."

FLOYD: "Show us how to do better." We also had fifty Peace Corps members out there.

Q: Were you seeing any inroads into the old boys system.

FLOYD: Inching. The trouble was if you got large enough, the tax collector came out after you. Or the mafia came after you and wanted their cut in protection.

Q: You mentioned fleet visits. Were there quite a few fleet visits?

FLOYD: We were exceedingly fortunate in that we arrived in the summer of the 300th anniversary of the Russian Pacific Fleet. So we were visited by the USS Blue Ridge, which is the flag ship of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, as well as by Admiral Clemens, who was the commander of the seventh fleet, and Admiral Prueher, who was CINCPAC, all within the first three months of my time in country. We subsequently had ship visits by the USS Bellau Wood and the USS Blue Ridge came back a second time, which was very fortunate for me. We got them to time their visit to the Fourth of July because my entire staff lived in hotel rooms and we did not really have any appropriate representational space. So both years that I was there, we held our Fourth of July reception on board the USS Blue Ridge.

Q: I've seen pictures – as a kid I lived in Annapolis and so I know naval ships – and seen pictures of that rusting fleet. Magnificent ships and just rusting away.

FLOYD: I looked out on them every day. The Consulate was on the hills of Vladivostok just above Pacific Fleet headquarters. The first year we were there we had the last of what was called “Cooperation from the Sea” joint exercises. We simulated a natural disaster that would require assistance from the sea. And U.S. and Russian marines and sailors participated in the exercises. After that, it should have been that the Russian Pacific Fleet went to someplace in the United States for a reciprocal exercise. They couldn't afford the fuel to get there. So the only other exercise we did was with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Japanese Self Defense Force with the Russian Pacific Fleet and the Ministry of Extreme Circumstances.

Q: Was the Russian navy essentially non-existent at that point? Did they put ships out?

FLOYD: After fish and timber, the largest export from the Russian Far East was scrap metal, primarily military equipment. But that said, the Russian Pacific ballistic missile fleet was as valid a threat as ever. Not as potent, but as valid.

Q: What were they doing?

FLOYD: The submarines? Patrolling.

Q: It was the submarines?

FLOYD: Surface ships were in port. The only active Russian government fleet was that run by the KGB in their new responsibilities for border security, both poachers and general coast guard type functions. Much smaller ships.

Q: Did you have in your consular district the Amur River?

FLOYD: Between China and Russia?

Q: Yeah. What was happening? It was about twenty or thirty years before that they had a battle going on?

FLOYD: Yes. And most Russians, particularly in the Russian Far East, will tell you that their greatest threat is economic intrusion from China. Huge numbers. Estimated five to ten million Chinese guest workers run what limited agriculture there is in the Russian Far East. They even call their food market the Chinese market. The difference between economic development on the south side of the Amur as opposed to the north side is excruciating for the Russians.

Every Russian political figure I ever talked to would talk about their nightmare scenario that some morning every Chinese in the three provinces that border the Russian Far East would simply wake up and decide to walk north. There are approximately 110 million Chinese in those three provinces. The Russian Far East total – a land mass about two-thirds the size of the United States – is about 2.5 million. If those Chinese just walked – I mean no weapons, no military – just walked, they would take over. Which is one of the reasons that the Russians in the Russian Far East are so loyal, dependent, subservient to Moscow because they cannot provide for their international relations. They need the Russian connection.

Q: Is there any residue of people from the Gulags and all that? Are a lot of the population descended from it?

FLOYD: Enough. Fascinating ethnic setup. It is one of those places where the Slavic elements, the Russians and the Ukrainians, get along well because they were thrust into difficult circumstances together. It was one of the most successful areas of Stalin's ethnic cleansing. Total deportation of all of the local Koreans and Chinese in the late 20s. The prison population or the exile population is apparent, but people don't talk about it.

Q: Are any gulags still in existence?

FLOYD: No. To my knowledge Camps 35 and 36 are the only remaining prisons that we consider political and they are in European Russia. Now you can go up to Madagan and go to the gulag museum. They are slowly coming to grips with what that means. You get a lot more people who are descendents of the gulag administration than of the actual prisoners, who died. So the questioning of is there any valid reason for most of Madagan and Kamchatka to exist except as a prison.

Q: What about Sakhalin? How important was this?

FLOYD: Hugely important. It is a multi-million dollar U.S. investment for a potentially multi-billion dollar profit.

Q: In what?

FLOYD: Oil and gas.

Q: How are we working with the Russians on this?

FLOYD: It is a fascinating set up and illustrative of the challenges of the various levels of

government in Russia. Primarily the development is taking place on separate, unique, distinct agreements between the United States Government and the Russian Government in terms of the conditions under which these companies will operate. Their liability to taxes. Their coverage by local laws.

Q: So they just sort of set them aside.

FLOYD: Absolutely. And obviously that irritates the local governor and folks. The local populations want folks to bring this oil and gas onto Sakhalin island for processing and/or shipment to current processing capabilities on the mainland, or what they call the mainland in Khabarovsk. But the American companies don't want to do that because they don't want it to ever get into Russia proper. They are planning to pump it directly into ships. Because if it comes onto Russia, they don't know if they will ever recoup that. The largest impact to date has simply been the presence of Americans. They built an entirely new, really cool, Western class hotel on the island to accommodate their employees. Exxon/Mobile is building a village, they estimate for between four and six hundred employees, with schools, housing, dining facilities, medical setup. And I can guarantee you that some of those oil workers will marry Russians and we will get to deal with a lot of citizenship questions. And they will get in fights and they will – yeah, it will be a major American presence.

Q: Did the question of what they call the Northern Islands come up?

FLOYD: The Northern Territories.

Q: This is Japan. To me, it was the greatest boon that we were handed by the Soviets and Russians, by so irritating the Japanese on this that there was no possibility of the Japanese making nice to the Soviets.

FLOYD: They are little rocks. It is a larger bone of contention with the Japanese-Russian relationship. The American position on it is so clear, so consistent and so out of our hands that it comes up, but it is not seen as ours to resolve. It does present an advantage for American businessmen in that the Russians are irritated to heck by the Japanese and the feeling is mutual. So the preference is to deal with American business folk. And mind you, we discussed this earlier in regards to the Stans. Russians are among the most prejudiced people I have ever met and the disdain with which they look upon Asian ethnicity is appalling. It is just unbelievable.

Q: What about the North Koreans?

FLOYD: Very interesting. We estimate they've probably got a couple thousand guest workers, primarily in the timber industry. There is a large and active South Korean consulate who keeps an eye on them. While we were there, one of our South Korean colleagues was murdered, presumably by the North Koreans for being too interested in what they were doing.

Q: But there wasn't any flow over the boarder of refugees and that sort of thing?

FLOYD: The Russians will send back, period.

Q: How about missionaries?

FLOYD: One of the banes of my existence.

Q: I go back to 1910 where at American consulate Seoul – this was 1910 – where a zealous missionary had a tree which had been declared a national treasury – it was an animate society and they used to hang prayers from the tree. And he thought this was anathema and he had it chopped down. And of course there was terrible outrage and our consulate at the time said “You know, I have much more sympathy for Pontius Pilot now that I had before.”

FLOYD: None of the missionaries in the Russian Far East were quite that stupid or aggressive. But the Russian Orthodox Church is so disappointing in having suffered for decades under Soviet oppression, their response to democracy was “Okay, now we are the only religion.” The Russian law on religions identifies five – I can’t remember what they call them – “native” religions: Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. And nothing else. Everything else is considered a sect. And the Russian Orthodox Church hates them. Goes after them in cahoots with tax collectors. We had one pastor who kept getting blocked just in terms of getting registered as a foreigner legally residing in Russia. And it was all instigated by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Q: It really doesn’t fit the mold of what we think of churches being.

FLOYD: We talked about the challenge of democracy and having to give before you get. But the Russian Orthodox Church was faced with the obtuseness. For them, religious freedom meant freedom for them and them only.

Q: Well the Greek constitution declares that the Greek Orthodox religion is the only religion there and that proselytizing is forbidden. It’s in the constitution. So, how did you deal with local authorities? Did they give you a rough time?

FLOYD: No. They generally speaking loved us. We were symbols of Russia’s greatness in the sense that Russia liked dealing with the superpower. And by our presence, it meant that the United States (end tape, change tape).

Q: This is tape four, side one, with Jane Floyd. Yes.

FLOYD: The Russians very much liked having an American presence because it meant that they were valid partners for America.

Q: Normally the Foreign Service is probably not the greatest example of American religious representation. I mean, as a group we . . .

FLOYD: There were no Muslims. There were no Buddhists.

Q: But also we tend to be a little uncomfortable dealing with people who are devoted to religion

and all, as a group.

FLOYD: Yes. We have a great deal of respect for religion and that means all religion. We probably distance ourselves a little from those we consider fanatics. In Vladivostok we had a Christian service on Sunday mornings. There weren't enough of us to have any one faith. And if we had a visiting preacher from any known faith we would invite them to lead the service. Both the Protestant and the Catholic folks from Moscow would come out from Moscow occasionally and visit us. But otherwise it was a very eclectic mix of folks who got together in the antechamber – actually it used to be a chapel – of the old Catholic church that the Soviet Government had turned into a book depository. But there were a very few, a handful, three, four, five, Russians who spoke English well enough to appreciate, I wouldn't call it a service – a prayer meeting? – that we had on Sunday mornings. But in terms of the Orthodox Church or our missionaries, you are correct that the Foreign Service attracts proselytizers, but not to a given religious faith.

Q: How did you find the hand of our embassy in Moscow rested on you?

FLOYD: Not bad at all. Only two or three major visits. The major connection was by either me going to Moscow or by this time we had limited e-mail capability. And because all of our operations were unclassified we could deal a lot with faxes, with telephone calls. The curious factor was that because the consulate had to deal with all of the various sections of Moscow, we probably knew more people in Moscow than the people in Moscow knew. When I would go back for consultations, I would of course take my stack of, here's the travel vouchers for travel and here's the personnel actions for personnel and here's some hand written reports that we couldn't send out because we thought some of the material might be classified for the political section and here's this . . . And as you would go around or as you would sit in the cafeteria at lunch, you would be saying hi to people from all different sections and yet the Moscow embassy people you were sitting with had no idea who those guys were. They would say "Are they from Vladivostok too?" Uh, no, they're from your GSO section. So it was funny to see how incredibly huge and impersonal the embassy in Moscow had become.

Q: In 98 you left?

FLOYD: I did.

Q: This must have been a very satisfying time, wasn't it?

FLOYD: It was a very good tour. We enjoyed it. Can complain immensely about the living conditions but overall it was enjoyable, productive.

Q: Living conditions, were you in a hotel too?

FLOYD: Oh yeah.

Q: Everyone was in a hotel. Was there any effort to build housing for us?

FLOYD: There was, but the legal situation in Vladivostok does not make land acquisition or contract finalization very easy. We could never satisfy FBO that someone could sell us some property with appropriate legal guarantees as to their right to sell us that property. We never could get an American contractor to fulfill the obligations that they took on by bidding on a contract to build. So the corollary to that was that the utility situation in Vladivostok itself meant that living on the economy was not viable. My administrative officer disparaged the long commute from the hotel where we lived and decided he would put up with a city apartment. Well, the second month that he went without water, not just hot water, but water – no flush, no brush – we went through the hassle of getting Moscow to authorize the installation of a 500 gallon tank in his second bedroom.

LOUISE TAYLOR
Policy Officer for Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States
Washington, DC (1996-1998)

Ms. Taylor was born and raised in Illinois and educated at Wellesley College, George Washington University and Boston University. After joining the Foreign Service of USIA, Ms. Taylor served in Washington and abroad in the field of Cultural and Information. Her foreign posts include Moscow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and Rabat. She also served in Washington as USIA Desk Officer for Afghanistan/Pakistan and for South Asia and as Policy Officer for Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States. Ms. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

TAYLOR: I wasn't prepared to go overseas again at that point. There wasn't really very much available. That was how I ended up as a policy officer for Eastern Europe and the NIS (New Independent States) in '96, which was not a job I ever would have applied for. It was the first job I had ever been directed to without my saying I had an interest in it. But there was nothing else that could be done at that point. Duffy had eliminated it supposedly on financial grounds... "We need to cut the director's office by X amount."

Q: If you're trying to destroy things, you get rid of the professionals. Otherwise, they get in your way.

TAYLOR: There was an unfortunate incident that happened during this period of time. I think he would have eliminated my position anyway because they didn't want me around. What tipped it over the edge was when Princeton Lyman was out in South Africa as ambassador. Al Gore had four different bilateral relationships going. One was with the Soviet Union and with Russia. One was with South Africa. And he had two other countries. He would go off with a whole bunch of advisors. These were bilateral talks. They would be held here and then the next year they would be held in another country. Well, South Africa was one. Mbeki, who is now the president of South Africa, was at the time Minister of Education. Joe Duffy was to have been his counterpart on the Al Gore trip out there. You may or may not have heard from others that Duffy never went anywhere in the eight years as our director. He never visited a USIA post anywhere unless he

happened to be in that country for other reasons. Even then, it was like he was dragged kicking and screaming to go to visit a post. I think he went to Mexico City and he may have gone to Canberra – in eight years. He didn't like to travel. Well, then you think about that before you take a job like that.

Q: Was there any concern that some of these things, particularly those that had to do with AID, were the playthings of universities where they would have their graduate students go out to X country and do whatever they're supposed to do. It's problematic about how much the country...

TAYLOR: I think it's one area of concern, especially with AID's money. They've got so much and they don't have enough people to monitor what's going on on the ground. They've got so much, but I think they need more. In terms of the FSA and the SEED grants, we had pretty good staff work on the ground at our embassies. By this I also include the Balkans. I'd like to insert here that when I took this job reluctantly, the one bright shining light on the horizon was that I could once again get back to working on things pertaining to Russia because I had had such a wonderful experience there in Moscow years earlier in my career. But in actuality, from '96-98, I spent 60-70% of my time on the Balkans. That was the big buildup at that time. Every morning, I would get up and say, "Today I am going to work on our Russian programs." I would get to the office at 7:30 with the international conference call headed up by the White House and with our people out in the Balkans and would just be sucked into that Balkan quagmire for the entire day. Then the next day, I'd come in and say the same thing, "I'm going to do something different today." But I inserted that but don't want to lose sight of your very good point about the NGOs going out to various countries where they have varying degrees of expertise and experience and how well do they do and how well do we do in monitoring them, keeping them on track, making sure they're doing what we originally had proposed for them to do, making sure that they're effective. I think the record is mixed on that. There are some places where the NGOs have succeeded really well. Helping small businesses become more effective, helping women's groups become a voice for change or a voice for political action, helping even universities become more modernized and streamlined. But this all happened so fast in the '90s that what we did to assist the former Soviet Union countries to remain on a path toward eventual democratization and opening up and liberalization of their systems was a new ballgame for everybody. It's almost like the new ballgame we're in now. In a sense, it was the blind leading the blind. What I think Bob McCarthy did so well as my boss was, he restrained us from rushing into projects with lots of money that he felt either we or the NGOs involved were not quite ready for or had not thought out seriously enough. He did a remarkable job while he was in that position.

There were people at the State Department with ambassadorial rank who were charged with administering the SEED and FSA funds. There were lots and lots of layers of responsibility and accountability. The Department was kind of floundering because they had extremely limited staff to deal with this. The Department doesn't do programs. It doesn't do action oriented things. So, the partnership with USIA and EEN (my office symbol) in particular worked very well. It meant that very few people were working extraordinarily hard to keep track of all of this. I suppose along the way if someone were to write an analysis and a history of it, there probably were some

bloopers and we probably picked out some Russian partnership entities which weren't the best. Our embassy was doing a very good job of trying to identify in the brave new world of the post-Soviet era with whom is it we should be working, whom can we trust, who is in this for the long-run, who are the good guys, who are the bad guys, who are the con artists, who is connected with the underworld? To a certain extent, it was a whole new horizon for all of us. Everybody did the best they could. A lot of good things came out of it. There were tremendous things done in the field of rule of law. There were some very good things done in privatization. But it's a massive country.

Q: When you think about it, the country had never had a democracy until about 10 years before.

TAYLOR: And it is very chaotic and very confused and very colorful and always interesting and absorbing. But the political game of the day was the Balkans.

Q: Before we move to the Balkans, did you play any role in coordinating what we were doing to bring about a changed Russia, particularly with the Western European countries? Was there any coordination there?

TAYLOR: I think there was far less than there should have been. In the early '90s, I was overseas. I didn't have a real sense of how the rest of the world was reacting to the fall of the Soviet Union and what new opportunities were presented. I think that we were pretty much in competition with all our western allies in Europe. I have no proof that supports my argument, but I would say that I don't think we were as well coordinated as we should have been.

Q: Just the fact that you're unable to say, "Oh, yes, we have a coordinating board for this or that" means that there wasn't much of a structure for coordinating.

TAYLOR: When you moved to the Balkans, there was. Of course, there were so many different national militaries represented there. There were coordinating boards. But those broke down almost more frequently than if you had had no coordinating board. But it's a very good point that you raise. It's one that if I had more time I'd like to look into, what were the other western allies and maybe some of the Pacific countries doing in Russia at the time? I have a feeling we were pretty much doing our own thing and letting others do their own thing. Whether we collided or tripped over each other's feet or whether we were duplicative or redundant, I really can't say. That would be a good thing to bring up with people who were actually serving in Moscow or Petersburg at the time. Paul Smith, for example, would have a good sense of that.

Q: Did you get any feeling about what the assistance that was coming in from us and others and also the major effort on the part of the Russian people themselves... What was your feeling towards the end? How were things going?

TAYLOR: Well, I'm one of the optimists about Russia. I think that the Russian people have such genius and creativity and such a zest for life that despite all they have endured and undergone. They are resilient to say the least. I felt early in the '90s that once the exhilaration of having

shaken off the Soviet system wore off, clearly, reality was going to land with a thud, and it did. That was when in the mid-'90s, a lot of pundits and people who wrote about these things said, "Well, there is a huge threat that the Russian people will realize that without communism there is only chaos." It's sort of like after De Gaulle, "le deluge" he used to say. Well, I never felt that way. I felt that with the exception of some of the really elderly pensioners and some people living in some godforsaken places in Russia there was a real chance for the age group of 50 and under to have an improved life even in their own lifetime and certainly for the future. My feeling was that once the genie was out of the bottle, you couldn't put it back in. Once people had had a glimpse of what life could be like despite the underworld, despite the Russian mafia, despite the enormous corruption, despite the lumbering systems they still have not yet completely dismantled, there is no turning back. Their bureaucracy is still just as ponderous as it was then. But there are ways around it and there always have been. The fact is they're beginning to develop the unfortunate trappings of a capitalist society in western civilization where you have an economy with few people at the top and many people at the bottom who are larger in number. But I guess I have to take a very callous point of view and say that under the communist system, although they didn't have a pyramid structure, everybody was at the lowest common denominator and there were very few who lived well at all or what we would even describe as approaching western terms. Now there have been people bubbling up from within this morass of a dismal economic structure. Although they might not be the ones who are the most admirable or the most deserving, slowly there is being created a system and a way for others to find a way toward a more prosperous and a more healthful life. The health statistics in Russia are appalling. Although that's not really the State Department's job nor is it USIA's, I wish that something could be done to help them improve their health statistics. The rate of death has reduced in age in the last 30 years by something like 10-15 years for Russian men. The average lifespan for Russian men now is somewhere in the 50s. When we were in Moscow, it wasn't great, but it was at least in the high 60s. They've had a cataclysmic disaster as far as health statistics are concerned and something really has to be done there. But they are people of great creativity, great energy, great genius. This is not the worst that they've gone through in the last 70 years of their history. A lot of people were very pessimistic about Putin. I'm one of the great Gorbachev fans. I'm one of the people who feels that Gorbachev has gotten short shrift from everybody. There are those who say, "Well, he wasn't enough of a modernizer," but I think they knew exactly how far he could go. He was almost like Khrushchev in a way, who saw something of what needed to be done, took some risks, and realized that he would only managed to get himself and his reformers toppled if he went further. So, there are a lot of people in the State Department who badmouth Gorbachev, but I just think he's far more than Yeltsin key to the success of what has happened there. I don't think Putin has turned out to be such a bad guy after all.

Q: What you gather is that a skeleton of a modern state is getting erected – laws and all. It's slow, but...

TAYLOR: But it's the optimism, the spirit of optimism, that is key here. Even if they bumble along through chaos and even corruption, as long as the people remain optimistic – and you frequently read articles that there is doom and gloom and a spirit of great pessimism spreading over Russia. That's just periodic. It comes and goes.

Q: What were you getting out of the State Department as you were going through this? All this

pressure to do something about the Balkans... But were you getting anything from the office of Strobe Talbott, who was the Under Secretary at the time who was essentially a Russian expert? Was he playing any role that you knew of?

TAYLOR: Strobe Talbott remains a mystery for a lot of people. He is such a Russian expert. By the end of the administration my sense of Strobe Talbott was that he had pretty much disappeared. He didn't seem to be focusing broadly on Russia or on what was happening in the whole system. He never seemed to gather a group of people around the table to say, "Where can we go next?" It seemed there was a lot of introspection going on. But I don't think that a lot of creative ideas were coming out of his circle. I don't think that his level at the Department asked us to do as much as we could have been asked to do. Where we really had good working relationships were desk officer to desk officer, office director to office director, and our liaison out with the field. Strobe would go out to Moscow and he would talk to Yeltsin's chief guys, but it never really trickled down into action. I think it might have trickled down to marching orders for Jim Collins in his discussions with the MFA and his discussions with other relevant personnel. But in terms of actual program and action and what can we do to further assist, Strobe was really much more in a more ethereal and philosophical mode. The embassy and the Department regional bureau and AID were much more interested in seeing how we could get these various projects going and what would be the outcome of them. They were all experiments in a way. Some worked and some didn't. There was a little petite scandal with a Harvard University group over there. We had given them money and there were accounting and regulatory problems. The Harvard group had gotten in with the wrong folks in Russia. So, these things were all happening at a lower level than Strobe Talbott. I almost think that he was much more of a thinker and philosopher than someone who could translate this into action.

Q: The structure was falling apart and needed an engineer, not a deep thinker.

TAYLOR: Yes. We didn't need to analyze it anymore. Something had fallen in our laps. It was a great opportunity to do things. I certainly wouldn't say that he was a negative force here. I just don't think he played a really active influence. I remember people saying, "Well, where is Strobe Talbott in all of this?" He did travel out to Russia frequently.

Q: Did you get out there at all?

TAYLOR: No, I didn't. But I was on the phone with them every day all day long.

Q: What about all these projects... Who were you dealing with at our embassy in Moscow or at other embassies around this area? Was it the public affairs officer? This sounds like it's much more across the board.

TAYLOR: It was across the board. The coordination out there was very good. Embassy Moscow has always been staffed with great people. I was fortunate enough to have my first tour in Moscow. My view from Washington of the coordination within the embassy was that it was extremely good to excellent. There were a few personality clashes. Some of those personality clashes transcended sections, including some in our section, which was public... We were still called USIA at that time. Although in Moscow, we always had to be called "Press and Culture"

because the Russians didn't like USIA. There were a few little dueling matches between some people in the political section and some people in the USIS office out there. There is bound to be disagreement when you have something as big as this. But basically it was pretty well coordinated. We had a very wonderful, active, kind of impatient guy, Bob Gosende, whose name is familiar from Somalia. He played a role there. He is retired now and has a fabulous job at the State University of New York in the president's office running the State University's \$100 million a year program with Russia. Bob is a USIA officer originally, but he had a very strong background in Africa. During the time of "Blackhawk Down," Bob was the State Department representative in Somalia. There is a very interesting story there. I don't want to say anything more about it. But he was our PAO in Moscow at this time. He is a very strong, opinionated person and has all the right motivations and all the right reasons for being the bull in the China shop and he would not object to me saying that. But what he did object to was that very often other people in the embassy didn't see how right he was. So, I took it upon myself to fight Bob's battles back in Washington. That meant fighting some of them at the Department. We won some and we lost some. Overall, we were all pretty professional about it. We got into some snarl, wrangling things. Our agency decided we should do a brochure about NATO structures so as to convince the Russians that the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe to include three new countries – the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary – would not be a threat to them. The people in USIA who did these types of brochures worked very hard to come up with something. We worked with the Pentagon and everybody all over town. In the end, no one would clear it. Everybody was shouting at everybody. We felt that it would be useful as a tool in Russia to have something like this. I don't want to go into all the details of what was and was not in the pamphlet. But it was an example of something where when you're trying to clear a public document, it's almost impossible to get everybody on board when there is any kind of a serious policy issue involved. Of course, the enlargement of NATO was a serious policy issue. It was looked at different from East to Western Europe. I spent an awful lot of time on this thing before it finally bit the dust and we buried it forever and it will never see the light of day. But probably we should have known from the beginning that we couldn't get the clearances necessary.

Q: One of the concerns that I've heard people have about the former structure of USIA was that here in Washington, USIA might have desk officers and all, but they're not in on policy development with a country – yet when you get to the field, the public affairs officer and the USIS contingent is as integrated as you can think as far as the country team. They're all together and all consulting along with the ambassador and all very much on the policy implementation. Yet you're talking here about things you're doing which would seem to be probably more than anything very strongly in terms of policy: whither Russia and its former empire?

TAYLOR: You're right. Presumably, consolidation should have helped solve some of that. But don't forget, I must have talked with my State Department counterparts on Russia or the Balkans more than once or twice a day. Plus, my boss, Bob McCarthy, spent more time at the State Department than he did in our office. I spent a lot of time physically at the Department during this period of time, especially with the Balkan task forces, which were always headed by a State Department person. We would do a lot of reporting explaining, justifying, what we were doing, as well as taking orders and taking ideas back to our own working groups. Similarly, we invited our State Department colleagues always to come to our planning sessions. We never ever would have done a major project or taken up a major initiative without having discussed it thoroughly at

several levels – desk officer to desk officer, office director to deputy assistant secretary and above depending on the sensitivity of the project. I don't think the cohesion in Washington has ever been as great as it is in the country team process overseas. Indeed, there have been some times where the State Department or USIA has proposed a plan, an idea, a project, where the ambassador will hit the ceiling and say, "You're not doing this in my backyard." So, those things would happen also. Then of course you put the poor PAO in a terrible position when Washington wants to do something and the ambassador doesn't. This particularly happened in my experience when the White House instructs the political appointees in an agency like USIA. The White House will tell Joe Duffy or Charlie Wick, "We want this to happen out in Moscow." Then they will come back and tell our agency, "The President said do this whether the State Department likes it or not." That has been an historical source of friction between USIA and the State Department. Mostly, USIA and State Department people would be singing off the same sheet of music were it not for the sometimes conflicting directives that we have gotten from the White House over the years. We have always been more public. The State Department has always been more inward looking and just generally by the nature of the beast tends not to like public events or much publication or publicizing of what the policy is, what the plans are, what the goals are. So, there is that friction and that clash of culture, too. But I think the major issues have come about when the most egregious things that USIA may have done in the eyes of the State Department anywhere in the world have usually come about as a result of some insane thing that the White House told us to do. The blacklist period during the Charlie Wick period... Then ambassadors would hear about this and hit the ceiling. Or some of the more propagandistic, anti-Soviet stuff that we were doing during the Reagan period would make career ambassadors cringe. We came out with Charlie Wick's "Let Poland Be Poland." It was actually so boring I don't know why anybody felt threatened by it. But just the whole idea of it was counter to what some of the career State people and the career USIA people were trying to do out in Poland at the time. So, there have been those things. That's always been fun.

NAOMI F. COLLINS
Wife of Ambassador
Russia (1997-2001)

Mrs. Collins was born and raised in New York City and educated at Queen College, City University of New York; Indiana University; Harvard University; and Moscow State University. Married to American Foreign Service Officer, James Collins, she accompanied him on a number of his assignments in the United States and abroad, including Izmir and Moscow, where her husband served as United States Ambassador from 1997 to 2001. Throughout this time Mrs. Collins continued her separate career, primarily in the fields of International Education, Humanities, and Political Development, notably Russian, authoring numerous publications on these and other subjects. She is currently an Independent Education Consultant in Bethesda, Maryland. Mrs. Collins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012

Q: So the Association works.

COLLINS: It works and it has been around for over 60 years, growing steadily. It still uses the acronym NAFSA but that no longer stands for what it originally did in the late 40's and 50's, which was the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors. But along the way – recognizing that there were five distinct groups within the Association – they realized they had to broaden the name to include “Association of International Educators.” And they kept the old acronym, as the NAACP did, even when it didn't stand for anything anymore.

This probably gets us up to 1997 when I left NAFSA. And when Jim became Ambassador to Russia. I was not yet sure what my next gig would be and was looking at possibilities as Executive Director of another national organization... but realized I probably did not want a third such position. And since I was freer than ever, I went out with Jim right at the beginning of his tenure as Ambassador. This was after waiting nine months through the nomination process.

I had left NAFSA because the Executive Committee had changed in those five years and we were not in the same place any more. The Board that had voted unanimously to hire me had turned over in that time. And the new Chair and Past Chair had different ways from mine at looking at things. So I left knowing I had done what I could in those years, grown membership and conference attendance, funds, and programs. Time to move on. So off I went with Jim to Russia, spending enough time to get a feel for Spaso House and what the job of “wife of...” might entail.

Q: We will just write you off after that.

COLLINS: It wasn't over yet... Lots ahead, including writing my book on observing Russia over four decades. And several projects in international higher education and in the humanities, plus a number of boards. Most happily, we have in the last eight years, gotten four wonderful grandchildren – from 2004 though just now in 2012. Tristan, Parker, Eden, and Anabel Collins. But that's more recent.

Q: Today is 23 April 2012 with Naomi Collins and Charles Stuart Kennedy. We left off in 1997. You were talking about what you might do next. You were considering other professional positions in the States – but meanwhile thought you would spend some time in Russia, seeing if you could get into something there.

COLLINS: Yes. Jim was appointed ambassador in 1997. I was completing my work at NAFSA and interviewing for my next professional position. By that time, I knew what questions to ask – and what spelled “trouble” - in interviewing for Executive Director positions. So that ended my interest in heading up a couple of national organizations that invited me.

Meanwhile, I got asked to do several projects. I did research and writing for publications in higher education for the American Council on Education, researched and wrote the entry for the “The Humanities” for the Charles Scribner's Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History [reference at end of document], reviewed proposals for the U.S. Department of Education, and worked with several other endeavors – including serving on nonprofit boards. When Jim first got the appointment, I was open-minded about considering what I might be able

to do as “wife of...” the Ambassador. I don’t mean things to amuse myself or keep busy, but rather something useful I could do, something that might make a difference, be of use to Jim or the field.

The obvious thought was that I was expert in nonprofit management, with about two decades’ work heading up these organizations (call them NGOs, nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations, the third sector, or whatever). I knew they made a real difference in delivering services, helping create what they call a civic society. So I thought I might do something useful there, or teach at the university level, as I had done. There was certainly no shortage of issues surrounding historical humanities questions. So I spoke with Jim and others, but it became clear to me that it would be hard to be taken seriously as an independent professional while being wife of the Ambassador. And I knew I could not do it as a volunteer and be taken seriously. So I was not able to find a position at that time. I know opportunity has increased since then. Perhaps another person would have been much better than I at figuring this out, perhaps be more imaginative in finding options. But it seemed difficult to be viewed in any way other than as “wife of...”

We know that the Russians then as now hold ambivalent and suspicious feelings about NGOs... so I didn’t want to be in the position of creating perceptions that could cause Jim trouble. When I realized that I wasn’t going to be able to do anything productive or contribute in any way, I decided that I would not stay full-time in Russia, but continue to go back and forth while doing the kinds of projects and boards I mentioned.

Q: And you mentioned your inability to find professional work in Moscow, being able to contribute in some way at the professional level?

Yes, as I look back, I’ve always wondered whether I could have had a productive career that was more compatible with Jim’s. The most obvious of course would have been to become a Foreign Service Officer. But that didn’t interest me. However, I had an interest and credentials in the kinds of educational and cultural endeavors then undertaken by U.S.I.A., the United States Information Agency. Somewhere in the middle or late 1970s or early 1980s, I took the exam for USIA.

I passed the written exams. But I had a peculiar experience at the orals. By that time, I could conduct myself well in interviews, public speaking: had even passed hours of oral exams for my Ph.D. And I had been told that the questions would be hypothetical and general, to test my judgment, problem solving, dealing with crises, analytic thinking. So I went into the exams confident. I was up to date with current events from reading the New York Times, Washington Post, and Newsweek. What a shock it was when the examiners turned on me asking for the actual provisions in the GATT, for example, and other very precise data. Their tone felt intimidating and even harassing. When I asked whether they might suggest at least one point, they refused to discuss anything. And they forged on asking other very specific legalistic points. I was quite upset of course and knew that they were hoping to prevent my serving – which they did. I have been cross-examined many times before and since: by members of the State Legislature, by Boards of Directors, and of course oral exams - and have never been treated that badly before or since. So I went home upset. By chance, Jim had a few young officers over at our

apartment, three or four young men. They had taken the oral exams not too long before. I told them what I had been asked. Their mouths fell opened. They said they could not have answered those questions themselves, but they were given only hypothetical situation questions, not such particular points questions at all. It was consoling, I guess – if frustrating. I later learned that none of the women I knew who were also wives of officers (as opposed to women who were not wives) were passed on the orals (although they had passed the writtens).

Q: I would like to say back in the 70's I used to be on one of those panels. This wasn't the attitude.

COLLINS: It shouldn't have been, of course. And “real gentlemen” did not behave this way. There was as you know a huge class-action lawsuit after this that became high profile. The women – and wives – did win it many years later. But the remedy was the opportunity – get this – to take the exams again. I did not think I wanted to work with people who treated people this way. But it also obviated the opportunity to have a professional career parallel to Jim's, which could have made family life easier. (I should be clear that I'm not arguing that wives of officers should get preferential treatment either.) But if Jim was not going to consider other career choices, I felt I should continue to try to find a compatible professional life. I regret I was unable to do so.

Q: When did you take this?

COLLINS: I think it was in the middle to later 1970s, perhaps early 80s. I've tried to forget it!

Q: At middle or end of the 1970s, I spent a year giving the exam. Certainly the individuals I knew weren't interested in “let's get them” or something like that. And we did try always to have at least one woman on the panel when interviewing a woman.

COLLINS: I think there was one woman on the panel with perhaps three or four men. She didn't say much, but had a severe officious manner that did not feel welcoming. When I've conducted professional interviews, I've always made sure the tone in the room was pleasant and respectful in manner and approach. One owes that to candidates... to people.

Q: The women who made it were rough. By god, I had a rough time and so will you...

COLLINS : Yes, and wanted to show their ... “macho”. Not all of them of course. But acting tough or intimidating never impresses me: confident and competent people don't have to “act tough.” In any case, one man did almost all the questioning, a former Ambassador (I believe to Asian countries). The others deferred to him.

But I do know that when I wrote their questions down immediately after the test, even before driving home, and tried them out on Jim's male colleagues, they were astonished. These were not even in the same ballpark. They told me the kinds of questions they had been asked, all of which I would have found easy to address. That doesn't mean I am confident I would have passed – only that I would have been able to feel it was fair. And if they had disclosed in advance that the nature of the exam included very specific points and “right and wrong” particulars – rather than a

test of judgment, analysis, reasoning, and hypotheticals—or even about American culture or education--I would have felt differently about any outcome.

Q. Returning to what Russia was like when you returned in 1997....

COLLINS: Huge changes had already started in the early 1990s. At that point, I've mentioned, we saw stores closing down and deserted, and goods appearing in impromptu kiosks germinating on sidewalks. Government owned businesses dissolved. By the time I returned in 1997, the first thing I noted was the change in the visual imagery, of the signage. The iconography had changed. Russia has always been about iconography: the iconography of onion shaped domes, the icons themselves of course, and even the visuals on the lovely painted enamel Palekh boxes. During the Soviet period, of course, we had Socialist Realism, a style akin to "Uncle Sam Needs You" posters. A government iconography, iconography of an authoritarian State, and very retro.

Q: When you say that I am reminded of a painting I saw when I was in Yugoslavia. "Vote for the Best" in very big letters. Of course you know who the best was.

COLLINS : That's right. Mao in China did the same. In Russia it was these smiling blond boys and girls happy on the farm. Wholesome and unquestioning.

Q: Looking lustfully at a tractor.

COLLINS : Yes, exactly. And next to the tractor, acres – or hectares - of tall golden grain growing. Ideal grain of the type I never saw there. Another thing I noticed immediately on my return – beside the change in visual images – was the traffic. Progress of course for those who coveted cars and now had them; hell for anyone trying to get anywhere. And it has only become worse since. Cars at a standstill. Unbreathable air. Sitting in such a traffic jam,

I was intrigued by the signs. In the Socialist Realist – pre-capitalist – days, the signs extolled work. The Russian leaders were for decades striving – as Jim puts it – to turn Russians into Germans, to motivate them to be very disciplined and to work very hard. They seemed to think if you had enough exhortatory posters around, people would just start working harder. Propaganda. Making large political points. And never subtle – in words or images; more comic book. Now it's 1997, inching out of the airport, all those graphics have been replaced with crude looking advertisements for modern products: detergent, toothpaste, automobiles. Stuff. Advertising had not yet gone slick. It was not Times Square. Not at that point, anyway. So I was amused by how radically the visuals had changed. And I thought suddenly about the underlying themes. In the past, they were trying to get you to buy Communism. Buy hard work. Buy Lenin and his ideology and his successors, and the concept of a New Soviet State with New Soviet People.... Men and women marching toward the future with hammer and sickle in the air. But now – in 1997 – they were trying to get you buy "stuff" – cars, toothpaste, detergent... in huge letters and not subtle visuals. Not sophisticated graphics. That said a lot.

And of course this was the first time I was going to Spaso House as a "home." It was – is – huge... probably some 35,000 square feet. My image was of Marjorie Meriwether Post. I had read of her tenure as wife of a much earlier American Ambassador, and the tons of frozen food

(Bird's Eye of course) that she had had shipped for her entertaining in Russia. Talk about a contrast of people filling this role: an heir to a fortune, raised with servants and privilege, and average people like me, raised in modest circumstances, in an apartment of perhaps a 1,000 square feet for a family of four. She and her husband hosted magnificent parties for which they imported fresh flowers and rented live animals. I wrote about these lavish affairs in my book because I was so intrigued with the excesses – and how one could not get away with this today, even using your own personal wealth if you happened to have it. So I pictured their life in Spaso House, and then the gap between that and everyday life even for an average person at the Embassy, let alone for an average American at home, or an average Russian.

Spaso House is regal. It is splendid. It may lose some of the glamour when you imagine the house's history: that the merchant who built it was murdered in it by his own son. The house dates to the turn of the century, 19th into 20th. He spared nothing. The stunning Czech crystal chandelier, they say, is the largest in any private home in Russia. And the furnishings, museum quality. I thought about that, and about how you would work at having a comfortable everyday life in so public and so large an edifice. And I thought of the practical side behind the glamour, the day to day running of an institution, like a hotel and restaurant. The 10,000 guests entertained each year. The staff of thirteen. Fortunately, they knew what they were doing and didn't need direction.

Q: Who paid for these official visitors, for their meals?

COLLINS : If they were not Americans, it came out of the set allowance an Ambassador was allotted for representation. If they were Americans, I don't believe you had funds for that. But most events were designed to bring Russians and other nationalities together in honor of visiting Americans. Support was quite limited, though, so it required a staff that could stretch the budget as far as they could, including by recycling leftovers. We were not in the position to provide out-of-pocket money for public representation, for doing Jim's job. But there were out-of-pocket costs to us of his career that we had to absorb, that we would not have had in a "normal" government job in D.C. The State Department also expected – at least when Jim was DCM (Deputy)-- that I would do the accounting and keep the books and do the entertaining, order the food, etc. That is, provide staff services without pay. When I said I was not going to be able to do the books, the accounting, the ordering, the managing a household, the inventories (that they should pretend that Jim was a bachelor or widower), the State Department then hired an American from the States to do the job, and paid him at that time about \$ 60,00 per year (today's equivalent perhaps \$70,000-\$80,000?). That is, a professional salary. They never offered me that option, which I might have considered, even taking a salary cut from where I was, but in order to be with Jim. I had lots of administrative experience by then. For the Ambassador, the paid staff does these jobs.

Living in Spaso House – seeking privacy in a house that was used not only for the Ambassador's events, but for other events all day and evening long, meetings, groups, meals – like a conference hotel--meant retreating to the second floor suite of rooms, bedrooms and sitting room. Unfortunately, connecting the rooms was a wide-open "mezzanine," a balcony opened to the first floor, a public hall ... so being dressed was required all the time! During the day, not a problem,

but for breakfast... well... it's nice to have a private cup of coffee or juice without being ready to greet the world.

In Spaso House, the other major activity was (and is) the annual Fourth of July reception for 2,000 – 2,500 guests. Shaking each hand on the way in and out. It was an interesting group, including Russians in all fields, people in the arts, education, music, and of course people in government. With time, people were more open and there were fewer government hacks and flacks. Then you had the people from all of the other Embassies. So you had people from European, African, Asian and South American countries. And you had the Americans from the Embassy.

Planning took months. In January, the staff ordered from the States the red, white, and blue crepe paper and banners and flags and balloons... They decorated for days so that the room was absolutely filled. I have photographs to prove this. What I recall most, though, was one of the Fourths – can't remember what year – in which the outdoor temperature was well into the 90s, the humidity high (you're in the middle of a big landlocked mass, perhaps like Kansas) – and these two thousand plus people all fully dressed in suits and dresses, sweat pouring down, shaking hands. There was no air conditioning – and no fans! The food was curling and wilting on the tables. I was appalled that no one ever managed to procure a single fan for those hot summer days of crowded rooms. That said – of course – I felt very proud to represent America.

One adventure as wife of the Ambassador I particularly enjoyed also helps illustrate life in Russia around 1997. One day I said to Jim, "Why don't we do something a little different. It is hot. I have been in Moscow a lot. Let's go out to the countryside. Let's go see a farm." Jim of course grew up on a farm, and also has a background in agriculture. So I thought this would be an interesting thing for him too and a nice excuse to get away. Agriculture is always such a big issue for the Russians. They have tried to return to the production levels they had prior to the 1917 Revolution. Meanwhile, population increased but grain production was stagnant or in reverse. We all know they didn't do impressive agriculture, despite the posters, movies, and exhortations. Wasn't happening on the ground. Some people said – well, it's too cold there – but have a look at Minnesota, North Dakota, and Canada. Hardly tropical lands. Canada is feeding the world grain.

So, Jim said, "Fine. This Friday we will go out to a farm." I was all ready to go at the stated time. But what Jim hadn't told me is that we were hardly going to be alone (or with only the driver.) So here was a van filled with men. "Who are these people?" I asked. Well two or three of them were Americans from the Embassy who were in the agriculture field. One from the States, there by chance. Also by chance, he was someone I knew professionally in Maryland. Then another van of men pulled up. These were Russian officials in agricultural fields. So, two vans, no springs, lots of men. And we're headed out to the countryside. We shortly discovered we had picked up a police escort with wailing sirens. And then more of them. They accumulated like flies all around us.

I was in the front seat with the driver, trying to avoid carsickness. As always, I was taking notes (which is what allowed me later to write my book). Turns out this activity had not gone unnoticed. At lunch, one of the Russian officials toasting Jim, commented to all assembled how

wonderful a wife Jim has, taking all these notes for Jim so he'd have them later. I just laughed to myself knowing the notes were for me.

And finally we arrived at the farm. We were greeted and hosted by the large, self-important farm director (where is Gogol when we need him?). He is the new entrepreneur, the man who will turn the Soviet farm to modern agriculture. He led us to the second floor to provide us background and tea. If it was in the 90s outdoors, it must have been 100 degrees in this room, sun beating down, windows closed, no fans. Drinking hot tea. All of us dripping and becoming very ruddy. And it didn't smell all that good, either. But being good sports – we smiled through the hot floodlights, the video cameras and the photographers. And I graciously accepted the bouquet of flowers. (These came in handy later when we unexpectedly stopped to visit a grave and I plucked a few to hand Jim discretely so he could place them on the grave.) I greeted everyone in usual Russian greetings. Jim participated in Russian at the meeting, impressing them, and commenting that “even the wife of... could speak Russian.”

They took us on a tour of the farm – lots of acres – or hectares – it was. For the tour, the translator they provided was the farm's “manager” or “administrator” or “economist” – they called her. She was perhaps 15 years younger than I, and dressed as if for a wedding, spiked heels, crinolines, taffeta dress. As we got talking she told me that she was Jewish and soon migrating to Brooklyn where her mother and young son were already living. In Brighton Beach. She had spent her career managing this business doing the numbers I think... probably ordering products, keeping inventory, and serving as interpreter and tour guide. (And I thought of my great-grandfather, manager of a large estate in the Pale.)

We saw the cattle, about which Jim could ask the right sort of questions about their feed, production levels (not a fraction of ours), and so forth. Driving around it struck me – even as a NYC girl – that there wasn't much hope for the grain or any crops. Looked like empty ground. And lots of men just sitting around. There had been a drought, but still. But the director was proud as a peacock. I was feeling less like Rebecca at Sunnybrook Farm as the day wore on. But I did enjoy seeing the fine day care center and the little garden cultivated with little tools by little people. The kids themselves were then napping on little cots, oblivious to our group passing through – and impressive for kids of some five years old and below. The women who ran the center had to bake and sell goods to help raise the money needed to keep the center running. But if there was one thing in Russia that always impressed me – that I loved to see – it was their day care and nursery centers. And the great women who staffed them, doing their jobs with all their heart.

Q: Girls with the big bows?

COLLINS: Oh, yes, the girls wore their big white organdy bows that no one in America has worn since 1923. Our own day care centers do not always have great napping equipment, often little floor mats, but these had not only little cots but also pillows and blankets. By that time I had given up on the quiet day at the farm with a picnic for two on the banks of the river. It was about 1:30. Even in that heat, I was thinking about lunch. We were then led into a building that served as their community or social hall. On the table, which had been laid some hours earlier, were platters and platters of smoked fishes, appetizers, and pickled things. Unfortunately, not

only had they been left sitting in the heat and wilting, but they were uncovered, and the resting places for hungry flies. Dozens or hundreds of them. Indoors, it felt like over 100 degrees (no open windows or fans), everything was drooping and dripping and curling up at the ends.

And everyone was waiting for me to start. So I was thinking Public Health 101 and reached for pickles and bread. Then came hot soup – which tasted fine even if we didn't need more heat then... but I ate around the fish's head floating in it. I was doing my best to be a good guest and receive the generous hospitality, which it certainly was. After the soup came – as I recall – fish, meat, potatoes, and then dessert... although sadly the chocolates were slowly sinking into their serving plate. I knew that good chocolates were dear. And of course there were bottles and bottles of vodka, wine, and sodas. Very generous feast and lovely set up. And the men (they were almost all men) were drinking and sweating and eating and sweating, very red in the face. Then I realized that I, too, was sweating, bright red, and smelled like a fish. I probably should have been drinking!

For the trip back we accumulated even more police escorts. So it was a totally memorable day. But what I was left with was the image of this “model farm,” the dry empty fields, the lack of working labor, the hopelessness of producing an adequate crop – and what a long way it would be to improve productivity in Russian agriculture. I don't know – because I haven't read up on it – whether they have progressed since 1997 in their agricultural output, but I hope so.

Q: I read a book that was personally influential. I think it was called “Farm,” by Tracey Kidder. Kidder talks about a farm in the Missouri lowlands and the apparatus that goes into making it function. You have a combine and somebody has to be with the combine all day during the combining season, ready to rush out and get a new part if it's needed. There are so many elements that go into feeding the agricultural process. You need a whole apparatus, a support system. It is incredible.

COLLINS: Yes. And today it is particularly huge business in the U.S. and Canada. It is industrial size. I've seen that it is computerized today, too, from testing levels of water needed for crops to other ways to test for the progress of the crops.

Q: Yes, tractors have computers too.

COLLINS: The tractors do and there is a central control room with computers that measure all kinds of things. Jim knows a lot more about farming because he grew up on a farm and has also kept up with Russian agriculture.

Q: He tells about being a pre teen driving a tractor.

COLLINS: Yes, a kid, actually. He was something like eight years old. And not just tractors but combines. He knows about hand milking and milking machines. He also knows what equipment and approaches were introduced into American agriculture at various times – and the time these things were or were not introduced into Russian agriculture. Sort of the history of agriculture. It was very intensive farming they did in Illinois. They had beautiful soil there and they were very systematic about such things as what you did in different fields at different times. Even a family

farm required “systems” and discipline. Which takes us to a larger question that extends beyond farms, and that is management. A farm has to be managed. It’s a business, too. Jim’s grandfather also had a cattle business.

Q: They just don’t do it casually and they do something else at the same time.

COLLINS: Right. You have to be serious about water, for example – and about irrigation systems that don’t waste half their water shooting it out like a fountain into the air. The Israelis and others came up with the drip system, just drops of water going into the roots of each plant right at the ground. But it takes leadership and management – and investment and incentives to make it work. In general in the changing Russia what is needed is people who can conceptualize what needs to be done and make things happen, and the wherewithal to effect these things through leadership and management skills, systems and approaches. I assume these abilities have been increasing with time as new generations rise. There are also issues surrounding capital – and capital flight – and of course diversifying industry to enterprises beyond extraction industries.

Q: Obviously Russia has a big problem, although not as big a problem as China has. The demographics of Russia are bad as far as the number of people being born and the number getting old. Did you find people talking about these issues? And also how this compares to the U.S. and Europe and the way their societies function?

COLLINS: I believe that educated, well-traveled, and open-minded Russians are concerned that their society isn’t functioning as well as others, is not as productive and not as good as some in re-populating itself. But I wonder how many countries do think a lot about their demographics and how to “control” these. We know what China has done about over-population. And Russian leaders have at various times offered incentives to induce people to have more children. But incentives alone probably won’t do: people need the optimism about the future and the material conditions of daily life that encourages them to have children – or more than one child, anyway. I believe they still have a high rate of abortion – and always did. That doesn’t help fertility even for the same person in the future. And the high level of abortion – or at least the low level of successful pregnancies – means that there are a lot of potential babies that people are choosing not to bring into the world for what they perceive to be good reasons. Demographers say that population growth is tied to people’s vision of the future and how hopeful they are about improving times. I don’t know if it is true or not, but it’s clear that Russians are not having a lot of kids. They are not replacing themselves. For the Slavic Russians, I should say. Muslim Russians do have more children.

Q: Were you getting any feel for the role of women in Russia today? For example one of the statistics that gets quoted was that the Soviet Union had so many women doctors. But doctors were fairly low down on the totem pole.

COLLINS: It was certainly true that the Soviets would advertise to the world how liberated their women were and used the example of doctors to support that. But it was also true that the average doctor had far less education than our doctors did and do – more like a graduate nurse or physician’s assistant – and that she did not garner major respect. The top doctors tended to be

the researchers and surgeons and specialists at top hospitals – and I understood that most of them were men. There was not a lot a doctor could do in the delivery of everyday services in the absence or shortage of medicines and equipment (including antibiotics)– and sometimes even running water or sanitary conditions. Public health was also an issue. I should add that for all this advertising of how liberated women were, they did not emphasize how that also meant they were free to do “men’s work” – physical labor on construction sites, laying train tracks, digging ditches. They were the low paid unskilled *physical* labor. They also worked in the fields. They did the heavy lifting.

The funny thing about the position of Russian women was that they sometimes would have preferred – as feminists opposed – being “placed on a pedestal.” They didn’t have that luxury, one that many American women were beginning to question as they sought full equality, not being condescended to, treated differently. Men opening doors for you, holding your coat. Chivalry. But – it seems to me – it’s a hell of a lot better than being treated badly or without respect. Overall, I think many women believed that the men did not treat them very well, did not help in the home. But some of these generalizations may also be about “class” as well as other things: there were and are women and men academics, PhDs, other “white collar” professionals in whose lives things played out differently. Yet the Academies, at least in the past, had only a small percentage of women in top places, and not for lack of women PhDs. But much is shifting daily with the new economy and decline in or lack of “entitled” positions.

Q: You are speaking of the latest revolution?

COLLINS: Yes, since this recent revolution women have been able to move into leading organizations, not just serving as deputies – at a time of course that remuneration has gone down. With less ingrained institutional controls, there may be other opportunities. Different skills – like ingenuity and initiative are now finding homes. Jim became involved with a group of successful female entrepreneurs in the “new Russia.” His commercial attaché, a woman, did a tremendous job helping these women create professional networks, something we’ve had going for several decades in this country. Some of these women were not young, but were experienced professionals in math, science, and other fields, and had the skills to conceptualize, lead and manage. As soon as they could they went for it. The majority of women most likely had routine jobs, physical or office, and did the housework, shopping, and childrearing. Not much help from men in that – not culturally the norm for men to do “women’s work.”

Q: Good God.

COLLINS: And of course the women do both men’s and women’s work.

Q: Let’s turn to the Embassy. As the Ambassador’s wife did you find yourself filling the traditional role or doing it part time or what?

COLLINS: I found that it was a “damned if you do and damned if you don’t” dilemma. The view seemed to be that an Ambassador’s wife could be too interfering, too controlling, too bossy, too demanding, too intrusive, too participatory in her husband’s work, too into derived “power” and wanting to “run things.” I also heard that wives who pursued their own professional interests or

detached from this role were too disinterested and selfish, too uninvolved, aloof, and uncaring, not community-spirited. Those are the extremes of course.

So I tried to imagine the ideal in being there: what could I do to contribute or make a difference? If I were there full time, what would I add to the community? What, if anything, could I contribute to Russia – or U.S.- Russia relations – at a time like this? I reluctantly concluded that I could spend periods of time at the Embassy, participate while I was there, and of course provide Jim company, but that staying full time -- after all the years I had already spent in Russia – would not be a good choice.

Q: Well I would think at an Embassy such as Moscow's where to get outside the Embassy group you had to speak Russian, and a lot of the wives, I assume, did not... I would think that particularly junior level wives might feel left out, isolated. This is where somebody like the Ambassador's or DCM's wife can pick these people up and try to do something about that.

COLLINS: I think you're right about that need. I'm not sure I would have been the best person to do it. But I do agree that the Ambassador and his or her wife or husband ought to support the people in the community and especially the most vulnerable among them. I don't know if male spouses – husbands of female Ambassadors -- have been expected to play that role: much less seems to be expected of them.

Now I think they've professionalized some of the family issues in the Family Liaison Offices at the Embassies – one of the great reforms of this period. That office can also be a way to tap the talents of spouses who are good at family and community support, including those trained in social work and related fields. Of course whenever I have been living or staying at a consulate or embassy I did always come to know the people there and go to family events, picnics, holiday parties, and such. I found in Jordan, in a small post, that many of the wives were very unhappy indeed, and wished I would stay longer – but I knew that joining the unhappy group and trying to improve the morale was beyond my own abilities. It was a place with very limited outlets for creative energy. That said, you're right that many people – especially wives of male employees in early posts-- were unhappy, bored, isolated, lonely, and/or homesick. They don't always have the language; the Embassy employee works 24/7, and “dependent/spouses” are not in an environment in which a person can necessarily feel in control of her life. I have listened, but I have always felt helpless in being able to solve anything. Very little opportunity to have a voice as an Embassy spouse.

That said – we should not underestimate the number of spouses who have done a terrific job overseas and enjoyed living their lives abroad. Many have found interesting things to do; some worked with the FLO office in organizing outings, exploring new places as a group. And I hope by now they are not wasting the talents of qualified spouses to use as professionals at the Embassy to deal with marriage, alcohol, teenage, and other issues American families have abroad so that these families have access to equivalent services they would if they were at home. Because a lonely, left-alone wife in Amman or Moscow could hardly say – OK, I'll just go out to Tyson's Corner for a few hours...shop, get some pizza, go to a movie.

Q: That is where my wife is right now.

COLLINS: Very timely! And yesterday I had the urge for art, drove down to the National Gallery West building, and saw not only a current exhibit, but also the 17th century galleries, Dutch and Flemish paintings. Ten rooms. I loved it. This would have been impossible in Amman or Izmir, and harder to do in Moscow than here. Of course there is amazing fine art in Moscow, but access can be daunting. The queues, systems of acquiring tickets, taking the Metro or being stuck in traffic, make a spontaneous visit either difficult or less pleasurable. And for many wives overseas, such an excursion alone downtown can be a challenge. Especially – in the old days – as some babushka would likely be screaming at you about something you have or have not done but you're not sure exactly what she's saying which makes her even more angry and red in the face and screaming even more. Even with language ability, you come home drained.

Q: During the period you were there as the Ambassador's wife, was the equivalent of the KGB or the security service causing problems for the families there, the wives or children?

COLLINS : During the earlier period, of course, we were all so vulnerable to be set up. Entrapped. Especially when we were there as students. And certainly surveillance was rampant. And anything the KGB could collect for blackmail they sought. We were so young when we were tripped up in 1966, as described earlier. But we had been smart enough, young as we were at 23 and 26, to have agreed that nothing the Soviets could try to use against us was worse than being blackmailed itself; so no matter how bad a thing they might claim to either of us about the other, we would not allow it to be used against us with the other one. Of course for all the years we lived there , the KGB was on our tail. When they wanted to do surveillance they could choose whether to be conspicuous or not. I understand that surveillance and information gathering has not ended, but do not know whether they still employ entrapment. They probably kept an eye on Jim when he was Ambassador in part to see that he was not the victim of some ordinary street crime – which would be an embarrassment. So although he had no assigned security, and ran around alone in the Metro and on streets and at markets, he may have been shadowed.

Q: This is not a discrete question, but were there a lot of marital problems during the time you were there, with either husbands or wives going off on their own, finding other people – at a level it caused problems.

COLLINS : I wasn't close enough to the gossip when I was there as Ambassador's wife (who wants to talk to *her*?), but knew that Jim did have to deal with family issues when they became problematic– or when he learned about them. He was responsible by law for dealing even with most personal issues such as spousal or child abuse, alcohol or drug addiction, or other harmful behaviors. Some of those people were sent home. But for other transgressions, I expect that people everywhere when they are bored, unhappy, and lonely, and there's not a lot of joy, fun, or romance in the air, find other outlets.

Overall, the Moscow Embassy was not great for marriages, as we've discussed. While many survived, and some may have strengthened, many didn't make it. In fact even in our student years there, married graduate students often ended up unmarried ones.

Q: When you were there was there terrorism directed either at Americans or at the Russians?

COLLINS : I didn't much think about terrorism while we were there in the later 90's into 2000 because the timing was fortuitous for us, anyway. That is, by 9/11 we were no longer there. Jim had retired just weeks earlier. And the Chechen and other incidents, I believe, came later. I can't say what the Russians themselves focused on or feared during that period, but Jim probably knows what their concerns were. I know one of their long-term worries had been (and likely still is) their growing Muslim populations within Russia and on its borders. They may also be concerned with the pressure of Chinese population on their long border with China. And of course the Chechens with their willingness to commit violent acts.

Q: The theater.

COLLINS : The theater and also a school filled with children. The Russians have so many things to think about today. Some of the large issues from their perspective – beside security threats – are demographic questions, demography as tied to economic development. Declining population; low birthrate; low life expectancy; little to no immigration. How do you sustain an economy? Add to that other economic woes surrounding industry: how do you develop businesses beyond extraction industries? And the development of an economic infrastructure, legal and economic systems, contract enforcement, integrity of the legal process, to create a framework to provide confidence for investors. And we have discussed the challenges of inadequate agricultural output.

Q: Well, when I think about it, I can't think of a single thing outside of those nested dolls that I would want to buy from Russia. I realize there are things like fighter aircraft.

COLLINS : Yes, they are successful in producing heavy metal objects. I'm not sure whether they do more finished products than parts, but we know they can compete in the field of heavy metal. The other area in which they can be competitive is "human capital," as they say: real talent in mathematics, computer sciences, engineering and other fields. They have brainpower for today's knowledge-based world.. This is where the U.S. is falling behind, landing something like 23rd among the world's nations in math related fields. Whether they are making the best use of the talent they have – and taking advantage of a highly literate population and workforce overall-- is another question.

Q: You mention computer programmers. You hire them and they are an asset to whoever hires them. And a net loss to the place they come from.

COLLINS : "Brain drain" is always an issue in a country that cannot absorb its own educated and professional labor. With our more global "marketplace" today, brainpower becomes a more fluid commodity, crossing borders. But in this global market they also have to compete with others, such as India.

Q: Did you learn from the American community that is trying to do business there?

COLLINS : There is a lot of such business going on there. Thousands of American companies are doing business there. There is an American Chamber of Commerce whose annual Fourth of

July parties had expanded to fill an entire park. And beyond the American companies are – of course – huge multinational corporations, like GE. We were there when the first American companies were just starting up. One of the first, McDonalds. Now I understand that Moscow contains a number of McDonald's most profitable restaurants in the world (outside the U.S.). And similarly for Pepsi Cola, for whom Russia is its biggest market (also outside the U.S.). These are nontrivial.

Q: McDonalds buys all of its stuff mostly from where?

COLLINS : They had to develop their own vertical industries there, their own farms (yes, Old McDonald's farms). They needed the right types of lettuce, the right size potatoes for long fries, the beef cattle for hamburgers, the right wheat for buns. For new industries starting up there, though, it's not so easy. Jim was involved with a couple of large efforts to grow chickens and to develop modern dairy farming. Venture capital was hard to obtain for all kinds of reasons. So, foreign investment, Russian investment, entrepreneurship, manufacturing, business-based agriculture, all are significant needs. And legal and financial infrastructure.

Jim continues to travel to Russia every couple of months to keep up with these developments. He also co-chairs the U.S.-Russia Foundation that supports entrepreneurship in Russia. He tends to be more of an optimist about the place than I am. He sees hope particularly in the young generations of people arising since 1991. I feel less optimistic because of my sense of their history, governance, demographics, and economics. I should add that the latent and blatant anti-Semitism in Russia – sometimes disguised as scapegoating and jailing oligarchs – is unlikely to improve the future of the country. Most countries have not made great strides after Jews were expelled or choose to migrate. And only time will tell what kind of governance is ahead there, with increasing authoritarian control. Cracking down on free thinking and views different from your own, your opposition, will never improve an economy or the quality of life, never help a country innovate or advance.

DAVID J. KRAMER
Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary for Global Affairs
Washington, DC (2001-2003)

Mr. Kramer was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts and Harvard Universities. After serving with several government and private organizations in Washington, DC, he joined the Department of State, working with the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs. He later was a member of the Policy Planning staff before joining the Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, where he served as Assistant Secretary from 2008 to 2009. In 2009 Mr. Kramer joined the German Marshall Fund, and in 2010 became Executive Director of Freedom House in Washington, DC. Mr. Kramer was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

KRAMER: I started June, 2001 and then I was at the State Department. Paula was in a meeting with a Mexican delegation at the time of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Q: Under Secretary of Global Affairs?

KRAMER: Yes.

Q: What did this entail?

KRAMER: I was her senior adviser. I focused on several different things. I focused on any issues dealing with the former Soviet Union because that was my background. I also focused on the issue of HIV/AIDS which was gaining more attention in the Bush administration and involved working closely with colleagues in the OES Bureau as well as in the White House's Office of AIDS Policy and was involved, I certainly won't say played a major role but played a minor role in helping to put together the PEPFAR Initiative, the president's major HIV/AIDS initiative for countries around the world.

I also helped the undersecretary with personnel issues and got somewhat involved, although I wasn't front and center on the issue of trafficking of persons which was an issue that was getting more attention. A new office had been created at the State Department dealing with the GTIP as it is called; G standing for global affairs. That's where I reported, straight to the undersecretary and provided general advice to help Paula with writing articles and speeches and so on.

Q: Your boss was Paula Dobriansky?

KRAMER: Exactly.

Q: What was her background?

KRAMER: I believe she started as an intern at the NSC under Brzezinski and then worked in the Reagan administration and the Bush Senior administration and I believe her last job at that point was as a DAS in what was I guess called the HR Bureau, the Human Rights Bureau at that time. She then left and wound up at the Council on Foreign Relations directing their Washington office. CFR rented space from the Carnegie Endowment and so I would see Paula occasionally. She also had a background in Russian and Eurasian affairs and so we would often see each other at meetings so we got to know each other in the '90s, became friends and then when I told her I had left Carnegie, she very nicely put me in touch with the chairman of the U.S. Advisory Commission. Then when she joined the Bush administration in May of 2001, she then asked me to join her in her office as her senior adviser.

Q: You were there for how long?

KRAMER: I was in the G office, as it is called, the Global Affairs Office, from June, 2001 until October, 2003.

Q: As a Russian expert did you sense that we were probably, when push comes to shove, were paying more attention to Russia because of what it had been than what it was? It was no longer the great menace. The great menace in a way has been described as Ivory Coast with missiles. It is living off a reputation if you are looking at it globally, it is not that big a deal or not? Correct me if I am wrong.

KRAMER: I agree in part with what you are saying. In 2001 George Bush came into office intent on trying to establish a good relationship with his counterpart in Moscow, Vladimir Putin. In the famous Ljubljana meeting he had with him he made the comment of how he looked into Putin's soul or looked into his eyes and could see his soul, a line that he never really lived down. He was interested in improving bilateral relations.

I think that paid off when he wanted to abrogate from the ABM treaty. He got Putin's support when U.S. forces went into Afghanistan through Central Asia and even in the initial round of or the next round of NATO enlargement, Russian objections weren't that serious.

It then started to deteriorate I think both because of the deteriorating situation inside of Russia on human rights exemplified most notably by the arrest of Khodorkovsky in 2003 but also with Russian opposition to the war in Iraq. Of course, Russia wasn't the only country to be opposed to it.

Russia did start to rebound under Putin, largely thanks to the increase in the price of oil which meant that Russia's importance in the world did increase in the past decade.

I think your point is a valid one which is that even in the '90s but including the early Bush period the focus was as much on what Russia had been as much as it was or is or would be.

Q: Talk a bit about the HIV program. I think one of the things that Bush II is not given much credit for is the fact that he really pushed this.

KRAMER: Yes, absolutely. It is an issue that he cared deeply about. There were two aspects to it; one was an international organization set up called the Global Fund to Combat HIV/AIDS/TB and Malaria. The U.S. played a critical role in founding that and providing seed money for it.

At the same time the president also launched his own U.S. initiative called the PEPFAR program for AIDS relief as part of his presidential initiative for prevention and AIDS relief. It was a real breakthrough in terms of focusing U.S. attention on trying to staunch the spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly in Africa but not just in Africa; in Southeast Asia and other places. It focused on, I think, a dozen countries, initially to provide significant assistance in getting preventive measures in place, for treatment and also for dealing with issues like condoms and others. The condom issue was a very controversial one in the Bush administration.

I agree. I think that this was an initiative that the president deserves great credit for and I think also President Obama does as well because he has continued it in this administration. It is one of those issues that had bipartisan support.

Q: Why would the condom issue be a, this is for historical purposes. A condom is a condom. What's the big deal about it?

KRAMER: Some people didn't like the idea that you would be distributing condoms, that they encourage sexual activity outside of marriage so there were those concerns about it.

Q: Was this mainly the Catholic Church?

KRAMER: It wasn't only. I think that the church had some issues with it. There were certain conservative factions, I think it is fair to say, that also had issues with it. At the same time part of the program was distributing condoms so not withstanding concerns or objections, it still happened.

Q: I interviewed Prudence Jones and she was in Africa Bureau and they were, one of the brands they were circulating says, 'Use prudence', you know.

KRAMER: Exactly.

Q: How did you see your bureau interacting with the rest of the Department? I have talked to people who worked for the Human Rights Bureau early on under Patt Derian and she sort of inserted herself rather strongly but became quite effective. How did it work with you?

KRAMER: In the case say of HIV/AIDS the OES Bureau, the Oceans, Environment and Science Bureau played the key, the lead role so my role was more as advisory and helping out, providing the support at the undersecretary level. The OES front office including; Bud Rock who was a P/DAS at that time and Ken Brill who had been involved and then later John Turner, working very closely with Jack Chow who was a DAS responsible for international health. He and his team including Judith Kaufman who was terrific and a number of other people were involved; Bill Dilday who is still working at the office dealing with international AIDS. They were the ones leading the charge. I was simply helping them out in a supporting and advisory role. Sometimes they would need the help from the undersecretary's office so I was able to provide that but Jack and his team were really the ones who were intimately involved in all this, including dealing with the setup of the global fund to combat HIV/AIDS/TB and malaria. OES was very important.

Then when the White House created this new office to deal with the PEPFAR Program it kind of took the issue of HIV/AIDS out of OES and so OES kind of lost one of its key functions in launching all this work on HIV/AIDS. It was set up in an office that was essentially autonomous and run by somebody who reported directly to the secretary.

Q: How did you find in dealing in the bureaucracy of the State Department? The secretary and Paula, how did they get along?

KRAMER: Secretary Powell and Paula? They seemed to get along fine. They got along very well I think and then Paula had, Paula was there for all eight years. Paula had a reputation of

getting along with everybody. Everyone liked Paula. She is a very decent person, smart person, very active, very energetic and so I think she and the secretary had a good relationship.

Q: I guess the African Bureau would be where the center of HIV business was although Asia was beginning to show up but there were some trouble spots in Africa, weren't there?

KRAMER: There were. It is working with the Africa Bureau most closely but most of that work done with the regional bureaus was done by OES so I wasn't directly involved in that kind of activity unless there were problems between OES and the regional bureaus and then I would try to weigh in in any way to be helpful but AF was certainly a major focus of it.

Q: Where did your bureau look in congress? Did you have sort of a constituency or connections to congress?

KRAMER: When I was working for Paula at that point the main interaction would be between Paula and members of congress or even staff so she would be the one front and center. I would be involved in it. I would meet with staff on the Hill but she would, I would go with her. I would help her with this. She would meet with members on trafficking in persons and other kinds of things.

That was a controversial issue at the time. There were some concerns about where that office was going so it wasn't just about the HIV/AIDS initiative. Jack Chow also played an important role on the Hill in interacting with them, explaining to them the administration's thinking and plans for dealing with the HIV/AIDS issue.

Q: Well, as you were looking at Russia, had been looking at it for a long time, what was your impression during the time you were in Global Affairs of where things were going in Russia?

KRAMER: I was concerned even before I joined Paula's office when Putin became president. He's a guy who came up through the KGB ranks and usually if you get somebody with a KGB background that he had you are not going to get someone who is enamored with democracy and human rights. I was concerned early on.

That concern was reinforced in the time I was working in the Global Affairs office as Putin began to take over the TV stations, nationwide TV stations which in retrospect was a brilliant move on his part because TV is the main means by which Russians get their news and information. That meant that the state controlled what Russians were seeing and hearing.

I was concerned early on about where Russia was going. You have to keep in mind too in 1999, again before I started in the government Russia had reinvaded Chechnya in the north Caucasus and terrible abuses were taking place in that war. That was under Yeltsin. It started under Yeltsin before Putin became president. I was very worried about where that was going, about the situation inside the country, about Putin's efforts to concentrate and centralize power and I would say those concerns would turn out to be very warranted in light of where he went.

Q: Looking at it in the long run, Russia has never really had a democratic government. In mega terms did you see this as a perhaps a necessary step towards getting somewhere or maybe a complete reverse?

KRAMER: In the '90s when I was at Carnegie I was not one who thought that Russia under Yeltsin was becoming a wonderful democracy. I thought Russia in the '90s was a bit of a mess. I think most Russians would agree with that assessment. It was a time of chaos, weakness. The Soviet Union collapsed. They were left with half the population. They were going through economic turmoil and financial dislocation, the ruble plummeted, the financial crisis of '98 and on and on and on. Russia in the '90s was not a thriving democracy. I think those who at that time were describing Russia as a democracy were actually discrediting the concept and notion of democracy. Most Russians, if that was democracy to them, they didn't like it.

I think if you start from that basis, then I think what we have seen under Putin has not been a step in the right direction. Putin owes a lot to Russia's revival, to an outside force to which he had no influence; the price of oil, exactly right.

If the price of oil had shot up as high as it did under Yeltsin, Yeltsin would have been a very popular president, I dare say. Putin benefited from that tremendously and as a result, his numbers went up. Meanwhile, he made sure he kept the opposition down and dealt with any potential threats. So you had people who were getting killed who posed any serious challenge, including journalists and opposition figures. It wasn't just inside Russia's borders as we saw with Mr. Litvinenko in 2006 or 2007. He was killed in the UK, poisoned with polonium. You have the leader of Chechnya, Mr. Kadyrov who kills opponents, wherever they may be. This is a problem not just within Russia's borders. It is a problem beyond as well.

Q: You left Global Affairs in?

KRAMER: October, 2003 so right before I started in Policy Planning, right before the arrest of Khodorkovsky in October of 2003.

Q: Then where did you go?

KRAMER: I was in Policy Planning for a little less than two years and I focused largely on Russia Eurasia issues at that time. Barry Lowenkron was the acting director. Richard Haas had been the first director in the Bush administration. He left in 2002. Barry hired me. Mitchell Reiss came on as the director and Barry returned as deputy director and my focus was on Russia and Eurasian issues.

Q: Policy Planning has gone through a whole series of things. George Kennan thought, he established it. It is basically going to be whither the next ten years or something of the State Department and then at a certain time, it turned into speech writing.

KRAMER: Speech writing. Sometimes it ran the building. With Dennis Ross, I would say, it was possibly at its most influential.

Q: How stood it when you were there?

KRAMER: It was more of a think-tank, I think for the secretary but at the same time I think Policy Planning staffs have this challenge all the time; you risk getting sucked into the day to day stuff which means you have less time to do the sort of stepping back and thinking long-term. I think that was true when I was there. We would often get sucked into the day to day.

You have to keep in mind when I started there the Iraq war was very much front and center and so there was a lot of focus on that. In my part of the world there was this concern that was growing about the human rights abuses in Russia, the centralization of power and the problem of corruption in Russia too.

Policy Planning, I enjoyed it. It was kind of like a think-tank job inside the government where you would write policy memos. Your audience instead of the public at large was the secretary of state. Unlike in a think-tank, you could deal with classified information.

So I enjoyed it. How much influence we had, I am not sure to be perfectly honest.

Q: Did you find yourself in competition with INR or not?

KRAMER: No. I worked closely with INR. The people who do Russia in INR are terrific and so I found INR actually to be a valuable resource and I let them do the intel and the analysis and I tried to focus more on what it all meant for policy. I worked closely and well with the folks in INR. That, by the way, continued when I moved on to my other jobs. I think INR is a really great bureau.

MELISSA SANDERSON
Deputy Minister Counselor for Science
Moscow (2001-2003)

Ms. Sanderson was born and raised in Ohio and educated at Xavier University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1985, she had several tours of duty at the State Department in Washington, DC and served abroad in Guadalajara, Ottawa, Madrid, Warsaw, San Salvador, Moscow and Kinshasa. She was a Polish speaking officer and a specialist in Technology and Arms Control matters. Ms. Sanderson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Where were you located? You know, there's been this back and forth about an embassy there for a long time. How did things stand at the time?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, we were in the so-called "new embassy" in the compound. It was an interesting structure because the first several floors of that building could only be used by unclassified groups. So you know, we had USAID in there. We had a couple of other agencies in there that only dealt with unclassified matters. And then the remaining floors above were all

secure areas. So you had coded badges and elevator codes and so forth. And you didn't have any Russian nationals working on the secure floors. So for instance, the Political Section Russian FSNs (Foreign Service National) were all on the lower levels, the unclassified Econ FSNs, et cetera. Everybody was down on those levels. And then it was Americans only in the skiff areas.

Q: This of course is the aftermath of the extensive placements by the KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)) of listening devices in the building of the new embassy.

SANDERSON: Oh absolutely. I mean there was debate, if I recall at one point, about whether to just tear down the structure and start over again. And then the decision was made that no, you know, that was extremely costly and there was a way to work around it by making it unclassified only and then having absolutely no one but the Army Corps of Engineers work on the remaining part of the building. And that was how we were able to ensure that that would be a secure zone.

Q: What was your section like. I mean how big was it?

SANDERSON: Well, let me think now. Debbie was in charge. That was my girlfriend, Debbie Linde. She was the Minister Counselor. Then there was me, then there was Penny Sachez who was attached to our staff from DOD (Department of Defense). Then we had Ellen Germain and two other people. So we had six officers and we had a couple of rotational experts in from Washington. So it was -- the staff was eight total, but six on permanent assignment and two rotational.

Q: What were your major concerns, you yourself?

SANDERSON: Me, I was dealing with two parts of our efforts over there. And the first was our program for providing alternative economic employment to Russian scientists who previously had been doing weapons of mass destruction research. And secondly, the environmental programs. I also did some site inspection visits because the office also was part of that effort of making sure that all treaty matters were being fully complied with. But I did a lot with environmental stuff, taking a look at whether the pipelines that were being built were going to cut off the reindeer migration paths, for instance. And I got to visit Chukotka at the extreme tip of Russia right across from Alaska to take a look at conflicts between fishing fleets. Because ordinarily that might have been strictly in Econ, but it was also an issue for us because sometimes Russian fishing fleets have more than one mission at a time. And while I was up there I also got to meet with Russian scientists to talk about the health of the Russian Tundra and I met with aboriginal leaders and talked about reindeer herds and livelihoods and traditional lifestyles and I met with the governor and talked about the provincial economy and why governors should have more power and the Kremlin should have less. Does that sound like a famous debate?
(laughs)

Q: Well, you know, I kind of wonder, I mean this is interesting, but I mean was this just to get information or were we trying to get the Russians to do more and these various things?

SANDERSON: It was largely trying to get the Russians to do more because you know, when

you have large polluted areas of Russia inevitably you have problems in the atmosphere, you have problems in the water, you have problems in soil that transfers to other countries through agricultural products or through prevailing winds or through fish. So we were actually trying to get the Russians to pay more attention to environmental issues in order to improve global welfare.

Q: Well, how are the Russians responding to -

SANDERSON: (laughs) Oh, you know them. They don't like anybody implying that anything is less than perfect -

Q: Yes.

SANDERSON: -- in their great mother country. So it was actually an interesting time to be in Russia because we had just finished one of our little tit for tat exercises where they threw out some of our diplomats and we threw out some of theirs. And as a matter fact that was how I got my position. It opened up very unexpectedly because my predecessor was PNGed (Persona Non Grata) from Russia. So it was a really interesting time to be there. I mean of course I was followed everywhere by the KGB. And they made no bones about it. They were very obvious. It's part of their psychological tactics. And part of your briefing before you go to Embassy Moscow is you're briefed that this kind of thing is going to happen and you're told if you don't think that you can deal with being under constant surveillance we'll give you another assignment, you just shouldn't go there. And a lot of people did leave the embassy each year, because once they got there they found that they really couldn't take that. But it didn't bother me. I would just -- I would be like oh yeah, there they are (laughs). They're not going to find anything interesting from me, I'm going to buy some souvenirs (laughs).

Q: Well, I've talked to people who've been in that and they say actually it wasn't bad because they knew if they had a blow-out of a tire or something like that they could -- usually help would be on its way.

SANDERSON: Well, sometimes. That actually is a false perception because that's only true sometimes. I actually was on the Metro in Moscow one time and just by coincidence a colleague got on the same car on the train, a colleague from the embassy. And this was an African American colleague and there were some skinhead types in that car. And they started hassling our guy. And you could tell who his two shadowers were, but they didn't do a thing to step in and help him out. Fortunately, when we got off -- he was getting off at the next station -- there was a cop right there on the platform, so the skinheads didn't follow him off. But yeah, most of the time they wouldn't help you because even though they were supposed to be obvious they weren't supposed to interact with you. They were just supposed to be there to try to, you know, make you nervous.

Q: How would you say relations were between the United States and Russia at the time?

SANDERSON: Kind of tense. We were going through one of those periods where Putin was trying to put his hand on a lot of things and very much a Russian patriot, very much determined

that, you know, the great Mother Russia will rise from the ashes. And therefore, making a lot of difficulties in relations across the spectrum. We were trying to deal with Russia-Iran, Russia-Pakistan, Russia-Kyoto Accords, which of course is a very timely topic today, Russian trade barriers, corruption in Russia that was affecting U.S. businesses. And basically, you know, Russia didn't want to hear about any of those things. It was kind of like they wanted to go their own way. But I'll tell you something very important about Russia. 9/11 happened very shortly after I got there. The fact is I was actually in Tver because when I first was transferred to Russia I did a direct transfer from El Salvador to Russia, and the Department decided that that would be fine because I already spoke Polish and so they felt if they put me a intensive Russian class in a domestic environment that I could, you know, pick up the Russian based on my Polish language. So when I first got to Russia I was sent to the town of Tver, which at one point in Russia's history had actually been the capital of Russia. It's not very far from Moscow, maybe it was -- I think it was like an hour and fifteen minute drive. And I was staying with a family there in their apartment and going to language classes at the institute during the day and then coming home to speak Russian with my family at night. And that's where I was on 9/11. I was in Tver. And I had just walked in the door of our family apartment and the mother of the family, Nadia, she met me at the door and she, she just started hugging me. And she was like, you know, "Oh my God, oh my God."

I said, "What happened?"

And she replied, "Come and see."

And it was on the TV in their living room and it was the first plane strike. And while I was watching that the actual, the second plane strike happened. And I just remember sitting on the couch with tears streaming down my face and her sitting beside me holding me and rocking me. And her husband Vitali came home and sat down with me and their daughter came in and Nadia went and fixed food and drink and we all sat in front of the TV and basically cried together and just couldn't believe it. And the real point that I wanted to make in this story is that Russia was the first country in the world to try to send help to the United States. They had their planes full of food and firefighters and rescue workers in the air less than an hour and a half after the attack, and they were already on the way when Washington made its decision that we just weren't going to let anybody, no matter who, not the British, not anybody, that we didn't want -- that we weren't in a position to accept help at that particular time. But it's important for everybody to know that Russia was the first. And Russians piled the embassy walls with flowers and prayers and they stood outside the embassy with their candles lit, singing and crying and praying for America. And that's something that most Americans don't know.

Q: Yes, that's very moving. It is an aspect that sort of has been neglected.

SANDERSON: Well, of course Russia has suffered its own terrible terrorist attack, some of which took place when I was in Moscow. Among the ones that stick in my mind was the bombing of one theater and the hostage taking at another theater and the bombing of a school. All of those things took place while I was there because of the Chechnyan conflict. And so Russians understand what it is to suffer the death of innocent people in terrorist attacks. And that's why they just reached out so instantly and so wholeheartedly, because they really could

understand, maybe more than a lot of other nations in the world, what it was that we were going through that terrible day. And I always tell everybody that because, you know, political relations ebb and flow, but that was absolutely a great day in Russian-American relations when they reacted the way that they did when they, they came out for us and stood by us. And it had a long-term impact as well. It really improved our dialogue on issues like anti-terrorism. It really got the Russians looking at believing in what we had told them about interconnectivity. And the Russians turned out to be very helpful to us in identifying al-Qaeda, because there were connections that they knew about into Chechnya. So that was, it was really something. And of course for me on the personal level, I mean I couldn't get a phone call out, you know, to my family because all the phone lines were just jammed. And I did finally get a phone call through to the embassy to ask what should I do, do you want me to stand pat, do you want me to come to the embassy, what do you want me to do? And of course, you know, literally nobody knew. So you I was told just stand pat. And so, you know, I froze in place and stayed with my family in Tver.

Q: Well, as you traveled about off to the provinces what was -- you know, Moscow's Moscow, I mean it's a major center. But the provinces in Russia, there's a tremendous divide, isn't there?

SANDERSON: Oh, Russia is absolutely two countries. And those two countries are the urban zones of Moscow and St. Petersburg, versus the rest of the country. The former is the modern, beautiful Russia, the Russia that Putin and others want us to see. And then there's the real Russia, the rural reality. I mean, you take my family in Tver, it's a great example. Vitali was an ex-military officer; he'd been in the Air Force. And so they had by Russian standards a large apartment on an upper floor in a building, and probably at one point it was really, really luxurious. But when I was there the electricity was off more often than it was on, and often there was no hot water as a result, and that meant no heat either. The cities, including Moscow, are heated by hot water pumped through these massive pipes above the ground. And by the way, every year throughout the country thousands of Russians die because they get intoxicated and they fall against these pipes and they're scalded to death. I mean that's how hot they are. But in Tver a lot of times the pumps were broken, so the hot water could not be circulated. I remember sleeping under, you know, six blankets that my family basically piled on top of me. And believe me, once you went to bed you didn't get up. You were just like, "Hey bladder, you have to hold it!" because you're not getting out, it's too cold! Because there was no hot water, every morning Nadia had to get up and boil water on a little brazier in the kitchen because the electricity only works certain hours. And so she had to get up and boil water on a little brazier in the kitchen in this apartment that was on the twelfth floor of a fourteen-story building. So think of all the little coal braziers in that building. So when Vitali got up, he got the first bath, he would have hot water. And then I got second bath and so I would have some hot water. And then after she would cook the breakfast she would heat more water so she could have her bath. And I saw even, you know, even more primitive than that in some places up in the Urals. It was really remarkable. People were living in places that had plywood on the roofs and the windows because they hadn't received any building materials in, you know, 40 years. So the buildings were falling down. The roads were abysmal. There's definitely the first world Russia of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and then there's the third world Russia where most Russians live. And the further away you get from the capital the worse off you are. You get to Yekaterinburg, which is a big city, and you're -- it's like being in -- well, it's like being in San Salvador before the earthquake. You've got places

where the sewage pipes are broken and you've got sewage running down roads. It's remarkable. It's the Russia that the authorities don't want anybody to see.

Q: Were you getting from your conversations or anything a feeling that there was I mean a sense of loss because of all the Stans and all, which had belonged to the Soviet Empire and now they were gone? Or was there a feeling of almost relief that we're rid of these people? Give me a feel for the situation.

SANDERSON: You know, it's an interesting question because Russians are, even in little villages, intensely political creatures. And also intensely patriotic, which is something that they have in common with Americans. And again, it's something that we don't necessarily think of. Most of my Russian friends, you know, I had friends that I went to their dachas on the weekend, the country places when the weather was good. This is a Russian phenomenon. Everybody flees the city for the countryside. Russians themselves joke that all Russians are peasants at heart. They're not really comfortable living in the cities. And once the snow gets low enough to make it possible to get to the countryside people start going every weekend to their country place. And their country place could be a two-room shack, but the point is it's out in the countryside and they're breathing the clean air and they grow their own vegetables and they fish in the streams and they walk for hours through the woods collecting mushrooms and stuff. And that's where you have your most interesting conversations with people is in these little villages and in the dachas. And in those conversations the Russians I've met, the ordinary Russians, were kind of like, you know, "We never wanted all of that anyway. That's not what Russia is. Russia's our mother and Russia is our place, and we are so proud to have been born here in Russia. But we don't understand why our leaders wanted to run out and grab all these other places. They're not Russia and we don't need them! They're not Russia!" And so it's good that they are their own free people again, because they are who they are and we are Russians. So there was a very sharp division between the, the -- what the political class would say, you know, about oh well, political evolution and, you know, radical liberalism and stuff, and what between average Russians who would say "That never did make any sense anyway. Those people aren't us. Those Uzbeks, they're not Russians. These Kazaks, they're not Russians. So why should they have to be inside of our country? They should go live in their own country, we are Russians." So it was always a very interesting topic of conversation.

Q: Yes. Did you get into conversations about the political structure of -- concern about -- well, this is during the period of Yeltsin, isn't it?

SANDERSON: No, actually it's just at the end of Yeltsin and then Putin came in in his first presidency right toward the end of my tour there.

Q: How were they viewing him?

SANDERSON: Putin was very, very much admired. He was regarded as a brilliant, young, forceful leader dedicated to restoring Mother Russia to the prestige and respect that she deserved. Very much viewed as a religious man, at least at that time, his principle advisor was actually an orthodox priest. They had grown up together and that particular orthodox priest could change Putin's mind overnight. If he really said no to something Putin would change course. So he was

regarded as a man who listens to the voice of God, a real patriot, a man who would fight for Mother Russia, a Russian who was proud to be Russian. There was of course some tension from the fact that he's a St. Petersburg, and of course there's that long standing traditional rivalry between Moscow and St. Petersburg. But by and large, at that time everyone was very pro-Putin.

Q: All of you at the embassy, you personally, but wither? Was there an effort on the part of the Americans at the embassy not to sort of boast about American or, you know, as a matter of triumphalism or anything? I mean was this of concern to us?

SANDERSON: Oh yeah, absolutely. You know, it was never considered to be in the best interest of the United States or in the best interest of world peace for that matter to gloat over the downfall of Russia or to make Russia feel small or poor. As a matter of fact, there was a concerted effort to do otherwise, to show Russia that it still mattered, to treat it respectfully, to try to engage with Russia as a partner and try to draw them into a whole host of global issues so that we could get past the old Cold War animosities without making Russia feel that it was being imposed upon. Because certainly the Russians had made it clear already that they weren't going to be imposed upon by anybody. They had those sensitivities and they were wearing them on their sleeves effectively speaking. And our policy was to do everything that we could to not make Russia feel small or poor or anything else.

Q: In your conversations and all did China come up as a factor?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. The Russians are very aware every minute of every day that they have a very complicated neighborhood. They worry about the Chinese, they worry about Poland, they worried about Iran, they worried about their incredibly large Muslim population and feeling that they didn't really have a good handle on that. They worried about NATO (North American Treaty Organization) Forces stationed in Poland. They worried about being overrun by China. Russians are a very historically minded people, and they will tell you that, you know, Russia has at moments in its history been overcome by some of its neighbors, but Russia has always remained Russia. And they're very, very proud of that. That sooner or later Russia always emerges stronger than before and Russia always remains Russia. But yeah, they for sure are constantly looking over each shoulder and overhead waiting for the next enemy to encroach.

Q: Well, why would Poland be much of a factor?

SANDERSON: Well, you know, at that time NATO expansion was still relatively new and it was an ongoing process. And you know, during the first round of NATO expansion, which included Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary, NATO decided to base some aircrafts and so forth in Poland. And at that time when I was in Russia, Poland was also gaining entry to the European Union. And so increasingly Russians were seeing historical Western European enemies sitting right on the doorstep inside the Polish borders. And it was making them very wary of Poland emerging as an Eastern European power. And of course there was a point in Russian history, you know, when the Polish empire was stronger than the Russians and Poland overran Russia, and the Poles subjugated Russia for something like 25, 35 years. So again, Russians are highly historical creatures. And what they're seeing -- what they were seeing at that time at least is that with the help of Western Europe Poland was being put into a position where

once again it could potentially threaten to dominate Russia. So they were keeping a close eye on all of those linkages.

Q: Was there any concern about a new Germany being a threat?

SANDERSON: No, the Russians weren't particularly worried about Germany. They watched with great interest the dynamics inside of the EU (European Union). And at least some of my friends seemed to find it kind of amusing that everybody within the EU was so hyper about Germany and intent on keeping Germany down.

Q: What about the Near East and all? I mean all the problems there.

SANDERSON: Well, of course that was a time when Russia was still very heavily engaged with Pakistan and also with Iran. And it was one of the sort of neuralgic points in Russian-U.S. relations that despite, despite Russia's assistance to us at 9/11 we felt that Russia was also maintaining ties to state-sponsored terrorism. And particularly in the area of weapons of mass destruction we were deeply concerned that Russia was helping Iran to develop its nuclear program. And Pakistan as well, but of course particularly Iran. So that was definitely an issue in our relationship.

Q: Well, did you find that the people you talked to were siding with sort of the Palestinian side, although many of the Israelis now are of Russian origin?

SANDERSON: Yeah. I mean there's quite a few Russian Jews in Israel. And probably in large part because of that, Russian people didn't talk a lot about the Israel-Palestine thing. They didn't seem to see the analogy, either on one side or the other, of a people sort of fighting to be free that would have possibly raised some sentiments within Russian hearts. Because they view themselves as a people fighting to be free. Folks that I talked to in terms of Middle East, their interests were Afghanistan of course, because Russians still rankle at that whole Afghanistan debacle. Iran, Iraq, because the Russians were watching very closely the sort of rubbing against each other of Iran and Iraq. Russians were successfully playing with Syria to try to drive that Iran-Iraq problem in a direction they wanted it to go. So I mean their principle zones of engagement were those areas much more so than directly the Israeli-Palestine thing.

Q: Well, turning to your, your job focus, what were we doing to keep Soviet scientists from mucking around with the Near East in chemical and nuclear weapons?

SANDERSON: The U.S. had a really interesting program where we would actually provide funding for alternative research. So let's as a concrete example say that some scientists who used to be at weapons centers would then be working at the University of Moscow and maybe doing research on genetic mutations to make food supplies more sustainable in a drought instead of working on genetic mutations that would be related to biological weapons. Or conversely, you know, for scientists that might have been working on chemical weapons, we would be working cooperatively with U.S. and Russian companies in providing funding to give those scientists jobs working to improve, for example, the nature of gasoline in order to make it more fuel efficient in cars and reduce emissions. A lot of research that goes on in Russia under this kind of program

winds up in the private sector around the world, improving life for people. And of course it's not well advertised, but it's actually a very successful program.

Q: Well, were we seeing a significant siphoning off of some of the talent toward Iran or Pakistan or elsewhere?

SANDERSON: Several Russian scientists had already made a decision to go in that direction before the official end of the Cold War, so certainly we were aware that there was a body of scientific expertise in those sort of countries that essentially had fled the Soviet Union before the collapse of the union. And of course, being that our relationships are what they are with those countries in question we didn't have very good means to access those scientists.

Q: Well, what about on the environmental side? Were we able to do anything -- I don't have my maps with me, but is it the Caspian Sea. What was happening there?

SANDERSON: You know, the Russian Caspian Sea Fleet from the old Soviet Union days had essentially just been sailed into harbor and abandoned. So what we had was a lot of former military ships that were not only leaking fuel into the Caspian, but also in some cases from the submarine fleet radioactive materials. And so we had a very extensive effort underway to decommission properly the naval fleet of the Caspian Sea and then also a massive clean-up effort, a multinational clean-up effort to try to deal with the elements that had already deposited. And we cooperated with the Russian Fisheries Ministry to set limits in those areas and put in place monitors right on the fishing vessels by which the catch could be monitored for radiation. On shore we were doing something very similar. We had radiation monitors in a lot of the markets. Even in Moscow we had things where they were right at the entrance to the market and as the trucks loaded with produce would come in they would drive through these scanners. And if, you know, anything redlined that truck would be pulled aside and its load examined case-by-case to detect where the contamination was and those supplies would be destroyed. We had, for instance, in the city of Moscow a really successful environmental intervention. One of Russia's largest nuclear facilities is right in the heart of Moscow and it's an older facility and there were quite a few concerns that it was beginning to leak into the ground water of the city. Contamination had been detected in about a 20-mile radius around, and of course these are all apartment buildings. They were talking about tens of thousands of city inhabitants. And we were able to do a very good remediation project to clean up that water and to seal the leakage. So all of those sorts of efforts fell under the environmental rubric. And we had a very active program with Russia, a very cooperative program in that regard.

Q: You know, back in the days of the Cold War we had an exchange program with the Soviet Union in which we sent people to the Soviet Union who specialized in Slavic literature and church art and that sort of thing, and the Soviets were sending their people to our science labs, which made us very nervous. Had there been a -- was there an exchange program going on and was it changing at all?

SANDERSON: We did have an exchange program, it ran in two forms. We had an exchange program for scientists; for instance, Russian scientists might go to a Monsanto laboratory to study what we're doing with plastics to make them more environmentally friendly. And at the

same time, an American scientist would be invited to a Russian company or to a Russian university. So we had exchanges of that sort between the private sector and also between university sectors. We were trying on a very, very limited scale some scientific cooperation government-to-government, again working largely on environmental issues. That one was in its infancy when I was there, so I don't know how it's gone. But yeah, we were still having those kinds of exchanges, and of course cultural exchanges. We were doing a lot of cultural exchanges, bringing, you know, Russian ballet groups to the U.S., bringing American musical groups to Russia, et cetera, for the cultural bridge building. It's a very active program.

Q: The Soviets, I'm using the term at the time, had these sort of science cities out way beyond the Urals and all, doing all sorts of stuff. And they were off limits to a lot of citizens in the country and all. I mean were these opening up, and did you get out to these places?

SANDERSON: Yes, the vast majority of them were opening up at least a little bit to outsiders. The Urals are a very funny part of Russia, because they're the borderlands. They're literally standing between the heart of Mother Russia and these outlying countries whose populations aren't even considered by most Russians to be Russian. So between that and a not very attractive climate we don't have a lot of Russians who naturally would want to gravitate toward the Urals anyway. But importantly, the Russian government had stopped the travel restrictions, so if ordinary Russians wanted to go and look for a job in one of the planned cities in the Urals, they could do so. And foreigners increasingly were able to go there. I mean obviously those were highly programmed. You know, you had to apply months in advance, the dates were set, when you arrived you were met by the officials, they still took your passport away from you so you couldn't go wandering around wherever you wanted, you had to stay with your guide. But yes, you could actually go there. And we were doing inspection visits there. Also in Siberia, same thing; we were able to go to these places. So it was, it was a big step forward. It really was. Because until just a few years before that there was no possibility for any of us to go there, and certainly not for any, you know, Russians to voluntarily go there. If you happened to have studied a necessary skill you might find yourself plunked down there, but yeah, that had pretty much changed.

Q: Well, I would think it would be a tremendous leakage of these cities, these sort of science cities stuck in the middle of nowhere. People want to get back to the cool spots of St. Petersburg and Moscow.

SANDERSON: Not -- actually, you'd be surprised because by and large the housing in the science cities is superior to that which the average person would find in St. Petersburg or Moscow. And by average person I'm including scientists. So they provided better housing, they made sure that, you know, the schools were among the very best. Because of course they were educating the children of the scientists. And you got frequent trips to St. Petersburg or Moscow. So you know, you weren't just stuck out in the hinterlands. You had these deluxe accommodations and high quality schools and frequent trips to the big city where you could shop and spend your money, because of course the salaries were substantially higher. I mean the new Russian policy was to incentivize scientists to stay in these areas because they'd already made such a capital investment building the planned cities. So it was actually kind of interesting. You didn't see people sort of fleeing en mass. Of course the other reality is there's not a lot of

alternative demand for scientists because the Russians have concentrated too heavily on building a huge scientific class, you know, that were dedicated to certain kinds of research. It's very hard in any economy, even in the United States economy, to find alternative viable employment for people in this very high category. So it was also a disincentive to leave, because it was like hey, if I leave I really won't be doing anything, so I better stay where at least I can still do some research.

Q: What fields outside of -- what fields did you find that Russian science was particularly adept at?

SANDERSON: They're extremely good at both biological and chemical elements. They've done a lot more in many ways with genetics than Western countries have. And part of that goes back of course to history and wanting to understand the origins of where Russians come from and so forth. But they've done a lot more with genetics, they've done a lot more with biomedical research, and with combining those two things. The Russian Institute of Longevity is a really interesting place to visit because they're working on cracking the aging code. They want to find a way to stop us from aging. Very interesting research going on there. Same kind of thing with chemical research. Very interested, you know, in changing the way in which chemicals are or are not absorbed, which of course is also related to nutrition. So we used to fund a lot of research for these kinds of chemists working on bio-nutrition issues. But yeah, they have particularly strong skills in those two areas.

Q: Well, I understand -- it may be changing -- but that the Russians have a medical problem in that their death rate is particularly worse than Western Europe, and that their population is not replacing itself. Would you seem concerned there?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. It's the hidden tragedy of Russia. When I was there the average male lifespan was 52 years. And the average female, 55. And essentially the leading causes of death were all alcohol related: depression, shot in the head, frozen to death, drunk driving, liver failure, brain failure -- that's what got Yeltsin, all those years of drinking vodka. As the Russians themselves said, "He pickled his brain." And a lot of that goes to the nature of life in Russia. It's a pretty grim life. Short and grim. You know, most Russians are going to work in jobs that they are not going to like, they are going to live in small, antiquated apartments where the services don't function, where they don't have electricity all the time, where they don't have water all the time, where they don't have heat all the time. Forget about air conditioning. They're going to travel on mass transit with people coughing and hacking all over them. Most Russians don't see doctors regularly, they see herbalists because doctors are extremely expensive and usually not all that good. Everyone dreams of a holiday on the Caspian Sea. About 40% of Russians will actually manage to have their holiday on the Caspian Sea. And there's not a sense that things are likely to get better anytime soon. So there's not a lot of hope either. And then they watch things like, you know, the rise of the criminal class and the brutality of the criminal class and innocent people getting shot and so forth, and it's no better than the place under Stalin. So there's a lot of fatalism, there's a lot of despair, the climate sucks most of the time, the winters are long and dark and brutal. On average, a couple hundred people every year get killed in Moscow just by falling icicles because, you know, heating issues mean that icicles can grow extremely long and then the train passes underneath, the building vibrates, and one of these things falls on you like a sword

and it cuts you in half.

Q: Eh!

SANDERSON: Oh yeah. Yeah. It's a real issue when you're taking the Metro like I used to do. You always walk toward the outer edge of the sidewalk. It's better to be splashed by the cars with dirty snow than it is to be impaled by a falling icicle (laughs). So yeah, that's definitely an issue. For whatever reason, fertility is declining among Russian women. There is very high use of birth control. Lots of Russian women simply feel that they don't want to bring children into their world. Women are also marrying substantially older. So yeah, it's definitely an issue. And because Russians are extremely proud of their Russian character, immigrants are not usually welcome. So it's not as if you're going to refresh your blood through immigration. It's definitely a political, economic issue that the Russian government's starting to pay a lot of attention to, because it threatens to be a real downfall for Russia as a proud, independent place.

Q: I would think that many of the factors that you mentioned are, you know, able to be repaired, I mean better apartments, more electricity, more amenities, that sort of thing. I mean it's not as though this is really a third world. I mean here are people who have sophisticated use of machinery and invention and all. You'd think that they could get a handle on this.

SANDERSON: No, it goes to the stratification of Russian society, very much a have and have-not, very much a small, highly wealthy, highly corrupt, highly centralized oligarchy, and very much a large disenfranchised mass. Statistically speaking, there's plenty of beautiful modern apartments and palatial private homes in both Moscow and St. Petersburg. Basically, they all belong to government officials and/or the heads of quasi-government companies, like the oil company and so forth, or mafia bosses. There are beautiful private schools for their children. There are trips abroad and foreign education for their children. There's second and third homes all over Spain and Italy and Greece where Russians vacation. And I remember in Spain, even when I served there, they used to talk about the Russian invasion. All these Russians would come stampeding over to plop down on the beach and buy up all the best real estate. That's part of Russian realty too. But it's not the realty of the average Russian. And the problem is that because the oligarchs are doing so very, very well, they don't feel any need to worry about the rest of the unwashed masses. It's a real issue. Because you can walk through almost any Moscow neighborhood and see a brand new apartment building and see pictures on TV of how these folks live and they're stepping out of their limousines with the women wearing fur coats and diamonds and rubies and, you know, the men smoothing their lapels with their pinky rings flashing. Because that's not what most Russians get.

Q: Was it a feeling there that you were dealing with a, I won't say a lawless society, but one that could be determined by who knew whom or that sort of thing?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. Even average ordinary Muscovites, for instance, would recognize certain license plates because the powerful in the government and/or their very rich friends all had license plates with special codes on them. And you knew better than to touch that car or if you were a cop you knew better than to try and stop that car. And you know, there were, for instance, horrible crashes all the time in Moscow because these guys would jump into their

big fancy limousines and they didn't want to deal with the traffic jams. So they would just pull out headfirst into oncoming traffic and expect every car to just weave out of their way because hey, we're special, we've got a plate, we've got this, we've got that. And sometimes they would crash into each other because, you know, neither side would give way, but lots of times, they'd crash into buses or innocent people because they'd just decide to get out and charge along and the police weren't going to stop them. It's worth your job, your family's future to mess with these guys. So yeah, there was definitely a sense of a sort of lawlessness, a sense that these people don't have to follow the same rules that I do. But in a sense it was also accepted. Like oh yeah, right, it's the big cheeses, they don't have to follow the rules that I have to follow.

Q: Well, I'm not sure if this is easy to say or you could say it, but what was sort of the attitude among our officers at the embassy towards wither Russia? I mean where is it going?

SANDERSON: You know, there was a lot of discussion about that. Because of the increasing prominence of the mafia, because of the increasing power of the oligarchs and the clear cut tendency of Putin to support both of those structures as at least in his mind a way of revitalizing Russia. And there actually was a lot of talk about that. Was there a risk that Russia would become the lawless Wild East of Europe? You know, what could we do to help stabilize Russia, to encourage our Western European partners to bring Russia closer? You know, what's the long term plan? Can we get Russia into the EU? You know, why not? Can we someday get Russia into NATO, you know? There was a lot of talk about how can we help Russia stabilize itself? Because a lot of the phenomenon that we've been discussing here were also viewed as the byproducts of the breakup of the Soviet Union, because with that absolute control removed relatively suddenly it left the whole society sort of going well, where do we go now? What do we do? What kind of country are we supposed to be? What will we become? And there was a lot of debate about the risks of Russia becoming a rogue state, because a lot of the factors that make rogue states were and are present in Russia. And so there was definitely a lot of conversation of how can we best help Russia to stabilize itself. How can we draw Russia into the international community? How can we make Russia part of organizations that will help it grow in the right, productive way? Yeah, there was definitely a lot of that conversation.

Q: Did you have this type of conversation or was there much cooperation with say, our British-French-Canadian-German colleagues? Or others?

SANDERSON: I didn't have those conversations, no. I didn't actually know a lot of the other diplomats. I knew a lot of Russians and of course I knew our folks.

Q: Was there concern about the departure of many a young Russian girl who was sort of entrapped into this trafficking of women and all that? Was that considered a problem much or not?

SANDERSON: At that time it certainly wasn't. I mean as a matter of fact my language school was in the exact same building as one of those so-called matchmaking institutes.

Q: Ah.

SANDERSON: And the thing that was a lot more worrisome from an official U.S. government perspective at the time was trafficking of girls from the Urals into Russia as prostitutes. I mean it was really scandalous. You would even see like a semi-truck pulled up on the side of a highway and you might think to yourself, "Oh, that truck's broken down." It wasn't broken down. Inside of it there would be rows of cots with young girls from various Stans and the Urals who were there to service guys who would stop their cars and jump into the truck for, you know, a quick break.

Q: Oh my God.

SANDERSON: Yeah. And that was of much greater policy concern to us than the so-called matchmaking agencies. Because at least those were mostly young women who went voluntarily, who paid a fee, who registered. And yes, they were selling themselves, but by and large, you know, it wasn't that this agency went out and grabbed all the girls, that started a little bit later. I had already left Russia when these agencies started going to parents saying, "Sell us your daughter." When I was there it was still very much a case of these young, well-educated women who could clearly see that they weren't going to go anywhere in Russia. You know, it was hard enough for men to get high profile jobs. It was much rarer for a woman. So if you were an educated young woman you didn't have that much to look forward to in Russia and it was worth your while to scrape together the registration fee and get your professional photographs taken and get into one of these matchmaking things. I actually ran into quite a few American men who were in that building specifically to check out potential future wives.

Q: Well, you mentioned the people you were working with in your particular department. And as I recall, some of them were women. How were American women officials treated in Russia at that time?

SANDERSON: Yeah, absolutely no problem whatsoever. Russians, particularly the government and the kind of Russians that we were interacting with, the educated upper class government, scientists, et cetera, had absolutely no issues whatsoever with women in authority, and took it for granted almost that of course there would be American women in these kinds of positions, because hey, it's America.

Q: You know, back in around '94 or so I spent about three weeks in Kyrgyzstan. And talking to the woman officers there, saying that, you know, social relations with the Kyrgys or the Russians who were Kyrgys was not much fun because it consisted of going to a restaurant with a bottle of vodka and sitting there. I mean did you find -- could you have a more relaxed, enjoyable relationship there?

SANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. I think the difference absolutely was living in Moscow. One of the really great urban centers of the world. I mean I remember my first Christmas in Moscow. I went to the Bolshoi Theater and saw "The Nutcracker." And it was snowing lightly. It was just one of those moments that sticks in your mind as being like a dream come true kind of thing. Like wow, is this me actually sitting in the Bolshoi Ballet watching them do "The Nutcracker"? Like oh my God (laughs). And there were so many art galleries and so many small theater groups. I used to go with Russian friends to -- I'm trying to think what would be an analogy in

English. It would be like political satire theater.

Q: Ah yes.

SANDERSON: And, you know, we would go there and take in one of these plays and then go to dinner afterwards and sure, yeah, we would have some vodka too, but we would talk about the play and were they on target, were they off target, were they exaggerated, were they real, you know. Oh, my God, and outdoor art markets. You know, we would go and go just strolling, admiring the beautiful art and then stop for lunch and, you know, then go to the movies afterward. And walking for miles in beautiful old Moscow and just admiring the architecture and then, again, stopping for coffee and sitting and talking. Oh, life in Moscow in many respects, aside from the crappy weather, life in Moscow was great.

Q: OK, by the way, for the transcriber, this is with Mel Sanderson and today is the 20th of December, 2011. So what was your job in Kinshasa?

SANDERSON: I did just want to tell you about Ambassador David Johnson in Moscow before we start with Congo.

Q: Ah-ha. How did you find him?

SANDERSON: Oh, he was awesome. In my opinion he was the perfect man in the perfect place at the perfect time. He had a real understanding of the Russian mentality, and his personal openness and his warm nature were absolutely perfect, both for bringing together all the diverse elements of the embassy and for making headway with the Russians. He was really liked and he had great access.

Q: What was his background?

SANDERSON: He's a professional Foreign Service officer. He had done a couple of tours in Western Europe, and if I remember correctly, also the Far East.

End of reader